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## AMBITIONS AS THE EFFECT OF CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCE IN E.L. JAMES'S *FIFTY SHADES OF GREY*

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### *Abstract*

This article aims to analyze the effect of the male character childhood in E.L. James's *Fifty Shades of Grey*. By using psychological approach to analyze the fictitious character and the creative process of the author. Theory of interpretation of dream by Sigmund Freud is applied in order to explain the causes of ambition done by Christian Grey. Grey's ambition is caused by the desire to revenge from his trauma in his childhood. There are three factors that make the character ambitious: The first is when Grey uses his violence (BDSM) to dominate his partner. The second is when Grey want become rich and popular man. The last is Grey's heart emptiness after a woman he loved left him. The first problem is in the field of abnormal psychology in order to differentiate abnormal from normal behavior. In short, Grey's ambitions are caused by a traumatic condition when he was a child. E.L. James explains a sexual lifestyle which is called BDSM (Bondage/ Discipline, Dominance/ Submissive, Sadism/ Masochism). By exposing this lifestyle in her novel, the author wants to shows that BDSM is not an equal relationship between man and woman.

**Keywords:** ambition, BDSM, psychology, relationship

### INTRODUCTION

*Fifty Shades of Grey* is a fiction novel, written by British author, Erika Leonard James, known as E.L. James. The novel becomes bestselling novel in 2011 after published by The Writer's Coffee Shop. It gets seventy millions copies in UK and recorded as the fastest selling paperback. From this popularity, Time Magazine endues her as the world's most influential people.

The novel twitters about love story about an innocent and virginal Anastasia Steele and a successful businessman, Christian Grey, who has a very dark past that leads him to become a dominant and sexual sadism. Ana meets Grey when Ana substitutes her friend Kate Kavanagh to get interview. During the interview, Ana is raptured by Grey's charming and intimidating. Later, they have attracted to each other. Grey manipulates and makes Ana to have contract to make a BDSM sexual style. BDSM (Bondage/Discipline, Dominance/Submissive, Sadism/Masochism) relationship gives power and subjugated other. Ana must fill a form about an agreement if she wants to get involved in such relationship with Grey. Later, Ana finds out of Grey that he has

a very dark past that leads him to what he is right now. Ana finds herself in love with Grey and Grey later realizes that he also loves her and wants more not only having sex.

James' first novel is a familiar work of romance which presents the imbalance sexual relation, money, and emotions. Therefore, this research aimed to give deep understanding about the main character's ambitions especially in three aspects, namely Grey's character portrayed in the novel, Grey's ambition represented in the novel and the author's personal experience represented in the novel.

## METHODS

This research uses the inductive research since the process of collecting data and information which are necessary for this research by reading the written texts. The primary data are information taken from *Fifty Shades of Grey*. The data are the statements and narration related to the psychological conflict, Grey as main characters in the novel and Grey's reaction to overcome the oppression. The information and facts which are taken from books, journals, articles, internet, and previous researches which are related to the topic discussion is called the secondary data.

The data are collected then categorized based on the topic discussion then classified based on the theory of interpretation of dreams and personality by Sigmund Freud. There are some steps to gain a settlement of the problem occurs in the novel. Firstly, I analyze the text and structure of *Fifty Shades of Grey* as the main source. The second process is data validation. After doing analysing the novel, I apply Sigmund Freud's theory of personality which focuses on the author personal experience represented in the novel and the main character in the novel. Finally, the third process is data operation. The concentration is only on the chosen material. Then, the data referring to the research question can be depicted. Afterward, the interpretation of dream is applied to answer the problem about the author personal experience depicted in the novel. After the construction of the male character, then the analysis come to the effect of his ambition toward his social value involving the violence of his sexual intimacy.

The last discussion is about the author's creative process. It will relate the novel and the author's experience. The purpose of this step is to reveal the hidden truth which is inserted by the author through the personal experience of the phenomena. The data of the author biography is needed. Finally, all these process will help me to answer the research problems and I can make a conclusion. The conclusion is based on the research result together with the process mentioned above. The result is a new product of researcher's thought. This observation hopefully can be a reference for next researchers to support their analysis.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### The Male Character In The Novel

In *Fifty Shades of Grey*, Grey character is formed by her mother's past that makes Grey lost control of the property and the women. Grey's mother was a prostitute woman, therefore Grey assume the same women, just judge the world with money. His character portrayed of the sexuality, money, and emotion and he loves to have violence sexual intimacy known as BDSM (bondage, discipline, and sadomasochism). There are some characters of Grey:

#### Having abnormal sexual relationship

The abnormality of human behavior that is also called abnormal behavior had its own meaning. Morkowitz wrote in *General psychology; A Core Text in Human Behavior* that the word abnormal defined in literal meaning as "away from the norm"; as individual's behavior would be characterized as abnormal, if it different sufficiently from behavior of most other people (1963: 283).

It is put down in *Abnormal psychology* that the term abnormal is deviated from the normal in an unfavorable or pathological direction. Belongs to the abnormal group is the individuals who different from the general society measurement such as limited intelligence, unstable emotion, unorganized personality, and character defect, which leads the person having the mess personal lives and social problem. James states that normal person is a person who poses average intelligence, personal ability and having average social adaptability. He becomes superior if he considerably more and abnormal if he posses less than normal (1947: 13-14). Meanwhile Freud (1925) found that internal or psychological forces will motivate the behaviour whereas abnormality is caused by an imbalance in the internal forces that motivate behavior. He believed that the early childhood contributed big in a mental health especially unresolved conscious conflict in the prior of life.

Ana is 22-year old English Literature senior at Washington State University, she becomes the project of desire for 27-year old billionaire CEO, Christian Grey. Grey is someone who enjoys part pacing in consensual sexual activity and enjoys the control and power to inflict pain or humiliation on others for erotic purpose. Grey proposed a contract to Ana about their relationship. Whenever Grey wants a woman, he starts to make a contract because he wants her to be his possession as long as the contract is still running and he can do whatever it says in the contract. He manages to take control of every aspect of Ana's life in every aspect namely how often she eats, with whom she gets along, what she wears and also when she masturbate.

BDSM is an alternative sexual oriented practice where one's sexual simulation or gratification is improved and facilities though the giving and receiving the pain toward dominant and submissive. The term of BDSM can be as a set of activities, sexual orientation or even a lifestyle. Carlström said that it is a creation of emotional energy during humiliation practice through connection and intimacy between the

participants (209) and the rituals can also function as ways to create collective feelings and experiences of ecstasy and euphoria (Westerfelhaus:2007).

Christian Grey is controlled and obsessed with power. He stalks Ana wherever she goes. He uses his unlucky childhood to get Ana's pity. He never tolerates to Ana emotion but he used her emotion to sharp her guilty after disappointing Grey. He comes immediately when Ana gets drunk and takes her to his apartment to show his kind. He treats Ana as if a gentleman but he is doing the dirty trick to get Ana's trustworthly. He always does whatever he wants and admits that he is sexually aroused when she says no to him.

Ana and Grey's relationship is not a romantic consensual. This is a sexually and emotionally abusive relationship described by the author. Christian manipulates and isolates to ensure Anastasia complies to his every irrational desire and wish. He physically threatens her, changes mood so quickly that she is constantly off balance or unsettled, makes her feel that he is the only one who can make her feel special. He limits her to get friend nor get along with her family. He conditions Ana to only rely on him. He is smart to make Ana feel guilty about her feeling and always questions her emotion. Moreover, he puts her in a position where she feels that she can't say no to him, either sexually or emotionally, and placed her position to feel lucky whenever Grey treats her sweetly.

Grey later introduces Ana to his playroom or "Red room of pain" which contains his sex toys and other sexual apparatus. The story continues as Grey discusses the contract with Ana, outlining the specifics of their potential sexual relationship. The contract outlines hard and soft limits as well as safe words to use in the event of Ana's wish to terminate the BDSM activities.

"I have rules, and I want you to comply with them. They are for your benefit and for my pleasure. If you follow these rules to my satisfaction, I shall reward you. If you don't, I shall punish you, and you will learn."

"It's about gaining your trust and your respect, so you'll let me exert my will over you. I will gain a great deal of pleasure, joy even, in your submission. The more you submit, the greater my joy – it's a very simple equation." (James, 2011:18-19)

In *Fifty Shades of Grey*, Ana reveals that she is actually a virgin but Grey was so angry. He said that he is angry to himself because does not treat Ana well so Grey decides to train the basic love nor DSM play and says sweet things to Ana. This is a kind of manipulation and finally traps Ana to follow his game.

You're a sadist?

I'm a dominant.

What is that mean?

It means that I want you to willingly surrender yourself to me.

Why would I do that?

To please me.  
To please you? How?  
I have rules. If you follow them, I'll reward you. If you don't, I'll punish you.  
What can I get out of this?  
Me. (James, 2011:105)

Ana urges Grey to do what the harsh activity that he wants. It seems that Ana liberate herself to break the social norm which restrain the woman sexual desire. She does not say the safe word although Grey whips her six times. She realizes that she cannot accept the humiliation and every whip make her angry and loses herself.

### **Grey's Ambition**

Every person has an ideal in his life to get high achievement. Life will become beautiful if one can reach great success in his life. Everyone must have great earnest attempts to achieve a successful future. In this case, an ambitious person will work hard to make his goals come true, because hard working is something absolute to reach his ambition. Hornby explains ambition as below:

“Something that you want to do or achieve very much. Political/literary/sporting ambitions and the desire or determination to be successful, rich, powerful, etc: motivated by personal ambition.” (200:35)

### **Becoming rich**

The experience of becoming the abandoned child leads Grey becomes an enigmatic CEO of Grey Enterprise Holding, Inc. He gains his higher position and become an extraordinary entrepreneur. He donates much money and becomes the major benefactor of a University where Ana is studying. He becomes a powerful man in business life, not only in the Seattle, but also in the other countries.

“Business is all about people, Miss Steele, and I'm very good at judging people. I know how they tick, what makes them flourish, what doesn't, what inspires them, and how to incentivize them. I employ an exceptional team, and I reward them well.” He pauses and fixes me with his grey stare. “My belief is to achieve success in any scheme one has to make oneself master of that scheme, know it inside and out, know every detail. I work hard, very hard to do that. I make decisions based on logic and facts. I have a natural gut instinct that can spot and nurture a good solid idea and good people. The bottom line is, it's always down to good people.” (James, 2011:11)

Grey achieves a grateful success in his business. He invests his money in telecommunication business, manufacturing in Africa, pulchritude business, farming technologies, and he is a benefactor in University.

### **Becoming popular**

Becoming popular is the basic need of human being because the popularity proves their existence. Many people know him, not only certain people but in every place many people know him. Including in this analysis, Grey is ambitious to be a popular person. He is widely known for his young success. He becomes very popular especially among women because he treats woman as a queen. He loves to treat woman eating and shopping in unlimited budget. He loves her mother's partner and he also a great dancer. He never spend his time playing video games. Furthermore, he always makes sure that his partner finish first. Moreover he is a confident man, who makes many people amazed at his young age.

### **The Author's Creative Process**

Stevens and Steward show that literature and psychology has a strong relationship because people will react based on their understanding (1987:87) so psychology becomes an important tool in literary critic world. It also can be used to understand about characters and their action. It is in line to the author psychological expression. The literary works is a product of mind which is influenced by the storage. The mind storage absorbs the society experiences. Jones (1969:1) says that literature is simply another way we can experience the world around us though the imagination. It is produced though the creative process of imagination of the author. He express his ideas, feeling, and thoughts though his imagination in his works. By reading his works the reader often gets entertainment.

Erika Leonard James or E.L. James is a pen name of Erika Leonard Mitchell. She was born in London, in 1963. She was a mixed-racial child. Tan explained that parents' differing ethnic background may create tension in the child of multicultural background if the parents cannot negotiate and resolve their differences (2012:167). Childhood experience may form James' character becoming a tough woman. She worked hard to be television executive before she wrote the three erotic novels. They are *Fifty Shades of Grey*, *Fifty Shades of Darker*, *Fifty Shades of Feed*. These trilogy novels become a best seller and phenomenon books. She confessed that it was inspired by the Twilight fiction by Stephanie Meyer. Firstly, these novels was an e-books published in James's website. Those were published in 2011. She was inspired by the male and female main character in the Twilight series that are Edward and Bella Swan.

In the first publication, these trilogy novels were entitled as Master of Universe, Master of Universe was more erotic than Meyer's original work which were intended for young and adult audience. These trilogy novels also explain the role masculinity practice. James removed her works from fan-fiction sites and complied them on her own website. The main point of her works is change of names of the two main characters from Bella and Edward to Anastasia Steele and Christian Grey. She has stated that her novel bears remembrance to the material which has inspired these three novels.

"*Fifty Shades of Grey*" the best-selling erotic romance novel which is banned from the public library in several US states because of the widespread opinion that the

novel will harm the reader (Bonomi, 2014:742). E.L. James started posting her own erotic take on the novels on Fanfiction.net an online forum that allows fans to write stories based on the settings and characters in some of their favorite works. "I was inspired by 'Twilight' author Stephanie Meyer. Shortly after reading the books, James says she sat down and decided to write a book of her own. Many readers deemed James' stories too provocative for Fanfiction.net, however, and she was forced to remove some of them from the site. Christian Grey and Anastasia Steele, the two protagonists of "Fifty Shades," are basically Edward Cullen and Bella Swan of "Twilight." In "Fifty Shades," Christian Grey is a mysterious, jaw-droopingly handsome CEO. In "Twilight," Edward Cullen is a mysterious, jaw-droopingly handsome vampire. The female figure in both stories is portrayed pretty but not beautiful. They are intimidated by the men's wealth and good looking. Bella and Ana are clumsy and routinely question what their male counterpart sees in them.

Later, James went on to create her own website –fifty shades.com where she could post more of her writing. Her online serial, originally published under the title "Masters of the Universe," eventually led her to write "Fifty Shades of Grey. In March 2012, James signed a 7-figure contract with Random House's Vintage Books. It is sold ten million copies in six weeks. By the end of 2012, sales hit seventy million copies worldwide. "Fifty Shades" has been sold over a hundred million copies worldwide and launched an entire genre known as "mommy porn." It has been translated into 52 different languages and the long-awaited film adaptation, which premiered on Valentine's Day, scooped up \$94 million on its opening weekend -a Presidents' Day record. Supporters of fan fiction have mixed feelings about the book's overwhelming success. Some feel that fan fiction is not supposed to be profitable, and that James betrayed the community and its values by signing a book deal with such a major publisher. But it does not decrease the popularity of the novel even it is adapted into film in the same title and crowned as the box office film.

## **CONCLUSION**

Christian Grey is portrayed as loving, but obsessive, he likes romantic relationships called BDSM, with him being the dominant. He initially scares Ana when he shows "Red Room" but he succeed to raise Ana curiosity to get over her limit. He begins to have a relationship with Ana, but the two fall out because Grey punishes Ana too severely at the end book.

Grey has a bad past experience, he was orphaned when his drug dealing mother committed suicide when he was only four. He is neglected before he was adopted by Dr Grace Trevelyan Grey. He was introduced to the BDSM lifestyle by one of his mother's friend, Elena when he was fifteen. They practice a dominant/ submissive relationship for six years, until Elena's husband found out. Ana is his sixteen BDSM partner.

E.L. James exposed BDSM is to illustrate Grey's characters. Since sex might be the only way for Grey to let out all of his emotions and to get sympathy by using his

childhood misery. It seems that James gives a way to other woman to get sex fantasy. By exploring the kind of sexual lifestyle done by the male main character called BDSM (Bondage/Discipline, Dominance/Submissive, Sadism/Masochism) lifestyle. By exposing BDSM lifestyle in her novel, the author also want to shows the woman fantasies but actually James shows that BDSM lifestyle is humiliate woman and give a strong emotional pressure.

E.L James creates Fifty Shades of Grey to escape from the social norms boundaries. She confessed that she composed her novel as a fan fiction from the Twilight. In this genre, the writer is free to explore her fantasy and especially about sex. She wants to break the myth which the society considered woman as a pure and without desire. Woman is forbidden to show her sexual desire. So by focusing on BDSM, it seems that James uses this novel as her escapism to pour her sex imagination. As the western woman, she wants to liberate her fantasy about the wild sex. Her religion and social experiences convince her that the respectful relationship between man and woman is a good way for everlasting relationship.

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