# IDENTITY CRISIS EXPERIENCED BY BEN DAY IN DARK PLACES NOVEL

## **THESIS**



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#### ABSTRACT

Safitri, N. A. (2021). *Identity Crisis Experienced by Ben Dy in Dark Places Novel.*English Department, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Advisor: Dr. Wahju Kusumajanti, M. Hum.

**Keywords:** adolescence, identity crisis, identity status.

This research focused on the second main character named Ben Day in Gillian Flynn's *Dark Places*. There are two research questions formulated in this research: 1) How is the identity crisis of Ben Day depicted in *Dark Places* novel? 2) What are the causes of the identity crisis experienced by Ben Day in *Dark Places* novel?

The research method used was descriptive qualitative. This data collection was based on a book entitled *Dark Places* by Gillian Flynn. In order to answer the objectives, the researcher used Erikson's fifth psychosocial development stages theory and Marcia's identity status theory to support and analyze the data.

These are the findings of this research: 1) The researcher found that some of Ben's characterizations are suitable with identity crisis characteristics. The identity crisis shown by Ben was irritable, self-hating, self-hurting, feeling useless. 2) The causes of Ben's identity crisis were divorced parents, bullying, uncomfortable home surrounding, and beginning new relationships.

#### **ABSTRAK**

Safitri, N. A. (2021). *Krisis Identitas yang Dialami Ben Day dalam Novel Dark Places*. Program Studi Sastra Inggris, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Pembimbing: Dr. Wahju Kusumajanti, M. Hum.

Kata kunci: masa remaja, krisis identitas, status identitas.

Penelitian ini difokuskan pada karakter utama kedua bernama Ben Day di novel *Dark Places* oleh Gillian Flynn. Terdapat tiga pertanyaan yang dirumuskan dalam penelitian ini: 1) Bagaimana gambaran krisis identitas Ben Day dalam Novel *Dark Places*? 2) Apa penyebab krisis identitas yang dialami Ben Day dalam Novel *Dark Places*?

Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Pengumpulan data didasarkan pada buku berjudul *Dark Places* karya Gillian Flynn. Untuk menjawab pertanyaan tersebut, peneliti menggunakan teori tahap perkembangan psikososial kelima milik Erikson dan teori status identitas milik Marcia untuk mendukung dan menganalisis data.

Berikut adalah temuan-temuan dari penelitian ini: 1) peneliti menemukan bahwa beberapa penokohan Ben sesuai dengan karakteristik krisis identitas. Krisis identitas yang ditunjukkan oleh Ben adalah pemarah, membenci diri sendiri, menyakiti diri sendiri, merasa tidak berguna. 2) Penyebab krisis identitas Ben adalah perceraian orang tua, perundungan, lingkungan rumah yang tidak nyaman, dan memulai hubungan baru.

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#### **CHAPTER I**

#### INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Study

Identity crisis is a feeling where people are in a role in life and when people do not know the 'real them.' Theorist Erikson coined the word 'identity crisis' and argued that it was one of the most significant conflicts people face in life. The identity crisis according to Erikson, is a period of intense study and discovery of various ways of looking at oneself (Cherry, 2021).

People of any age can experience an identity crisis, but people in adolescence year most likely to experience it. Adolescence is a transitional period in the span of human life, connecting childhood with adulthood. Growing up is never easy. Santrock (2010, p. 352) also argues that adolescence, though, is not the best seen as a time of rebellion, crisis, pathology, and deviance. A much more accurate view of adolescence describes it as a time for assessment, decision-making, engagement, and a place in the world. Much of today's youth's issues are not with the young themselves. Adolescents need access to various meaningful resources and long-term help from adults who care for them profoundly.

Environmental or social factors greatly influence the development during adolescence. During this period, adolescents experience many interactions with parents and friends and have many new experiences and new developmental tasks. Therefore, it is social interaction that can determine the failure of adolescents to find their identity. Specifically, according to Santrock (2010, p. 383), the causes

of an identity crisis during adolescence can vary, including career, political, religious, relationship, achievement, sexual, cultural, interests, personality, and physical problems experienced by people.

The importance of addressing any problems of identity crisis during the adolescent period is emphasized by the consequences of an identity crisis, which can affect the next stage of psychosocial growth. Adolescents who do not resolve their identity crisis will reach a stage known as identity repudiation. It is a state in which they do not fully comprehend who they are and have difficulty determining what they want. Furthermore, adolescents who cannot resolve their identity dilemma effectively are at risk of developing a negative identity. Many who are involved in negative identity can threaten society because they can do something adverse, like criminalities, removing themselves from society, and doing any other risky behaviors (Larasati, 2017, p. 4).

There are some literary works, especially in novels, where identity crisis started from the explanation mentioned above. One of them is *Dark Places* by Gillian Flynn. This novel tells the story of the Day family, consisting of 5 people named Pattie, Ben, Michelle, Debby, and Libby Day, who were victims of a sadistic slaughter in one night. All of them got killed except Ben and Libby. The researcher paid more attention to Ben Day that plays an important role and has several flashback stories about himself that are detailed. The researcher focused on Ben's story, not Libby's. The researcher decided to choose Gillian Flynn's *Dark Places* because of her interest in one of the characters in this novel, Ben Day. Ben had a lot of pressure and social problems in his adolescent years to deal with,

whether from his family, girlfriend, or close friends. From that case, Ben Day is starting to show an identity crisis.

The findings of this study are expected to raise awareness of the problem of adolescent's identity crisis. If readers come into contact with adolescents, they will know how to deal with them and what to avoid. It can also be knowledge that parents with adolescent children can put into practice so that they know how to help and assist their children in achieving their goals.

There have been several studies that examined Gillian Flynn's *Dark Places*. There is research by Whenny Trijayanti (2016). The study raises the issue of anxiety that is suffered by one of the characters in the *Dark Places*. The second is Andhika Wahyu Rustamaji (2020). This study examined the woman's struggle. The third is Sandi Rodan (2018). This study examined the impact of the psychological childhood trauma that affects the main character in the childhood to adult using the psychoanalysis approach. The fourth is Susan Panca Lina (2020). This study examined Toni Morisson's *The Bluest Eye* and focused on the identity crisis of Pecola.

However, most of the previous studies discussed the problem faced by the main character, Libby. This present study is different from the previous research with the same novel title because the researcher used the theory of identity crisis to analyze Ben Day, who is not the first main character, and none of the previous studies research this topic.

#### 1.2 Research Problem

This study has the intention to answer two questions, those are:

- 1. How is the identity crisis of Ben Day depicted in *Dark Places* Novel?
- 2. What are the causes of the identity crisis experienced by Ben Day in *Dark Places* Novel?

## 1.3 Significance of the Study

Theoretically, this research provides some important information to increase the reader's understanding of identity crisis in Erikson's fifth stage of psychosocial development, identity versus role confusion, which occurs in adolescence years 12 to 18. This research also provides some information about Marcia's identity status. With some new information provided in this research, the researcher hopes that new ideas will emerge and help someone face and control the identity crisis phase. The researcher also hopes that this research can be helpful as a reference for other scientific writing.

Practically, the findings of this research are expected to increase awareness of the problem of identity crisis that adolescents suffer. So that if readers are near adolescents, they can find out how to deal with and what to avoid when facing adolescents. It can also be a knowledge that can be practiced by parents who have teenage children so that they know how to help and assist their children to achieve their identity. So that people around the adolescents can also support them not to commit or experience psychological distortions such as identity crisis. They may

also assist teenagers in making appropriate and constructive observations and explorations.

## 1.4 Scope and Limitation

There are scope and limitations in this research to keep the discussion focused on the study's objective. The scope is *Dark Places* novel by Gillian Flynn. The limitation is Ben Day's characterization. The researcher only focused on looking for Ben Day's characterization through the words of his family described by the author and his description in the novel to find his behavior that leads to an identity crisis, also analyzing the dominant identity status, and state the causes of identity crisis.

## 1.5 Method of the Study

This chapter covered the research design, data sources, data collection, and data analysis. The method used in this study will be discussed in greater detail below.

## 1.5.1 Research Design

This research was library research that concerns the literary text of *Dark Places* novel by Gillian Flynn. The researcher used a descriptive qualitative analysis as a method. This method relied on the researcher's interpretation and explanation of the data collected. This method aided the researcher in gaining a thorough and detailed understanding of the data.

#### 1.5.2 Data Source

There were two data sources in this study, the primary and additional data source. The main data source of this study is *Dark Places* novel written by Gillian Flynn, and the additional data source are journals, books, previous studies related to the data or issue.

#### 1.5.3 Data Collection

There are several ways that the researcher used to collect the data:

- 1. The researcher read *Dark Places* novel twice to get a great understanding.
- 2. The researcher collected data in quotations that relevant to the research problem about Ben's identity crisis. The quotations were in the form of phrases, sentences, or dialogues.
- 3. The researcher grouped the data into Ben's identity crisis portrayal, Ben's identity status, and Ben's identity crisis causes.
- **4.** The researcher also collected data from journals, articles, and books that supported data analysis.
- 5. The researcher related references from the secondary data source as theory and other information to support the analysis.

## 1.5.4 Data Analysis

There were several steps that the researcher used in presenting the analysis:

- The researcher divided the discussion into three significant issues, i.e.,
   Ben's identity crisis, Ben's identity status, and Ben's identity crisis causes.
- 2. The researcher explained about Ben's attitude that reflected as an adolescent with an identity crisis, the researcher also analyzed Ben's identity status in the first discussion. and then the researcher explained about several factors that triggered Ben's identity crisis in the second discussion.
- 3. The researcher interpreted the results through the analysis
- 4. The researcher concluded the discussion.

#### **CHAPTER II**

#### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study aims to find out the characteristics of one of the characters in the *Dark Places* novel by Gillian Flynn, Ben Day, which refers to the identity crisis and examines further the causes of Ben's identity crisis. Also, to find out which identity status dominates Ben's identity crisis. This chapter will include the theories and foundation of the research in the form of background information to support the results of this study.

## 2.1 Psychology and Literature

The word psyche is derived from the Greek words psyche means soul, and logos means knowledge. It means that psychology involves the scientific knowledge of behavior, personality, and mental process. The psychology of literature reveals a particular psychological dimension of the fictional work of characters, particularly the novels.

Literature about readers (audience psychology) is the study of psychology means the study of psychological activity that views literary works. Wellek and Warren (1956, p. 81) said that with academic psychology, we could refer to the author's psychic study, as a type and as a person in the study of creative processes, or the study of psychological styles and laws that exist in literary works, or finally their impact.

Psychology and literature are no different because psychology can examine literary functions (Papalia, 1985, p. 4). However, the concern of the

study is different in psychology and literature. Psychological elements manifest as characters in drama or prose in literary plays perceived as psychological phenomena (Endraswara, 2003, p. 96). Psychology deals with human beings in conflict with one another, and literature depicts and writes and reads these individuals. Human psychology is inordinately nuanced and can be approached in several ways (Purnama, 2015, p. 9). From those statements, the readers can understand that psychology and literature have a close relationship to each other since the fictional or literary work uses real life to deal with the imagination of human beings, such as their difficulties and the state of life, to create the character of the story in it. Therefore, psychoanalysis is used to study human behavior.

## 2.2 Erikson's Concept of Identity

Erik Erikson is interested in psychosocial theory, which examines and learns how social factors such as society, community, and history affect an individual's identity. Furthermore, he was motivated to learn more about the relationship between an individual's identity and social circumstances because he had personal experiences with social problems that influenced the formation of his identity. His interest in a more profound analysis of the issue of human identity made him successful in writing several books including *Society* (1963), *The Life Cycle Completed* (1982), *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (1968), and *Identity and the Life Cycle* (1959), Childhood. These books talk about how human identity developed.

Erikson (1980, p. 109) considers identity a collection of distinguishing characteristics or human individuality cultivated through social interaction. As an ego-psychologist, Erikson's discussion of identity leads him to conclude that there is ego identity. Ego identity is described as a constant sense of sameness within oneself selfsameness and the ability to communicate with and give meaning to others in one's immediate community in a genuine way (Erikson, 1980, p. 94).

Erikson also argued in "The Problem of Ego-Identity" *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* (1956, p. 66) that social circumstances play a significant role in forming a long-term pattern of "inner identification." In other words, how a person performs his or her position in society and how society identifies the individual can have a significant impact on how an individual develops their true sense of self. Furthermore, identity can be acquired, created, and evolved depending on one's position in a given social situation and how one communicates with others. In conclusion, Erikson's concept of identity is how social circumstances affect the discovery of a person's identity.

## 2.3 Erikson's Psychosocial Development

There are eight stages of psychosocial or human development to build the personality. Eight stages of human development are also known as "eight stages of man." Every single stage characterized by identity development starts from childhood. The children in adolescence will experience the conflict that generates a crisis called an identity crisis that occurs when facing their lives. Erikson (1978, p. 27) said that "All the earlier conflicts can, therefore, be seen to hit and be

renewed at the level of the last, because they are at each point in between —but still renewed in terms of the conflict that controlled that point." Therefore, social development follows the eight stages. Those eight stages are:

Age		Conflict	Important	Outcome
			Events	
<b>Infancy</b> (birth	to 18	Trust vs. Mistrust	Feeding	Норе
months)	1			
Early childhoo	<b>od</b> (2 to 3	Autonomy vs. Shame	Toilet	Will
years)		and Doubt	Training	
<b>Preschool</b> (3 to	5 years)	In <mark>itia</mark> tive vs. Guilt	Exploration	Purpose
School Age (6 years)	to 11	Industry vs. Inferiority	School	Confidence
Adolescence (1	12 to 18	Identity vs. Role	Social	Fidelity
years)		Confusion	Relationships	
Young Adulth	ood (19	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Relationships	Love
to 40 years)				
Middle Adulthood (40		Generativity vs.	Work and	Care
to 65 years)		Stagnation	Parenthood	
Maturity (65 to death)		Ego Integrity vs.	Reflection on	Wisdom
		Despair	Life	

From Erikson's eight psychosocial development listed in the table above, the researcher only focused on discussing one stage, the fifth stage, identity versus

role confusion. The researcher only focused on the fifth stage because the character analyzed in this research are a teenager aged 15, which means he is currently in stage five, adolescence. Here is an understanding of identity versus role confusion:

## 2.3.1 Identity versus role confusion

This stage occurs at the age of puberty, around 12-18 years of age. At this point, adolescence seeks a sense of self and personal identity through an intensive exploration of their interests, behaviors, and values. Adolescents discover who they are, what they want to be, and what others expect of them. They begin to consider their future career and their relationships with peers in their family, school, and community. Since adolescents experiencing psychosocial tension want to explore and discover their true sense of identity and morality, it is critical to always provide a supportive atmosphere with ongoing guidance (Santrock, 2010, p. 23).

In the table above, it is written that the critical event of the identity versus role confusion stage is a social relationship. In *Dark Places* novel, Ben was 15 years old, which means he was currently on this stage, and indeed he had many relationships with some people at this age. In this research, the researcher described how Ben interacted with people and found out whether Ben managed to get the goal from this stage or vice versa.

If Ben managed to find himself at this stage, he would get a good outcome or goal, namely fidelity. However, on the contrary, failure to find an identity

could lead to uncertainty, depression, and an identity crisis. Erikson also put forward a theory related to an identity crisis in response to a person's failure to pass through this stage.

## 2.4 Erikson's Identity Crisis

Erikson identified identity as a subjective sense and the measurable quality of personal equality and continuity, coupled with a particular belief in the sameness and continuity of the everyday world image. As a characteristic of an unself-conscious life, this can be glorified in a young person who has found himself in the way he finds his group. When someone is unsure about who he is and what he does in life, he has an identity crisis.

At this time of life, a person asks himself questions like, "Who am I?" Or "What do I like about it?" They try to create a common identity, an awareness of their unique characteristics, and what is really of central importance to them. Erikson claims that the most critical period happens at the age of puberty. The beginning of this phase is signaled by a sudden increase in the rate of physical growth (Baron, 1995, p. 337). Throughout the psychosocial development of Erikson, the occurrence of an identity crisis happens during adolescence years in which individuals are grappling with identity and role uncertainty.

The researcher connected the findings on how Ben interacted socially with his surroundings previously and then described whether or how Ben's attitudes or characterization indicated that he was experiencing an identity crisis.

## 2.4.1 Symptoms of Identity Crisis

As Erikson says, identity is an illustration of who a person is, about people in general, and the attribute of a person who will appropriately portray itself. To be more specific, identity crisis contains the following characteristics, according to Silitonga and Ambarita (2020, p. 31).

The first is role confusion. This stage may occur throughout adolescence. However, people in adulthood may experience similar feelings based on their own experiences. People are left wondering who they are and what they can be as a result of role uncertainty. People will feel insecure about their lives as a result of the query. People have many personal struggles as they try to figure out who they are and their place in society.

The second is to feel isolated. In this stage, when people are going through an identity crisis, they are terrified of rejections such as being turned down for jobs or having the end of their relationship. They are used to suffering, and for some of us, rejection is so terrible that our egos can no longer endure it.

The third is doubtful. At this point, people will be asking for themselves due to an identity crisis. Is it possible for me to make a difference in my life? That question will cause people to doubt themselves, and as a result, they will be unable to live a comfortable existence both inside and outside of their homes.

People be searching for more meaning, reason, or passion in their life.

The following are more specific characteristics of adolescents experiencing an identity crisis. It usually turns into several negative things that

have an impact on mistreatment. Some of them are irritable, self-harm, feeling useless and powerless. Here is the definition:

#### a. Irritable

Merriam Webster dictionary defines irritable as "capable of getting irritated: such as quickly exasperated or excited, as well as receptive to stimuli." Irritability is frequently regarded as a personality feature. It is a psychological trait defined by a proclivity to become enraged and respond to minor provocation and arguments (Caprara et al., 1985). Anger, on the other hand, is an emotional state, whereas reactive aggressiveness is a behavior.

#### b. Self-hatred

Inadequacy, guilt, and low self-esteem are all symptoms of self-hatred.

People may continuously compare themselves to others, focusing on the negative while overlooking the positive and believing that they will never be good enough.

However, everyone has worth and value—as well as the ability to love themselves. ("Self-Hatred", 2021).

### c. Self-harm

Self-harm, also known as self-mutilation, is the intentional infliction of pain and damage on one's own body. Cutting, burning, scratching, and other forms of external injury are the most common forms of self-harm; but, it can also relate to internal or emotional harm, such as drinking toxic amounts of alcohol or drugs or engaging in risky sex. ("Self-Harm", 2021).

## d. Feeling useless

Useless, according to Collins Dictionary, is having no practical use or advantage. So, if someone feels useless, they feel bad because they cannot help someone or achieve anything (Collins, n.d.).

#### e. Powerless

The expectation that people's behaviors will not produce the consequences or reinforcements they desire is referred to as powerlessness. Powerlessness can also be defined as a lack of strength or power. Helpless people may feel out of control and have no way of regaining control. Feeling out of control is followed by a lack of power to direct my environment. ("Powerless", 2021).

## 2.4.2 The Causes of Identity Crisis

There are many explanations why identity crisis exists, according to Erik Erikson in Silitonga and Ambarita (2020, p. 32), including:

The first is individual psychology determining whether they are imperfect creatures and of no value in the universe. The second is identity crisis occurs during adolescence because it is the time for people to become aware of themselves in the present and their status or place in social life at the time or in the future.

The third is that people's perceptions of how their family handles them are influenced by parental values. If their families mistreat them, they will have less

confidence and carelessness and wonder what they should do with their lives, affecting their mind, spirit, and social characteristics.

The fourth is life's unfortunate events. People's identities and questions about themselves may be influenced by a traumatic event or something that makes them scared of the past. Whether or not they are worthy of the universe. Divorce, the transition from adolescence to adulthood, being alone due to an accident, how society handled them, and so on are all examples of negative experiences.

## 2.4.3 The Impacts of Identity Crisis

The following are some of the effects of the quest for self-identity crisis, according to Erik Erikson in Silitonga and Ambarita (2020, p. 32).

The first is that they still believe that they are worthless in this universe and do not deserve any opportunities. The second is that they have less faith in themselves and are unsure about what to do next in life, which causes them to be confused. The third is losing self-confidence in doing or starting a new thing or even the hobbies that they like. The fourth is that they have become isolated due to being mistreated by the social or by the people around them, including their families.

The researcher developed her research from Ben's identity crisis using Erikson's theory by continuing to another theory by James Marcia. Erikson's initial idea was built on by a researcher named James Marcia. According to Marcia and his colleagues, the balance between identification and confusion resides in committing to a particular identity. Marcia devised an interview method

for assessing identity that considers three aspects of functioning: occupational role, beliefs and values, and sexuality. He also defined four distinct identity statuses that people progress through as their identities evolve.

## 2.5 James Marcia's Identity Statuses

The stages of the life cycle often have a list of benefits achieved by completing the phases. The virtues acquired during adolescence are identification and competence for the fifth stage, which is especially appropriate for this study. In Erikson's definition, identity plays a part for the first time between 13 and 19. He portrays late adolescence as a crucial time in one's life because it marks the transition from childhood to adulthood. It is the first time societal and teenage standards collide, forcing the person to commit to a career and ideologies. Erikson's works and thoughts attracted many other scientists. Some continued Erikson's thoughts, one of which was James Marcia, who came out with his identity status theory.

James Marcia developed his theory about adolescent identity formation on Erikson's basic concept of the life cycle. He reiterates that identities are often established in the light of social and interpersonal relationships (Marcia, 2002, p. 199). He also exaggerates the role of adults in adolescent identity formation as a "position of generativity, of caring for, of assisting in the 'grow'" of their society (Marcia, 2002, p. 199). As a result, it is the adult's responsibility to provide a rich atmosphere for adolescents to allow this capacity to 'grow' as an individual.

The four identity statuses are at the heart of Marcia's definition of teenage identity. Two criteria characterize the individual's personal growth: exploration and commitment, as a determiner to find a sense of identity. Exploration in this context refers to the active quest for alternative lifestyles, philosophies, and so on. In contrast, engagement refers to the demonstrated investment in important areas of life such as career choices, religious and political ideologies, and relationship ideas, including sexuality, gender roles, etc. (Marcia & Josselson, 2013, p. 619). Adolescents will enter four states of identity formation during their quest for identity. According to Marcia, they are identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achievements.

	Identity	<u>Identity</u>	Identity	Identity
	Diffusion	Foreclosure	Moratorium	Achievement
Exploration	X	X	V	V
Commitment	X	<b>√</b>	X	V

## 2.5.1 Identity Diffusion

The term "identity diffusion status" refers to teenagers who have not committed to or explored alternate identities. Individuals in the identity diffusion stage do not participate in self-exploration or make firm commitments (Kroger and Marcia, 2011, p. 35). Diffusions come in various forms, but they all have a short or non-existent exploratory time and the inability to make firm commitments. Diffusions can appear incredibly versatile, charming, and infinitely adaptable at

their best. Diffusions are confused and isolated at their worst, filled with feelings of emptiness and meaninglessness. (Kroger & Marcia, 2011, p. 35).

People with identity diffusion may or may not have gone through a crisis period; his defining characteristic is a lack of commitment. They have not settled on a profession and are not concerned about it. Even though they might discuss a chosen profession, they appear to have little understanding of its daily routine and give the impression that the option could be quickly abandoned if better opportunities occur elsewhere. They are either uninterested in ideological debates or adopt a smorgasbord approach. Each viewpoint seems equally valid, and they are willing to sample from each (Marcia, 1966, p. 551).

## 2.5.2 Identity Foreclosure

Adolescents in the foreclosure did agency status have made commitments to those personalities, but only after a limited amount of experimentation (Crocetti *et al.*, 2013, p. 11). A closer look at their identity reveals a reluctance to pursue alternate identities sincerely. In a foreclosed identity situation, a person is more likely to choose an identity and profession based on chance (Luyckx *et al.*, 2010, 343). As Kroger & Marcia (2011, p. 35) said, foreclosures may appear to be as powerful and self-directed as successes. Their position, however, has a brittleness to it and thus an underlying fragility. They must retain their defensive positions and refute or misinterpret disconfirming details due to their difficulty in seriously considering alternatives.

A foreclosure subject is characterized by the fact that he or she has never been through a crisis but expresses dedication. It is difficult to say where their parents' aspirations for them end and where their begin. Their personality has a certain rigidity; one gets the impression that if they were put in a situation where parental ideals were nonfunctional, they would feel highly threatened (Marcia, 1966, p. 552).

### 2.5.3 Identity Moratorium

Adolescents with a moratorium identification status go through a period of reflection and discovery. During this period of contemplation, they have minimal commitments to identity and are often conflicted between multiple identities to which they could make commitments. Moratoriums are trying to figure out who they are. They are vivacious, engaging, conflicted, and sometimes exhausting to be around. Moratoriums are frequently extraordinarily morally sensitive (Kroger & Marcia, 2011, 35).

The moratorium subject is in a state of crisis. They are preoccupied with issues that are often described as an adolescent. Even though their parent's desires are still vital to them, they attempt to strike a balance between them, society's demands, and their abilities (Marcia, 1966, p. 552). The process of reflection in a moratorium is likely to result in one of two outcomes. The first is that once a secure life commitment has been chosen, the individual moves on from a moratorium status (Adams *et al.*, 2006, p. 84), or the second is that the person

remains paralyzed in their decision on which identity to consent to, resulting in a never-ending reflective phase (Kroger & Marcia, 2011, p. 34).

## 2.5.4 Identity Achievement

Adolescents who have gained identification status are highly committed to their choices. The transition to identity achieved status, which usually occurs after a time of self-examination, is one cause of their high degree of commitment (Beronsky *et al.*, 2013, p. 895). These people have a clear idea of what they want to do with their lives, and their path is always unaffected by external forces or naturally occurring obstacles. Although they maintain versatility, they are easily influenced by external forces and pressures in their chosen life paths. Even if they face challenges, one gets the impression that they will stick to their plans until doing so becomes impractical (Kroger & Marcia, 2011, p. 35).

A sense of achievement in one's personality subject has been through a time of crisis and is dedicated to a particular profession and philosophy. Even though their ultimate choice could be a variation of parental desires, they have seriously considered many career options and decided on their terms. In terms of ideology, they seem to have reevaluated previous views and arrived at a resolution that allows them to act freely (Marcia, 1966, p. 552).

Identity crisis, according to Marcia, help people transition from one status to another. People, on the other hand, do not necessarily experience each of the above statuses. So, the researcher only focused on looking for what status fit Ben's identity crisis.

First of all, the researcher looked for Ben's characterization. After found Ben's characteristics, the researcher selected and only wrote the characteristics of Ben, which showed a sign that he was experiencing an identity crisis in his teens using Erikson's theory of psychosocial development stages, precisely the 5th stage named identity versus role confusion. The researcher also looked for Ben's identity status using Marcia's theory of identity status, which response to Erikson's theory mentioned above. Then, looking for the cause of the identity crisis experienced by Ben is based on Erikson. The researcher applied all the theories in chapter 2 because the theories mentioned are the most relevant for analyzing the identity crisis in adolescents and their identity status compared to the others.

#### **CHAPTER III**

#### **ANALYSIS**

This chapter discussed the identity crisis experienced by Ben Day. The researcher analyzed it using Psychosocial Development theory by Erikson and focused on the fifth stage, identity versus role confusion, then continued the analysis using identity status theory by James Marcia. Therefore, there were three significant discussions: Ben's identity crisis, Ben's identity crisis causes, and Ben's identity status. In order to make this discussion understood, the researcher would provide Ben's resume in his adolescent age.

Dark Places by Gillian Flynn tells the story of the Day family in Kansas City who was murdered simultaneously and brutally by a killer. The Day family consists of Patty as a mother, Ben was the eldest son, and Ben's three younger sisters, Michelle, Debby, and Libby. The killer was hired by Ben's mother to kill herself to get their insurance out because they were a low-income family.

On the night of the murders on January 3, 1985, at 2 a.m., when the killer executed Patty, the noise woke the other children, and an out-of-scene murder occurred. Michelle and Debby were killed. Libby survived because she ran out of Patty's bedroom window and hid. While Ben who saw that incident, failed to save the other sisters. At that time, Libby was only seven years old, she did not see anything at that time, but she testified to the police that Ben killed her family because she knew only Ben was left in the house.

The storyline in this novel is a mixed plot. Thirty years after the murder, someone asked Libby to prove Ben's innocence, but at first, Libby refused because she already believed Ben was the murderer. Libby may believe that Ben was the murderer of her family because at his 15 years old, he was a weird person, and he showed a lot of negative traits. Unwittingly, Ben's behavior at the age of 15 was only the characteristics of a teenager facing an identity crisis, but no one in his family recognized and could help. Ben's behavior had nothing to do with the murder incident.

Ben was a loner at the age of 15 and only had two close friends, the Muehlers brothers. He worked part-time as a janitor at his school. However, Ben changed when he met a girl who was his girlfriend, 18 years old Diondra. From Diondra, he also met Diondra's cousin, Trey. Since Ben knew Diondra, his life has changed quite a bit. Supported by the state of the house that makes Ben unhappy, he has another place to play, but it leads to more negative things.

From Trey and Diondra, Ben knew and joined a gang belonging to Trey, which of course, contained teenagers who were older than him. The gang usually gathers in a warehouse every day. Ben constantly felt different social interactions considering he did not have that many friends. Trey taught Ben about satan sacrifice, which leads him to kill random animals and introduce him to narcotics. At the same time, Diondra taught Ben about alcohol and sex. The most obvious thing here is the lack of a family role in interacting with sensitive and easily influenced adolescents. So that Ben felt more free and comfortable outside

without thinking about right or wrong. So that nothing and no one help him to develop his identity, instead he stuck in an identity crisis.

### 3.1 Ben's Identity Crisis

The researcher focused on observing Ben's identity crisis in the flashback of 1985. At that time Ben was still 15 years old where it was a crucial period because he was facing a stage called identity versus role confusion. At this stage, if adolescents failed in getting their goals, fidelity, they will face a problem called identity crisis. Identity crisis is a feeling where adolescents are in role in life, and do not know the 'real them'. The researcher explained about Ben's identity crisis in the form of Ben's questioning about his role in the life. The researcher could not give the impacts towards his next psychological stage because of the limitations of Ben's story, only about his 15th, while to find out about the impact toward his next psychological stage, he should be upper 18th. However, this discussion explained about the impacts towards his own personality, for instance, him being emotionally unstable, insecure, self-reject, and etcetera.

#### 3.1.1 Irritable

The first identity crisis showed by Ben is that he looked like an irritable person. According to Merriam Webster dictionary, Irritable is "capable of getting irritated: such as quickly exasperated or excited, as well as receptive to stimuli." The researcher found several quotations that prove that Ben is irritable in dealing with something, even if it is a minor one.

Since Ben Day was the only boy in the Day family home, in his perspective, he needed some different treatment from his three little sisters. In Ben's not really big house, there are only two landlines, one in the kitchen and the other in Ben's room. However, the telephone cord is one wire that connects to all phones in the house, so when one person calls on one phone, the other person can listen to the conversation on the other phone. At that time, Ben suddenly wanted much privacy in his life, he wanted some privacy because he was getting into adulthood phase, he started to get close to a girl, and he did not want all the conversations with his girl to be heard by his mother or younger sisters, so one day he asked his mother to install an extension cable so that he had his phone line

He'd wanted an extension of his own—half his schoolmates, he swore, had their own listings in the phone book. They were called Children's Lines. She'd laughed and then got pissed because **he got pissed at her for laughing**. (Seriously, a children's phone line? How spoiled were these kids?). (Flynn, 2009, p. 20)

In the sentence above, when her mother, Patty, heard Ben's request, her reaction was to chuckle because she found Ben's request funny. Ben and his mother had very minimal communication, so there was no bonding between them. Almost all of his mother's actions made Ben angry. So, Ben's response to his mother's attitude is unpredictable, 'he got pissed at her for laughing' shows that his mother's laughter angers him. Ben was angry at such a simple thing. He felt like being ridiculed. Even though his mother did not mean that because his mother was always looking for ways to make him respond well. She tried to break the ice with a laugh, but Ben always assumed differently.

Ben is also described as an irritable person by another character, Libby. In Libby's thirties, she went on a mission to find her family's murderer. She returned to the old house once and went into Ben's bedroom, and she found something, as mentioned in the quotation:

I picture it, back home, putting it on for Picture day, practicing in the mirror how he'd smile. In September 1984, he was still wearing shirts my mom bought him, and by January, he was **an angry, black-haired kid** accused of murder. (Flynn, 2009, p.191)

Libby was looking through Ben's 1984-1985 yearbook to find Ben's girlfriend,
Diondra, to get new information about Ben, but unfortunately, Libby could not
find her. However, she found Ben's old photo at that time and remembered the day
Ben was going to take the yearbook photo shoot in the past years before the
murder. Ben practicing smile since Ben did not know how to smile. Ben's way of
practicing smile in front of the mirror was full of effort because he was a cold
person, and nothing could make him smile in his life at that time. He was terrible.
Libby could see Ben's smile in the photo, but all she could remember was her
brother, who could only be angry and acted rebelliously as Libby said, 'he was an
angry, black-haired kid.' That was what Libby remember about Ben.

As recorded in Libby's memory, Ben owned a bicycle when they were younger, and because his younger siblings are all girls, one of them put a butterfly sticker on the speedometer of his bicycle. "It had been there for weeks, buzzing in and out of his vision, **pissing him off**, but not enough to deal with it." (Flynn, 2009, p. 55). The quotation shows that Ben was angry with his younger sister's behavior, putting butterfly stickers on a boy's bicycle. For normal brothers, it may

be funny, casual play between siblings. However, Ben was angry as it said, 'pissing him off', he got pissed off because the sticker was always in his sight. That can be seen that even little thing could trigger him.

Barb Eichel told another proof. Barb Eichel was a journalist that wrote a book about Ben. As quoted in the story "Barb Eichel described Ben as 'a black-clad loner, **unpopular and angry**' and 'obsessed with the most brutal form of heavy metal—called black metal—songs rumored to be little more than coded calls to the Devil himself.'" (Flynn, 2009, p. 65)

Barb Eichel was a journalist and the author of the *book Devil's Harvest:*The Satan Sacrifice of Kinnakee Kansas. The book was written based on the original story of the Day family murders, wherein the story, author, believed that the Day family murderer was Ben. As a journalist, Barb Eichel has researched how Ben's characteristic was. She called Ben 'unpopular and angry' that showed how Ben looked to the strangers. He was a loner and always angry. Ben was also a big fan of black metal music where it is a genre of music known for being loud and aggressive that might influence Ben's emotion.

Ben's irritable characteristic is a behavior that usually appears in teenagers who are experiencing an identity crisis. According to Aspiro (2018), one of the warning signs of adolescent identity issues is intense anger or sadness. As explained above, Ben experienced excessive intense emotion, which the researcher called irritably, and he became a sensitive person. Hidayah & Huriati (2016, p. 55) also stated that adolescents experience an identity crisis is because

they have problems with their ability to control emotions. The researcher concluded that one of Ben's irritable traits is the beginning of all the identity crises he experienced in his adolescent years.

## 3.1.2. Self-hatred

The second identity crisis showed by Ben is self-hatred. The severe dislike of oneself is known as self-hatred or self-loathing. The researcher found some evidence that Ben hated himself for some misfortune that he thought to damage his life.

The story about Ben Day began with a conflict with his mother, Patty Day. On January 2, 1985, Ben Day startled his mother and his three younger sisters because of one act, in the sentence "He took off his hat, and on his head was a jetblack crown of hair, ruffed like an old Labrador. It was such a shock, like swallowing ice water too quickly, her red-headed boy, **Ben's defining characteristic, gone.**" (Flynn, 2009, p. 26).

His family was shocked that Ben's hair has turned black, which means his natural hair is not black. Instead, Ben's natural hair color is red. His mother was very disappointed that Ben changed his hair color, and so were his younger sisters. His mother thought a lot about what caused Ben to have such a decision. However, due to a lack of communication, his mother did not dare to ask Ben about it.

The relationship between Ben and his mother can be seen in the quotation "**He'd hated his red hair as a kid**, been teased for it. Maybe he still was. Maybe this was an act of assertion. A positive thing." (Flynn, 2009, p. 26).

Ben and his mother did not talk much because Ben was so irritable, so his mother tried not to oppose Ben's. From the quotation above, his mother did not try to talk about it, but she assumed her positive thoughts. According to her, Ben changed his hair color because he was tired of being teased by his friends about his hair since childhood and maybe until now, so Ben wanted to end it by changing his hair color. However, his mother was unfortunate and offended because the red hair was descended from her.

After the dyed hair incident, Ben left the house, notifying him that he would return. Instead, he went to school to do his part-time work as a janitor. While he was doing his job usually, he heard negative news about himself abusing an 11 years old girl. It hit him terribly, and he felt the pressure again. As stated in Flynn (2009, p. 55) "He headed down the stairwell and toward the back door as a pack of upperclassmen brushed past him toward the parking lot, his hair feeling hot under the black hair, **imagining what they were thinking –freak.**"

The quotation above shows that even though Ben had changed his hair color, he was still worried about what people think of his new black hair. He had no confidence at all. Therefore, Ben had no sense of self-worth, leading to him being a self-hatred individual. He also believed that because of anyone's rejection about anything in him. He cannot see himself in a positive light, or to put it another way. Because no one ever talks nice things about him. It made him feels like a hateful person.

Ben Day's actions, as written above, show that he is experiencing the 5th stage of psychosocial development, namely identity versus role confusion, because he hates what is destined for him, such as red hair where God creates something in humans according to its portion. In his book Child Development and Personality, Paul H. Mussen claims that people suffering from identity crises have low self-esteem, reject themselves, and feel insecure.

If Ben had not experienced the so-called identity crisis, he would not have done something without thinking about the effects, like offending his mother for the red hair she gave him. He would not care what people say about him because what is in him is destiny that does not need to be embarrassed, but he did the opposite with being insecure.

### 3.1.3 Self-harm

The third identity crisis showed by Ben is self-harm. Self-harm, also known as self-mutilation, is the intentional infliction of pain and damage to one's own body. Self-harm is usually a continuation usually done by people with self-hatred because they hate themselves, so they like to injure themselves like an addict.

Ben has poor management of emotional control. He liked to take it out on something that hurt him, but he felt relieved by it. As shown in the quotation below

He jerked up, one leg still caught on the bike, and fell sideways... His head smashed the dirt hard, his teeth sang like a bell. (Flynn, 2009, p. 55)

By the time he could breathe again—ten tear-blink seconds—he could feel a warm trickle of blood snake down past his eye...**He wished he'd hit harder.** (Flynn, 2009, p. 55)

On the same incident on January 2, 1985, at 9:13 A.M., when one of his little sisters placed a butterfly sticker which kind of girly on Ben's bicycle, he was furious at that time, even though it was just a tiny thing that could be taken for granted. However, Ben chose to pedal his bike very fast and turned out the front wheel of his bike got caught in a mound of dirt which damaged his bike, and he lost control, injuring his forehead. He did it on purpose and had no regrets or pain. In the sentence 'he wished he would hit harder,' it is seen that he wants even more pain than just bleeding on the forehead.

Ben joined a group of devil worshipers who must sacrifice or kill animals brutally. After falling off his bicycle, he met his girlfriend, Diondra, and Trey, Diondra's step-cousin. They are also part of a demon worship society. Ben left still with an open wound

"BenGay, wipe your face; you're dripping blood everywhere."

More blood kept coming; it was in his hair now and smeared over one eye.

He was freezing and remembered that's what happens when you bled to death, you get cold, and then he realized it would be crazy not to be cold, him in his thin little Diondra jacket, his entire torso prickly with goosepimples. (Flynn, 2009, p. 341)

On the night of January 2, 1985, at 10:23 P.M., they would launch their action to kill random people's cows. However, during the distribution of weapons, Trey was distracted by fresh blood that kept coming out of Ben's head. So Trey

said to wipe his face quickly, 'you are dripping blood everywhere' means the blood is so much that it almost covers his face. 'He was freezing and remembered that is what happens when you bled to death, you get cold,' from the sentence, it is seen that Ben did not panic at all even though he knew that people who bleed out would die with signs of his body turning cold, Ben was precisely love that.

However, from the sentence 'and then he realized it would be crazy not to be cold,' Ben also did not want to die like he thought, so he fought that feeling by borrowing Diondra's jacket to reduce the cold night air. He did not want to die, but he liked the pain to get out of a problem for a moment.

His mother also recognized Ben's self-hurting actions. At that time, her mother was being informed about the news that Ben had harassed Krissi, an 11 years old girl. His mother denied that Ben could do such a thing because he had younger sisters who were all girls, and she also said the sentence below

**But she knew her son did have a taste for hurt.** There was the moment with the mice: That robotic shovel pounding, his mouth pulled away from his teeth, his face trickling sweat. He'd gotten some pleasure from that, she knew. (Flynn, 2009, p. 281)

From the quotation above, the researcher concluded that Ben's mother knew that her child liked to take out her frustrations on something as strange as hurting herself. However, she believes there is no way Ben could do anything worse than abusing an 11 years old girl. Her mother knew he was once anxious about rats. So she threw shovels on mice with an exasperated face. 'His mouth pulled away from his teeth' describe how hard Ben bit his lips at that time, and it made him bleed. Examples of cases of hurting himself the umpteenth time.

Ben's traits that he likes to hurt himself are also included in an identity crisis because he does not know yet exactly how he will solve a problem. He had many questions about how he will solve a problem. He did not like interacting with people, whether his own family or friends, so he did not have a place to pour out his feelings to vent with hurting himself to get calm and satisfaction because he was very anxious about what he was going through. Self-harm is considered as a continuation of self-hatred that has been discussed before.

# 3.1.4. Feeling Useless

The fourth identity crisis showed by Ben is feeling useless. Useless, according to Collins Dictionary, is "having no practical use or advantage." So, if someone feels useless, they feel bad because they cannot help someone or achieve anything. The researcher found some evidence of Ben's uselessness.

As previously written, Ben only has one vehicle that allows him to go everywhere doing his activities, just a single bicycle. "He hated that he had to bike places like Opie going to the fishing hole. **He hated that he couldn't drive.**" (Flynn, 2009, p. 58). Ben's mother owned a car that was not luxurious, but Ben had no power over it. 'Ben hated that he could not drive' shows that Ben wanted to be able to drive a car like an average teenager who can and should drive a car. Because according to Witmer (2019), about legal driving age in Kansas City is 14 years old learner's permit, 16 years old restricted license, and 16,6 years old full license. Ben, who should have been learning since the age of 14, did not get any

driving lessons, so Ben hated riding a bicycle composed only of one seat and two wheels.

The unability of driving a car also made Ben got mocked by Trey every time he came to Diondra's place. "Nothing sadder than a boy just short of sixteen. Trey would say, shaking his head and blowing smoke toward him. He said this every time Ben showed up to Diondra's on his bike." (Flynn, 2009, p. 58). The sentence shows Trey's mock to Ben. 'Nothing sadder than a boy just short of sixteen.' Trey mocked Ben as if he was the saddest boy at that time because, at the age of 16, he still had to go from one place to another just by riding a bicycle, let alone going to his girlfriend.

A 'mock' was not new to Ben, but the more often it is said, it made Ben even more insecure. He felt useless because a bicycle could not carry anyone but himself. Fortunately, Diondra did not mind it, but Trey always puts pressure on him. Diondra was Ben's girlfriend who was born rich, and they met by accident. In the sentence "Before Diondra, Ben had just floated: he'd been a poor, quiet farm boy who hung out with other farm kids in an unnoticed corner of the school." (Flynn, 2009, p. 97), shows that Diondra did not care about what Ben was.

Diondra did not care about skills or things that Ben does not have. Because 'before Diondra' shows Ben's condition was quite bad because he was poor, quiet, and others. Since meeting Diondra, Ben's life has turned into all necessities depending on Diondra. Diondra's dominance made Ben feel useless because he could not provide anything for his girlfriend. Instead, Diondra did the opposite.

Ben had a part-time job as a janitor at his school. Because he was a loner, he liked to do his job when school hours were over and school was getting quiet. He did not like to meet and interact a lot with people. Saturday was a day that he would not choose because the wrestling team had the gym on that day. He said "It was just too lame holding a mop when all these blocky, muscled, loud guys were waddling around, spitting chaw on the floor you just cleaned and then looking at you, half guilty, half daring you to say something." (Flynn, 2009, p. 95).

Ben's personal description of the wrestling team, such as 'blocky, muscled, loud guys,' reflects Ben's sense of insecurity because he looked at him, unpopular, quiet, no friends, it was very much reversed with his school wrestling team, who were popular men. Besides, the researcher assumed that he had done his job once on Saturday and met a wrestling team that did not appreciate his job, so he avoided taking the job on Saturday. 'half guilty, half daring you to say something' Ben knows their faces are like 'daring you to say something but did not dare to take it', because he knew the ending of it, he did not want to be bullied anymore. He was insecure and felt useless compared to the wrestling team.

Erikson claims that identity confusion can manifest itself in the form of a 'negative identity at times. This crisis makes the adolescent feel inadequate, depersonalized, and alienated. They have a profound sense of futility, disorganization, and aimlessness (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1981, p. 127). So that feeling useless is also one of the identity crises experienced by Ben because, according to the explanations above, he realizes that he could not drive a car, he became

passive towards his woman, and he felt insecure with the wrestling team. It is shown that Ben questioning what exactly he can do for the people around him.

### 3.1.5 Powerless

The fifth identity crisis showed by Ben is powerless. A lack of strength or power can also be defined as powerlessness. Powerlessness refers to the belief that people's actions will not result in the results or reinforcements they seek. Helpless people may feel powerless and unable to reclaim control. Feeling out of control is followed by a sense of powerlessness over my surroundings. The researcher found some evidence of Ben's powerlessness.

Since the arrival of Diondra in Ben's life. Almost all matters related to Ben are arranged by Diondra; for example like the quotation below

Diondra had a big allowance, and she'd taken him shopping a few times, holding clothes up to him like he was a baby, telling him to smile. He wasn't sure if guys should let girls buy their clothes, wasn't sure if it was cool or not. (Flynn, 2009, p. 147)

Diondra was a stylish rich girl at that time, and she has some perfect jeans. Diondra loved Ben so much that even though Ben is poor and lousy, she did not mind him. However, Diondra controlled Ben oftenly; for example, she spent her money on Ben's clothes. 'She'd taken him shopping a few times' shows Diondra has bought Ben some clothes repeatedly and all by her taste, 'holding clothes up to him like he was a baby' Flynn uses the phrase 'like he was a baby' shows Diondra's control. Just like an innocent babies, Ben could not have any choice and always obey those who take care of them. Diondra controlled Ben in the choice of

clothes, and he did not give Ben the slightest chance to choose clothes that suit his taste.

'He wasn't sure if guys should let girls buy their clothes, wasn't sure if it was cool or not.' showing Ben's confusion about this, he was actually hesitated to accept gifts from Diondra, considering the prestige of men is very high, and this role should not be reversed. However, Ben could not reject it.

Even though Ben is embarrassed to receive Diondra's gift, he always did what Diondra wanted. Diondra liked Ben in black, including his hair. "When she looked up and saw his black hair, she gave him a giant happy smile and thumbs-up 'Awesome.' And Ben felt a little better, not as stupid. 'I told you it'd look good, Benji' And that was it." (Flynn, 2009, p. 197). When Ben heard that Diondra liked him in black, the writer concluded that this was the initial reason for Ben's dispute with his mother. Ben immediately rushed home to dye his hair black. Ben felt that he wanted to make Diondra happy with the simple things he could afford because he could not buy all black clothes, so he dyed his hair black. There was no problem with this case. After all, they both do it happily because they love each other. However, Ben looks powerless because he has no voice and cannot be the real him in front of Diondra.

Since Ben knew Diondra, Ben began to be sexually active; they often had sex. Due to the high intensity of the sexual activities, Diondra became pregnant with Ben's child. When they found out, they were panicked because Ben did not have a permanent job yet. Finally, however, Diondra suggested leaving the city

with her remaining money and stealing Ben's mother's savings because Diondra was afraid that her father, a strict parent, would hear about her pregnancy.

Ben tried to think of the right thing to say. He sometimes thought he never said anything to Diondra that was just pure talking; it was all verbal elbows, arms, trying to fend off her constant annoyance, say what she wanted to hear. (Flynn, 2009, p. 249)

The sentence above shows the situation in which Ben should answer Diondra's suggestion to leave the city and steal his mother's money. However, again, he was in a difficult choice. Nevertheless, it seemed that Ben had the answer and his own opinion about dealing with their pregnancy. Nevertheless, Ben decided not to talk about it because he was responsible for Diondra's pregnancy. Moreover, he did not want to irritate Diondra more, because Diondra was a person who is constantly annoyed by a bit of thing, just like Ben, but Ben could control more when he was with Diondra.

Ben's trait towards Diondra is wrong because it makes him look weak and helpless in front of the woman he loves; his woman is more dominant. The researcher means as powerless is Ben's traits that he cannot make any decisions and does not dare to express his opinion; even though this is normal and everyone has the right to an opinion, Diondra is more powerful. The researcher considered this as an identity crisis because it looks clear that Ben is questioning the role in his life, he is a man that someday will be a husband, but he cannot act like one, as Diondra is more dominant than him.

## 3.1.6 Ben's Identity Status: Identity Moratorium

According to Marcia, the moratorium subject is in a state of crisis: he or she is seeking and actively looking for values to eventually call his or her own, as discussed in the previous chapter. To put it another way, this person is actively searching for his or her identity but has yet to commit or has only made very temporary commitments. Judging from the previous definition, the researcher found that Ben's characteristics in living his life include an adolescent experiencing a crisis with a moratorium status.

In the novel in chapter 2, Ben's mother told the story of how Ben's behavior had wholly changed to become more introverted. Indeed, Ben was previously described as a quiet and weird person, but recently Ben has become more closed and could be heard talking intensely with someone from behind his bedroom door. According to his mother, Ben did not have any other close friends besides the Muehlers brothers, but if it was them, Ben usually opened up even if his younger siblings or mother held his phone. His mother at the time suspected Ben had a girlfriend, and that suspicion was confirmed.

Before Diondra, Ben was a quiet person, weak, poor; everything terrible was in Ben. Diondra and Ben's meeting is unexpected, as the sentence from Libby's perspective, "Big fucking thanks then to Diondra for claiming him, at least in private. She'd actually hit him with her car. That's how they met." (Flynn, 2009, p. 97). That was at the summer orientation for freshmen and new kids. Ben walked from the parking lot and was hit by a car driven by Diondra. Diondra was

very angry at that time because it was her arrogant nature. Diondra cursed at Ben. However, even though Ben was the guilty one, he still apologized because Ben was lousy and afraid of people but only dared to curse in his mind. After Ben apologizing, Diondra changed her mind and was not angry any more because according to Diondra, Ben had a nice face, a kind of love at first sight, and then offered him a ride home.

From the very beginning of their meeting. Diondra has had quite a bit of influence on Ben. "'You know what, you have a really nice face,' and then a few seconds later, she said, 'You wanna scam or what?' and then they were full-on making out, which wasn't his first time, but was only his second." (Flynn, 2009, p. 98). It describes a situation where Diondra and Ben were on their way in a car. Their first meeting shared a lot of stories and then got in a romantic situation and kissed. Even though it was Ben's second kiss, what is now is the first kiss that means a lot to Ben, with feelings. This kiss is an example of Diondra's influence on Ben; Diondra starts introducing new things for Ben, specifically, sexual matters. Ben was unfamiliar with her circle of friends. At school, he never spent time with her. Diondra was like a hummingbird, flitting in and out of the school week, sometimes showing up, sometimes not. It was enough for him to see her on weekends—own personal space, free from education constraints.

Ben's meaning by 'own personal space' was a small apartment in Wichita that belonged to Diondra. That was the most comfortable house for Ben, and Ben spent most of his time there. However, since living with Diondra, Diondra had influenced Ben's life more. "He and Diondra in their own apartment in Wichita,

eating McDonald's and watching TV and having sex, and smoking an entire pack of cigarettes." (Flynn, 2009, p. 60) and "The first time they'd tried to have sex, he'd been so clumsy..." (Flynn, 2009, p. 148). From that quotations, the researcher concluded that this was the first time Ben had sexual activities, with Diondra, his new girlfriend. Because from the previous quotation that Diondra was Ben's second kiss, Ben's first kiss was Krissi Kates, a 11 years old girl who was rumored to have been molested by Ben, even though it was done with their consent.

After the kiss before, Diondra influenced Ben to do something more than that, the center of sexual activity. Moreover, the sentence 'The first time they'd tried to have sex, he'd been so clumsy' shows that Ben had never done it, so he was very awkward when he was going to do it with Diondra. So, in essence, Diondra was the first girl to have had his first sexual intercourse, and Ben did it a lot after that, all with Diondra. Also, Ben was never smoked much if Diondra was not around because Ben was not a heavy smoker, but on the other hand, Diondra was, and that affected Ben's changes. This is also a new exploration that Ben has undertaken under his new acquaintance, Diondra.

Apart from their apartment in Wichita, Ben had another place to stay when he was tired and needed some relief. Still, under the influence of Diondra, this time, the one who introduced this place to Ben was Diondra's step-cousin named Trey. The place was a kind of warehouse, which in the previous analysis, the researcher named the devil worshiper place. Many friends were older than Ben because it was Diondra and Trey's crowd, not Ben's. There are so many demands there to be accepted, one of which was, as previously explained, Ben must

experience bullying, and other demands to join this gang, Ben had to kill cows brutally.

Ben thought the devil would want something more useful than cow entrails. Gold. Maybe a kid. To prove loyalty, like when gangs make a new guy shoot somebody. (Flynn, 2009, p. 155)

"So why do you kill cows?" the girl asked.

"Feels good, satisfies some requirements. You can't just be in the club, you have to really do stuff." (Flynn, 2009, p. 156)

Ben was influenced by the figure of Trey, who has committed many crimes before meeting him. Trey shared that he had killed cattle, tried to kidnap college girls but failed, and also killed dozens of cows and blew up in Kansas City's headline news. Trey did that based on sacrifice for Satan because he believed in it. From Trey's routine described, and he was also a figure like a leader in the gang, he provided a requirement to be a part of the gang. The requirement was to kill cows brutally.

Ben, who was in the process of finding his identity, was straightforward to follow what was being done by the people around him or the group that was currently with him. Actually, Ben does not care about the satanic sacrifice. However, Ben was willing to do it because based on satisfaction, as explained in previous analysis that Ben had a taste for hurt or hurt something to vent his frustration and anger. It is also another exploration of Ben, who was influenced by new friendships and surroundings.

Back to Ben's relationship with Diondra. Due to the intensity of their frequent sexual intercourse, there was a problem that came out, Diondra was

pregnant with Ben's child. On the one hand, they are happy and proud, but on the other hand, they were still very young to take care of and be responsible for a child. "He'd wondered at first if she was going to get an abortion. He'd said if you have the baby instead of when, and she'd completely freaked, and Diondra completely freaking was something he never wanted to see again." (Flynn, 2009, p. 246) The quotation shows that Diondra was very happy with the news of her pregnancy, and Ben also said that he is proud of the idea of having a baby. However, Ben still does not have a permanent job because he will only turn 16 years old. Diondra and Ben themselves did not plan or could not plan anything about this baby because Diondra was afraid of his father's threats about getting pregnant outside of marriage because he felt he had broken his father's promise. This shows that Ben is not yet committed to anything, and it is challenging for him to decide just because Diondra is dominant.

However, on the other hand, Ben showed little care for their baby. "Ben made a list of things they might need, and he bought some hand-me-down baby clothes at a Delphos flea market right near Christmastime." (Flynn, 2009, p. 247). Ben showed that he cares about their future baby by buying several clothes and underwear for a baby. Ben sacrificed his embarrassment by asking for help from a mother who was going to shop at the baby store to buy his groceries as well. Ben did it in order to please Diondra. Ben's actions like this show that his psychological stage is going to develop. At this stage, Ben has not shown any progress because he has not yet committed. However, what Ben did was a

responsibility that could result from his exploration in the direction of finding his identity.

Identity moratorium refers to how an adolescent is currently in a crisis, exploring various commitments, and is ready to make decisions but has not yet committed to these decisions. Adolescents are in a 'crisis' decision, which encourages them to explore indirectly and experiment. However, they have not decided what beliefs and values are most important to them at this third stage. As a result, they have not committed to a specific identity.

From the discussion above, the researcher concluded that Ben's identity status is a moratorium. It is because he has carried out several new explorations in his life, such as drinking alcohol, joining a thug gang that invites him to commit crimes, as well as having sex outside of marriage which makes Diondra pregnant. Everything that Ben does, he does not commit it. He cannot be responsible for punishment for his criminal actions. Then regarding Diondra's pregnancy, he has no thought to commit the form of a marriage bond. He keeps on exploring without thinking about the effects of his exploration that are considered to be negative.

# 3.2 Ben's Identity Crisis Causes

There will be a time in a person's life when they feel insecure or that they have been questioned about their identity. Thus, inquiring about who they are, what they must be, and what they should do. In this case, an identity crisis is

caused by reason. In this part, the researcher explains what causes Ben's identity crisis in *Dark Places* novel.

### 3.2.1 Divorced Parents

Day's family had been incomplete since their children were kids. Day's parents, Patty and Runner Day, divorced since Libby was two years old, which means Ben was ten years old when his parents separated. All children go with their mother because their father was a trouble maker who cannot take care of himself and in many cases. Ben was the only boy in the family, so his mother did not really understand how to parenting a teenage boy. Ben and his mother often quarrel because of a lack of communication.

The divorce of his parents at the age of the children who are still really young must have significantly affected their growth and development, especially Ben. Boys, of course, really need a father figure to teach things that a mother cannot teach. However, unfortunately, Ben's dad has not been in contact since the divorce and only came on summer vacation, and of course, not for long. "He'd been too young when his dad left. He never had a chance to learn anything practical." (Flynn, 2009, p. 57). From that sentence, it can be concluded that Ben never received practical lessons from his father. So, for example, when he saw guys his age was able to tinker with motorcycles, tractors, even cars, which of course, Ben had never seen before.

He was also a hunter like all of his family, but that did not help much because his mother was a better shot than him.

He wanted to be a useful man, but he wasn't sure how to make that happen, and it scared him shitless. His dad had come back to live on the farm for a few months this summer, and Ben had been hopeful, figuring the guy would teach him something after all this time, bother to be a father. (Flynn, 2009, p. 57)

Ben felt himself a useless man. Since he was little and his parents were still together, Runner was also not a good father, just an adult man with a bad character who drank, used drugs, and loved money but was poor, also known as a lot of debt troubled man. Therefore, when his father returned to the farm for the summer vacation, Ben hoped that his father had changed because he saw Ben was a teenager and it was time to teach him something. However, what he expected was precisely the opposite. Runner did all the mechanical work by himself without any initiative to teach this boy who grew up as a teenager. Even when Ben wanted to get close to him, Runner told Ben to stay away and not bother him. He also said something like 'That is men's work,' as Ben was not a man. Of course, it made Ben angry and disappointed, like being ridiculed.

Runner's attitude above made Ben experienced an identity crisis. Without his father's help, he looked for his own identity and tried to learn things by himself, which is complex, and he got angry quickly because he hates his father because of the bad qualities that are remembered in Ben's mind.

He'd taken a shovel, finally, and smashed them into the ground, bits of flesh splattering his arms, getting angrier, each big loose wield of the shovel infuriating him more. You think I'm such a pussy, Runner, you think I'm such a pussy! (Flynn, 2009, p. 157)

The sentence above shows how Ben was distraught and how Ben took his anger out on his father. What happened was when Ben saw his mother's barn cat drop the nest of the newborn mice and also eat some of the mice. After that, Ben took the initiative to end the rats' suffering, which was even more torturous. Ben took the shovels and beat them to the ground to death, releasing all his emotions while shouting, 'You think I'm such a pussy, Runner, you think I'm such a pussy!' to prove it wrong, he was not a coward.

Parental divorce is an important factor in achieving a child's identity. Taufikurrahman *et al.* (2015, p. 32) stated that parental divorce that occurs in a family has an impact that affects the soul and condition of the child. Children who experience obstacles in their fulfillment related to love and having parents must face the fact that their parents have divorced. As a result, children get a lousy picture of family life.

Divorce, which means separation between mother, father, and children, whatever the cause, can have a bad impact on children. Because a family is no longer intact, and generally what happens is a mother with children on the one hand and a father living alone. As a result, the child loses one of their identification figures (Rahwanto, 2010, p. 37). Exactly what happened to Ben. Since the separation of his parents, Ben has not established good communication with his mother or especially his father. Since then, he has lost a father figure who teaches him men's work. Parental separation and the lack of a father's role in a child's life can be as fatal as Ben's. It has an impact on the identity crisis shown by Ben, namely irritable and self-hurting.

# 3.2.2 Bullying

Ben was a pale, small-boned, and red-headed boy. Since childhood, he was alienated by his peers because of his quiet, angry, and strange attitude. Ben's mother ever said that the red hair was always ridiculed by his friends, it can be seen from the thinking of his mother when she found out that Ben dyed his hair black, she thought positively that it was a good thing to end it, she thought Ben was still being ridiculed about his red hair to this day. Just like the newest incident at the place with the new gang.

In the sentence "Ben had thought the new black hair would have helped, made him look less young. But guys just liked to fuck with him or ignore him." (Flynn, 2009, p. 154), revealed Ben's reason for changing his hairstyle, but after the second time he came to the gang headquarters, he did not get a positive response from his friends there. 'made him look less young' means Ben is trying to get a more mature look like the other members. However, their responses are still the same, like when he arrived suddenly someone said 'you know someone here' and 'Hey, Alex do you know this kid?' then Alex answered, 'Well, man, I don't hang out with middle schoolers. The words they put out like 'kid' and 'middle schoolers' were also bullying Ben because it embarrassed Ben in front of many other gang members, especially Alex, he knew Ben, but in front of the other friends, he pretended not to know.

Ben's effort here is in order to fit with his new peers. It is called peer pressure. According to Healthy Families (2014), Peer pressure refers to being

persuaded to do something you would not normally do in the hopes of being noticed and respected by others. One example is choosing the same clothes, hairstyle, or jewelry as their friends. Ben changed his hair and dressed to receive a little respect from the gang, but it did not work, and he was still humiliated and bullied.

The second is bullying by sports coaches at his school. Ben wanted to meet Diondra at his house, but in the next few hours, so he decided to wait and did his part-time work at school until the time came. Because he was too poor to kill time by waiting at the burger place. But the school's back entrance was chained shut, so he had to enter through the locker room of the school athletes. When Ben saw an open locker with an item that almost fell, so he opened it and wanted to fix it. Just then came the sports coach, Mr. Grunger.

"I said, why were you in that locker?" Grunger smacked the newspaper against his fat hand.

"Were you going to take something?"

"Get out of here. Go clean somewhere else. Don't come back in here til we're gone. You are not welcome here. You understand?" (Flynn, 2009, p. 100-101)

It can be seen from the sentence uttered by Mr.Grunger that he looked at Ben with one eye; just because Ben is a school janitor and a poor person, he assumed that Ben went into the locker room to steal something from the athletes.

Mr.Grunger also ordered Ben to get out in a very disrespectful and disrespectful manner to others. Ben was angry and muttered in his heart, but Ben had no power

and chose to remain silent and obey Mr. Grunger's orders. Therefore, that is considered as bullying that brought Ben down.

Bullying is one of the factors that cause an identity crisis to be experienced by Ben. Bullying has a potent effect on a person's psychology. Sejiwa (2008, p. 62) argues that victims of bullying can experience mental injury; in addition, victims will have high anxiety, lack of confidence, and some even experience depression and trauma. Khoirunnisa (2015, p. 28) has proven that one of the ten specific adverse effects caused by bullying victims is emotional disturbance and can even lead to personality disorders. As identity crisis is considered a personality disorder, it matches just like what happened to Ben. Due to the mistreatment of friends in the environment and people at school, he became very insecure and quiet; he preferred to keep his emotions to himself rather than talk to someone. He seems to keep questioning what is wrong with him because he focuses on someone's view of him.

## 3.2.3 Uncomfortable Home Surrounding

Another cause of Ben Day's identity crisis is the uncomfortable home surroundings. Ben and his mother never got along. Her mother struggles with taking care of a teenage boy because, according to her, this is quite difficult considering that her other child is a girl and can measure it from her fellow women. At the same time, Ben is the only child of different gender in the family. Even one day, his mother bought a book for parenting teenage boys, but all the suggestions written in the book were not able to be applied by her because she

knew how angry and irritable Ben was. So, the more often she asks something, Ben will be angry and uncomfortable.

The second is Ben's relationship with his three younger siblings, which we can see from the quotation "Ben hated Michelle. Ben had tolerated me, has dismissed Debby, but he'd hated Michelle actively" (Flynn, 2009, p. 287). It can be seen that their relationship is awful. Ben tolerated Libby. According to their mother, Libby was the only brother Ben conquered Ben's toughness because Libby likes to praise Ben's work or never does things that make Ben angry as other family members do. Debby and Ben's relationship was not very detailed; it was only known in the quotation above that Ben has dismissed Debby. Debby was not very active in the story.

However, there is one of Ben's older siblings, Michelle, whom Ben hated so much. Ben hated Michelle because of her nosy nature. She often went into Ben's room and kept finding items, which Ben said a privacy violation. One day Michelle found a letter from Diondra to Ben about how Diondra wanted frequent sex, teenage letters. Knowing about that, Michelle made Ben feel uncomfortable. Diondra also hates Michelle about it. She was afraid that Michelle would divulge about sexual things and her pregnancy to relatives who knew her. However, Ben tried to cover up Diondra's fears by saying that Michelle did not bring up that letter anymore.

Instead, Michelle really liked to mess with Ben, "That was a lie. Just yesterday, Michelle caught his eye, shook her hips, and said in a teasy voice, 'Hey

Beee-ennn, how's your seeeex life?' She was such a shitty kid." (Flynn, 2009, p. 248). Michelle's treatment of Ben as seen in the quotation, she will continue to bring up something she had just encountered due to her nosy nature, which made Ben very uncomfortable, so he hated it. Things like this made Ben more comfortable doing his activities outside the home. Because the house's surroundings were uncomfortable and he did not have a good relationship with anyone, Ben felt that no one could make him comfortable, starting from his mother and siblings, who are all annoying. Ben had been under much pressure from outside, so the family should be where he complained, but his family puts another pressure on him.

As Hidayah & Huriati (2017, p. 40) said that disputes between siblings could lead to deviant behavior. Such as the development of jealousy with each other, differences of opinion, or differences in the treatment of parents against one child from another. The tensions of this fraternal relationship make adolescents feel uncomfortable in the family environment. Adolescents tend to seek peace and pleasure outside the home as compensation for feelings of depression or anger.

## 3.2.4 Beginning New Relationships

A relationship is a particular type to connect two or more people. Starting a new relationship with someone definitely makes yourself forced to adapt to the nature of people who are different from yourself. According to Cherry (2021), it is stated that one of the causes of identity crisis in adolescents is beginning a new relationship. In his adolescence age, Ben has two new relationships to adapt. The

first is by the devil worship alley, where he meets Trey and Diondra. The second is the special relationship between Ben and Diondra.

It is evident that Ben's new group or friends significantly affect Ben's changes in attitude and appearance, because as previously explained, Ben got bullying by demon worship gangs. After all, members of the gang are, on average, around 20 years old, while Ben himself is a child who still 15 years old. Therefore, he dyed his hair black to look older, but it still did not work.

Then Ben's special relationship with Diondra also immensely influenced Ben's self-change, especially at home, where his mother was very aware of the changes. Since the arrival of Diondra in Ben's life, Ben was increasingly free to leave the house because he felt that he has a place to run away from his problems and anger. Ben spent more of his time with Diondra and Trey in Diondra's apartment. These are some of the factors that trigger Ben Day's identity crisis.

At this point, the researcher only emphasizes more clearly that beginning a new relationship is one of the causes of Ben's identity crisis. The researcher has explained how Ben's relationship with friends or new gang he knows recently through Trey, also detailed relationship about Ben with Diondra at the points of the previous discussion.

#### **CHAPTER IV**

#### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

## 4.1 Conclusion

This research aims to find the identity crisis, the cause of the identity crisis, and the identity status experienced on Ben Day in Gillian Flynn's Dark Places.

After analyzing more deeply the objectives of the study, the researcher divided conclusions into the following points:

The researcher found that Ben was an irritable person. He was easily angry with small and trivial things, which according to Erikson, emotional instability is one sign of someone experiencing an identity crisis. The second is self-hating. Ben hated himself physically, like his red hair color, because he was constantly teased by his friends, leading him to feel hateful. The third is self-hurting. This is a continuation of self-hating where Ben liked to hurt himself or hurt animals to vent his frustration. The fourth is feeling useless. The lack of education about life in his childhood made Ben feel inferior to his peers, who are starting to do things that adults do, thus making him feel useless. Moreover, the last one is powerless. Ben had a difficult obstacle in making a decision in his life, which the researcher describes as powerless.

The researcher concluded an identity status that describes Ben perfectly.

Ben's identity status is a moratorium. Identity moratorium is where adolescents do much exploration but are not yet committed. Ben had explored sexual, friendship,

and even criminality cases. However, Ben had not stated that he would commit what he did or the consequences that will occur due to what he has done, about Diondra's pregnancy and the crime of brutally killing people's cows.

The researcher found several causes for Ben's identity crisis. The first is divorced parents. Due to Ben's parents' divorce could not get any lessons about man things, and his mother did not know how to care for teenage boys, which made him get less attention. The second is bullying, the words of friends, teachers, and the environment that humiliates Ben physically and Ben's job to make him feel down. The third one is uncomfortable home surroundings. Ben did not get along well with anyone in the house, neither with his mother nor his younger sisters, especially Michelle. He hated nosy Michelle's, which makes him feel uncomfortable at home. The last is beginning new relationships. Ben had new circles and a girlfriend who are dragging him down to some negative things.

# 4.2 Suggestion

Several examples of the symptoms and causes of the identity crisis occurred in a teenager named Ben Day in *Dark Places* novel have been described in this study. With the new insight on the identity crisis of adolescence, the researcher suggests that people who are more mature can always accompany the teenagers who are around. With psychologically good treatment, teenagers will find it easier to identify themselves because someone is helping them. The researcher suggests this because it is a noble thing and it avoids teenagers from the negative impacts that are caused when they experience an identity crisis.

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