

CHRISTOPHER, AN ASPERGER SYNDROME KID, SOLVED THE DOG MURDER CASE IN NOVEL *THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME* (2003)

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ABSTRAK

Objek penelitian ini adalah *The Curious Incident of the Dog in The Night-Time* (2003), sebuah novel yang menyajikan cerita tentang kasus pembunuhan anjing yang terjadi di halaman rumah Ibu Shears dan Christopher, anak yang memiliki sindrom asperger mencoba untuk memecahkan kasus pembunuhan tersebut dan menemukan pelakunya. Topik yang menarik dan menjadi pembahasan utama dalam artikel ini adalah kenapa Christopher dengan sindrom asperger dapat memecahkan kasus pembunuhan anjing di novel ini. Untuk menganalisis topik ini, peneliti menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa mendukung alasan Christopher untuk memecahkan kasus pembunuhan anjing, Christopher memiliki tiga alasan yaitu Christopher menyukai binatang terutama anjing, keinginan Christopher untuk menjadi detektif seperti Sherlock Holmes, dan tanggung jawab Christopher untuk menemukan pembunuhan karena anjing itu milik tetangganya.

Kata kunci: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in The Night-Time*, psikologi, sindrom asperger, misteri

ABSTRACT

The object of this study is The Curious Incident of the Dog in The Night-Time (2003), a novel that presents a story about a dog murder case that happened on the Mrs. Shears's house lawn and Christopher, an Asperger Syndrome kid, tries to solve the case and disclose the murderer. The engaging topic which became the main discussion in this study is why Christopher with Asperger Syndrome can solve the dog murder incident in this novel. To analyze this topic, the researchers used the descriptive qualitative method. This study found that in favor of Christopher's reasons to solve the dog murder case, Christopher has three reasons namely Christopher's likes animals, especially dogs, Christopher's desire to be a detective like Sherlock Holmes, and Christopher's responsibility to find the murder since the dog belongs to his neighbor.

Keywords: *The Curious Incident of The Dog in The Night-Time*, psychology, asperger syndrome, mystery

A. INTRODUCTION

Asperger Syndrome belongs to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), which is part of neurodevelopment conditions. People with Asperger Syndrome have no difficulty in cognitive development, so they could manage their own life without help from their surroundings. There are four signs of Asperger's: participate in repetitive activities, encounter difficulties in social interaction, have strong opinions, and centering on rules. Asperger's is known as high-functioning autism. The term high-functioning autism means they just need a little support rather than people with autism spectrum.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time is a mystery novel written by Mark Haddon. This novel was first published in 2003 and became the best-selling novel and adaptation into play. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* presents a journey of Christopher who finds a dead dog and gets in trouble with the police because he does not like many things that normal people would not mind: like when the cops grabbed him, he punched him. His father gets him out of the station but he still is not satisfied because he wants to find the one who killed Wellington (the dog) which becomes his biggest mission. He does his detective work but hides the fact from his father since he wants him to stay away from the dog. Christopher has no one to depend on since his mother had died of cancer and he does not like strangers. During his investigation, he also writes a book to find more clues about the murder.

In the previous studies, there have been some papers discussing *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* novel. The paper entitled, "The Issue of Lie in Children's Story: The Study of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* Novel by Mark Haddon" (2017) by Diah Ayuningtyas. This paper intends to examine how the concept of lying is presented in the novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* which is categorized as a children's story. The act-utilitarianism principle of John Stuart Mill's ethical theory is used to support the analysis of the lie problem, and it is combined with the inherent elements of a children's story: plot, characters, setting, and point of view—to determine how the lie problem is presented.

Another research was conducted by Stephen Bauer, M.D., M.P.H., under the title "Asperger Syndrome" (1996). The goal of this study was to dig deeper into Asperger Syndrome and the characteristics that make children so unique and fascinating, in their peculiar, idiosyncratic areas of "special interest".

Therefore, this study aims to reveal the reason why Christopher with Asperger Syndrome can solve the dog murder in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*.

The reason this paper conducts the novel is because it has focused on the act of an Asperger Syndrome kid to disclose the murder case. Besides, explaining the reason why Christopher solved the dog murder incident with his Asperger Syndrome condition is hoped to broaden the understanding of others that people with Asperger Syndrome can do many things and they are also independent.

B. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. Psychology in Literature

Psychology can be used to explore and explain things and phenomena of human existence by applying the principles of psychology in literary work. For some theorists, psychology may have narrowed their perception of reality, improved their observational skills, or given them the freedom to fall into previously unrecognized patterns. Psychology and human life have long been intertwined. People's lives and psychology are inseparable. Psychology offers a key factor that influences people's lives which is motivation. Motivation is the source of everything a person has accomplished (Guerin, 1979). The psychological approach significantly amplifies the meaning of literary works in the most direct way. Examining psychology and its place in literature is the same thing as studying the author's passion. All literary works draw from experiences in some way, and as all writers are also people, we must experience a wide range of emotional issues. In addition, literature is the glance at how people think, act, influence, and connect with others.

2. Asperger Syndrome

Asperger Syndrome is the term used for the mildest and highest functioning or it also known as pervasive developmental disorders. This is like all condition along with the spectrum, it represents by neurologically-based disorder of development, which unknown cause, where there are abnormalities in three aspects of development: social skills and relatedness, language use for communication, specific behavioral and stylistic aspects involving repetitive or perseverative aspects, and a limited but intense variety of interests are all factors.

Besides, the characteristics of people with Asperger Syndrome is their social impairment with highest egocentricity, which is inability to communicate with peers, deficiency to interact with others, badly off appreciation of social signals, and inappropriate comments. Thus, some Asperger's individuals discover that it is simpler to interact with others and communicate than others (Roberson, 2016). They are creative thinkers since they can solve problems well. Many Asperger's individuals exhibit a strong work ethic and are successful in a number of occupations.

C. METHOD

This research using qualitative methods. This method is chosen because descriptive qualitative uses strategies to gather data and seeks to ensure objective analysis of subjective meanings, in this case literary works (Gall & Borg, 2007). The purpose of the qualitative method is to comprehend a study question from a humanistic or idealistic perspective. Although the quantitative technique is more trustworthy because it is based on numerical data and can be replicated by other researchers, it is less flexible. Additionally, a qualitative approach is employed to comprehend the attitudes, interactions, behavior, and interactions of people (Gibson, 2008). Qualitative research findings will be handled and decreased. The information will be displayed as text and discourse. Furthermore, the descriptive approach is research that is presented in a systematic manner using established methodologies and techniques, during which the results are compared to reality.

Numerous procedures are required to acquire data. The first stage was to read and reread *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* to have a better understanding of the story's characters. The second step was to make a detailed list of any key details on Asperger Syndrome. The third step was based on psychoanalysis theory, and the relevant data were gathered. The last step was to select data that supports the issue and classify it based on some characteristics that appear to be associated with defense mechanisms.

Moreover, after data gathering, the data were described, interpreted, and analyzed. The data is described to understand Christopher's reasons to solve the dog murder incident. Then, during the analysis, supporting data is provided to strengthen. As the final step, concluding was conducted.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Christopher's Likes Animals, Especially Dogs

Christopher's intention on animals in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* is displayed as his way to share his love and attention to creatures. In this novel, Christopher is portrayed as an Asperger Syndrome kid. Christopher's condition caused him to have difficulties in social communication. This leads Christopher to care less about others and find it hard to understand the expression and feelings of his surroundings. Besides, Christopher has empathy for animals. Christopher's empathy related to his social interactions has been improved since he eagerly wants to find the dog murderer. Christopher's intention on animals is first shown when he has his own way of thinking. The proof is as follows:

I love dogs. What a dog is thinking can always be known. It has four moods, which are glad, sorrow, cross, and focusing. In addition, dogs are credence and they do not tell lies because they cannot speak. (Haddon, 2003, p. 4)

Based on the proof above, it could be seen that Christopher is liking animals, especially dogs. He loves them based on their sincerity. This is related as the benefit of having a pet affects Asperger Syndrome kids. Carlisle (2013) said that dogs can assist children with autism as a social lubricant. For instance, Asperger Syndrome kids will find difficulty to communicate with others. Then if those kids invite their friends to play with their dogs, the dogs can be a bridge that helps the kids to communicate with each other. The form of communication appears because they perceive less social threat from animals, from whom unconditional love towards kindly humans is typical. If autistic people instead have low empathy, this result ought to be very unlikely.

Moreover, having interaction with animals improves social skills, which they can use with other people. First, it starts that they receive tiny social treats from animals, whose sincere love for people is typical. If autism's instead have under average empathy, this result would be unlikely.

The next evidence presents another quote of Christopher's like dogs. He found a realistic reason for loving dogs. Behind the reason for loving dogs, Christopher must be facing hard times especially when he talks with humans. At some point, he felt different and avoided social interactions. On the contrary, he enjoys spending time with dogs because of its pure heart. It is explained:

I love dogs because they are sincere and loyal, and some of them are smarter and more intriguing than humans. (Haddon, 2003, p. 6)

The data above indicates Christopher's interest in animals, especially dogs. The word "sincere" emphasizes the attitude of dogs that he has seen during his life. Christopher as an Asperger Syndrome kid puts attention to who he interacts with. It affects his ability to communicate with humans. As a result, he feels more comfortable interacting with dogs rather than humans.

Furthermore, the fundamental thing that makes Christopher eager to find out the dog murderer is because of his love of animals, in this case is dog. Since before the dog was murdered Christopher often plays with it and feels comfortable to have a buddy companion like Wellington. Christopher must face the reality that the dog was being killed when he needed an animal to cheer his day up. Rather than life with sad moments, Christopher chose to find the dog murder for showing his sincere heart to Wellington. He knows it will not run smoothly, but he manages to do it properly.

2. Christopher's Desire to be A Detective like Sherlock Holmes

The other reason why Christopher wants to solve the dog murder case is because he wants to be a detective as Sherlock Holmes. As an Asperger Syndrome kid, Christopher spent much of his time in the house and likes to read books. As a result, he found that Sherlock Holmes is a very cool detective who inspires him in solving the investigation. It is described:

Sherlock Holmes for me is such an inspirational detective and I want to be like him. He is smart and capable of solving mysteries. (Haddon, 2003, p. 73)

The passage above contains the meaning of the impact of Sherlock Holmes on Christopher's lives. Sherlock Holmes' role as a detective gives Christopher faith to disclose the dog murder case. Therefore, he tried to take note of clues that he had been found, and had a conversation with the purpose of knowing the murderer of Wellington.

Moreover, when Christopher read *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902), he noticed that Sherlock Holmes is the proper detective who he wants to be. The reason is because Sherlock was highly intelligent and able to solve all the mysteries. It is explained: Sherlock Holmes is awesome, he has the power of his mind at one's pleasure. (Haddon, 2003, p. 73)

From the passage above, it could be seen that Christopher once again adores Sherlock Holmes as his role model. He states that Sherlock has the power of his mind, it emphasizes how smart he was. The presence of Sherlock's ability really affects Christopher's role and desire to help others. He also jumps out from his boundaries to be able to interact with his peers, even neighbors, in order to investigate the dog murder case.

At the beginning of the story, Christopher mentioned that he does not believe in God. The reason is because he believes in something that is real and able to explain science and numerical. This is increasingly strengthened by Sherlock's story that Christopher read. The statement is supported by Christopher understanding about Sherlock Holmes that he finds which is written in the novel:

Sherlock Holmes's mind was busy in fathom some schemes into all cases that he endured. He does not trust in supernatural powers, such as fairy tales and after life, which are ridiculous things. (Haddon, 2003, p. 74)

The data above indicates that either Sherlock and Christopher do not believe in supernatural powers. As an Asperger Syndrome kid, Christopher had above average intelligence which makes him able to think what other kids are not. His ability to organize and categorize things is reliable. In addition, it is a special case for a fifteen year old boy's ability to even know about Sherlock Holmes and have the same way of thinking as an adult or even more advanced.

In addition, the Sherlock Holmes story which Christopher found when he read books really inspired him. As we know that Sherlock Holmes is brilliant and able to solve all the

cases that he handles, Christopher wants to do the same with the Wellington's case. The role of Sherlock Holmes affected how Christopher thinks and acts, which is incredible. Christopher also feels motivated and has the same thought about supernatural powers as Sherlock Holmes did. It could be seen that the presence of someone who is marvelous gives a motivation to Christopher pursuing amazing yet exciting things in life.

2. Christopher's Responsibility to Find the Murderer since the Dog belongs to his Neighbor

Another reason Christopher wants to solve the dog murder case is because the dead dog belongs to his neighbor, Mrs. Shears. As a kid who often plays with Wellington, Christopher was already fond of the dog and felt pity when Wellington left him. Since Christopher is the person who finds the dead body of Wellington in one evening, it makes him wonder about the murderer. Moreover, from this point Christopher decided to find out who killed Wellington. The data shown when Christopher shocked about Wellington being murdered is shown below:

"I never realize I am going to get into trouble. I love Wellington and I went to greet him, but I didn't know he had been murdered." (Haddon, 2003, p. 20)

The data above emphasized the sorrow caused by Wellington's death. The word "never" means Christopher cannot imagine himself to be at that position. He is sad about the fact that he must accept a dog that he cherishes forever. As an Asperger Syndrome kid, animals mean a lot, because they can give big social support both as companions and as service animals (Mueller, 2015). In addition, Christopher intended to find the dog murderer that can be seen in the next data:

I decided to find the person who killed Wellington even though my father has warned me to not get involved in people's business. (Haddon, 2003, p. 28)

Christopher's pure heart leads him to reveal the dog murder case, he wants to know the murderer. On the contrary, his father, Ed Boone, refuses his idea and warns him not to investigate the dog murder. However, Christopher is straight to his belief that he must find out the murderer, even though in his investigation he found some obstacles and struggles, such as hard communication and interaction, or being rejected from people he wanted to ask for.

Considering how big the role of Wellington is in Christopher's life, Christopher steps out of his comfort zone to be able to interact with people, in this case his neighbors. Even though Christopher rarely has a conversation with the neighbors, he still struggles to get more information about the dog murder case. To gather the information, he decided to do interviews with neighbors, the data as follows:

I am going to interview some of my neighbors if they had seen something suspicious on the night Wellington was killed or whether they saw anyone murdered the dog. (Haddon, 2003, p. 34)

From the passage above, it could be seen that Christopher once again wants to do the investigation by interviewing his neighbors. The word “suspicious” refers to something fishy and still wandering by people. Since at the time when Wellington died, Christopher saw a fork garden stabbed the dog and it was questioned by him. This interview makes hope to Christopher that he will get the answer or perhaps clues that help him to connect the dots of the dog murder case that has been written on his notebook.

Furthermore, although Christopher is an Asperger Syndrome kid and having some difficulties in communicating with people, he still tries his best to find out the dog murderer and sacrifices his time to do investigation which is not easy for him. By the end of the story, Christopher finally found who the dog murderer is, and managed to keep it to himself, because he does not want to have affairs with the cops anymore.

D. CONCLUSION

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time is a novel that uses an Asperger Syndrome kid as the main focus to brighten up the story. According to the novel, there is a dog murder case that is still unknown to the murder. Then Christopher tries to disclose the dog murder case and there are some of the reasons why he wanted to do it, namely, Christopher likes animals, especially dogs, second, Christopher’s desire to be a detective like Sherlock Holmes, and lastly is Christopher’s responsibility to find the murderer since it belongs to his neighbor. Hence, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* novel is interesting to analyze regarding the portrayal of an Asperger Syndrome kid. Accordingly, it leads to the result of the analysis which is about an Asperger Syndrome kid who is able to jump out from his boundaries, such as social communication, interaction, and investigate the dog murder case.

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