Loneliness in Haruki Murakami's *After Dark* (2007): A Focalization Analysis

Linna Amanda, Nia Nafisah, Nita Novianti
English Language and Literature
Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia
linnamandalol@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Young adult literature provides varieties of themes and concepts of life for teenager to explore. *After Dark* by Haruki Murakami (2007) focuses on abstract concepts of loneliness. This study attempts to analyze how are the forms of loneliness depicted in the novel through the main character, Mari Asai, by scrutinizing the literary tool of focalization (Bal, 1985). Mijuskovic's theory (2014) that distinguishes four forms of loneliness and three ways to overcome loneliness are also used in this study. Mari Asai's loneliness is found to be a complex four forms of loneliness that she experiences throughout her life: aloneness, loneliness, isolation, and alienation. The forms are based on some sources and ways to overcome loneliness that she reveals and finds throughout the story. Mari's loneliness is overcome when she is willing to have conversations with others, build relationships, and seek solitude within herself. From the focalization used in the novel, the loneliness is mostly shown through Character-Bound Focalization on the second level (CF2). CF2 is found to be the most useful type of focalization that helps to depict what the main character think and feel because of its detailed use. Mari Asai's experience of loneliness shows how loneliness is a common and important thing for young people to progress into adulthood. Through the whole progress of the main character coping with her loneliness, the novel provides guidance for young adult to go through loneliness as a stage that may happen in life.

Keywords: *character, focalization, forms, loneliness, young adult literature*

INTRODUCTION

Loneliness is a kind of emotion that is commonly found in everyday life. In the novel *After Dark* (2007) by Haruki Murakami, loneliness is explored throughout the story from the characters' perspectives. A young girl named Mari Asai copes with her loneliness by spending a night away from her home to Tokyo. The event leads her into meeting other young people who are also coping with their loneliness in different ways and the story progresses to get even deeper to the character's mind. As the story progress, the loneliness that the character experienced progresses as well. By scrutinizing what are the forms of loneliness and how it is depicted and also overcome in the novel, the main character's story that represents issues of a young adult may be unraveled.

The novel's portrayal of loneliness may provide as a self-help guide for young adults in facing many issues while progressing into adulthood. Loneliness is a significant issue for young adults that may be caused by their inability to understand the causes of loneliness and how to cope with it. As the story in *After Dark* (2007) continues, not only the main character, but also other characters appear to be affected by loneliness. The different ways of young adults dealing with loneliness presented in the novel may be a solution for the phenomenon that is happening in the real modern society.

Specifically in *After Dark* (2007), the theme of loneliness in young adult life seems to be emphasized by the use of a literary tool named focalization. The term focalization denotes the meaning of the relationship between the 'vision,' the agent that sees, and that which is seen (Bal, 1985). Bal (1985) explains that focalization functions as a connector (called focalizer) of elements in the story so that those elements could be interpreted as a meaningful event. In the novel, the narrator seems to act as an observer who limitedly reports the event, but later in the story the narrator suddenly acts as someone who knows everything in great details, even the emotions of the characters. With this, the narrator, or anyone who perceives the story (as in focalization, focalizer) seems to have

a free will in interpreting and portraying the thoughts, events, and other elements (such as setting) of the novel, and therefore even taking the role of revealing how the characters are supposed to feel.

There are several studies that discuss several elements and themes in Murakami's *After Dark*. Ravari and Bahadori (2016) focused on the postmodern concept that Murakami uses and how focalization helps to construe the concept in general. Another researcher, Hong (2016) studied the novel from the perspective of meta-textual meaning-making and application of focalization that results in manipulation of the reader. Different from those studies, this study focuses on the use of focalization that help in depicting the forms of loneliness experienced by the main character and how it is overcome, especially in young adult literature. For the analysis, the theoretical frameworks of loneliness by Mijuskovic (2012) and focalization by Bal (1985) are used.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Loneliness is a universal emotion, yet it cannot be easily defined. Rokach (as cited in Killeen, 1998), proposes that one fundamental similarity that all humans have in this world is the yearning for love, acceptance and understanding, and hedonistic nature and aversion to such painful experiences as loneliness. As a universal matter, the definition of loneliness subjectively depends on each individual. From the methodical and objective view of Killeen (1998), loneliness can be a discrepancy between a person's social and/or emotional needs/wants and their social reality. In other words, loneliness is the feeling of being apart from others (McGraw, 1994).

Loneliness is often related to other similar terms such as aloneness, isolation, alienation, and solitude, but the terms cannot be used interchangeably. Loneliness and aloneness are two different terms. If loneliness is the result of 'being unable to be with someone', aloneness is the result of someone's choice to 'not be with someone' (Killeen, 1998). On the other hand,

Killeen (1998) elaborates that the term "isolation" depends on the context, in a sense of desire. Isolation may be the result of someone's personal choice to self-isolate but it may also be the result of people's attitude toward the person. For the term alienation, or "estrangement" as Younger calls it (in Killeen, 1998, p. 764), it can be defined as "a condition of separateness, distressing emotions, or the painful longing for the absence of love object." Solitude, according to Rokach (in Killeen, 1998), can be perceived as calming and refreshing, and even can be used as a way to cope with loneliness. To highlight the differences and relation between the terms, the scale shown in figure 1 by Killeen (1998) is bound to be helpful. The continuum scale in figure 1 shows that loneliness and other similar terms explained may change according to someone's choice of being alone and/or how the society treats them.
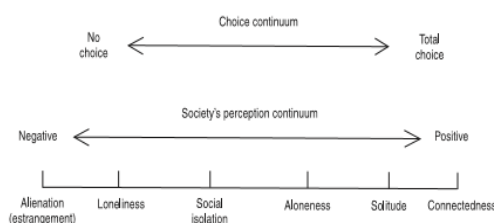
Figure 1. Killeen's "Alienation and Connectedness Continuum" scale. (including the importance of choice and society's perception of the concepts) (1998, p. 765).

Figure 1 illustrates that the greater the choice of someone's to be connected with the society, the more positive the relation s/he has with other people and him/herself. The willingness of being social leads to connectedness and solitude. On the other hand, the more forced someone to be engaged in social relationship within the society, the more negative the outcome will be. It explains why being alone by choice may bring positive energy, but being alone forcefully may lead to alienation. In *After Dark* (2007), each character perceives the concept of "being lonely" differently.

Loneliness comes in several forms. Mijuskovic (2012) offers three forms of loneliness constructed from Gotesky's theory: physical aloneness, loneliness as state of mind, state of isolation. Gotesky (as cited in Mijuskovic, 2012) originally includes the fourth form, solitude, but Mijuskovic argues against the form as unfitting with the rest of the forms.

Mijuskovic underlines the negative elements of loneliness and only identifies aloneness, isolation, solitude (as well as estrangement, alienation, forlornness, desolation, and abandonment) aside from loneliness. Koch (2015) supports Mijuskovic's view of solitude as a positive form since the term does not logically have the same meaning as loneliness. He believes that loneliness is painful; on the other hand solitude is open to both pleasant and painful sensations by acknowledging the glory of being alone, even though it is still related to loneliness. The figure of loneliness continuum by Killeen (1988) in the previous section also reflects Mijuskovic's positive view of solitude. Solitude brings positive energy from being alone, while other forms of loneliness bring rather negative energy because one does not intend to be alone in the first place. In other words, both researchers see solitude in a positive light because it is an experience that can be a personal choice. Therefore, Mijuskovic's final forms of loneliness that are considered to be fit for this research are (physical) aloneness, loneliness

(as state of mind), (state of) isolation, and alienation.

Mijuskovic elaborates each form literally and metaphorically. Aloneness is a state of being alone. Mijuskovic (2014) defines that aloneness is essentially spatial and temporal; in other words, it refers to a condition of being physically alone. Since being alone is not necessarily being lonely, the term can be differentiated by understanding whether someone is alone because of his/her desire or because of others'. With that said, loneliness as a state of mind is conditioned by (a) the feeling of rejected by people, when (b) there is a desire to be included and rejected by them. This is similar to alienation which Mijuskovic (2014) defines as the outcome of an intense form of loneliness. To separate the two, a consideration based on the character's tendency to be left alone is used. Since loneliness and alienation are on the same continuum, each form can easily manifest into other forms (Killeen, 1998). For Isolation, it is defined as a feeling that depends on one's surrounding. The feeling of isolation is caused when someone is

lonely by being different from the people around him/her. Mijuskovic (2014) gives an example of a person who chooses to isolate him/herself to reach for an ambition that is different from the people around him/her. Considering Killeen's continuum (1998), isolation can be differentiated according to one's desire of personal isolation or one's surroundings that forcefully isolates him/her. This form might appear similar to alienation, but it is different in a sense that isolation is rather based on personal choices. Thus, these definitions of Mijuskovic's loneliness are considered adequate to be used in the analysis.

If there is a problem, then there is a way to conquer it. In a similar condition with the forms discussed before, Mijuskovic (2012) reconstructs Gotesky's theory of conquering loneliness. Originally, Gotesky (as cited in Mijuskovic, 2012) provides three possibilities for conquering loneliness: *rapport* or communicating and connecting with another person, having relationship such as friendship, or accepting loneliness until it reaches the state of solitude. Mijuskovic (2012) argues that although to communicate with other people is agreeable, there are still barriers in communicating. He proposes three reasons as arguments. The first is because human's thoughts are very unique, so it cannot be perfectly transmissible every time. The second is because conceptual meaning can never be conveyed perfectly as intended. The third reason, from the perspective of philosophy, is because one could never truly be able or understand his/her emotion, let alone to let someone else to understand it. For the second way, Gotesky (1965) distinguishes friendship into actual, token, and ideal friendship. Again, Mijuskovic (2012) proposes that there is no actual difference between the three forms, therefore he diminishes it into general friendship. For the last possibility, Mijuskovic agrees that solitude is a way to conquer loneliness, in a way that someone may have been very defeated and seek inner solace instead. As a conclusion, Mijuskovic's ways of coping with loneliness are communicating with other people in a limited sense,

building an intimate relationship, and accepting the emotion and perceiving it as something positive (solitude). In this study, the three ways will be further referred to as having conversations, building relationship, and seeking solitude. Thus, Mijuskovic's three forms of loneliness and ways to conquer it which offers complex categorizations is applied for the analysis of loneliness in *After Dark* (2007).

In terms of young adult, *After Dark* by Haruki Murakami (2007), which is analyzed in this study, can be considered to be relevant to the issues of young adult literature.

Young adult literature explores many themes, but the most highlighted is how to become an adult and how to find the answer, or as Campbell (2010, p. 70) states, "Who am I and what am I going to do about it?" Wells (2003) mentions several themes that are common to be found in young adult literature such as friendship, getting into trouble, interest in the opposite sex, problems with parents, and puberty. The themes that occur in most young adult literature surround the ideas of

growing up and self-development as a way to help teenagers to begin the age of adulthood.

Young adult literature covers varieties of themes to fulfill its aim of talking about how adolescents deal with many issues and to show world perspectives. YA covers a variety of themes and issues that deal with realities of life, ranging from family relationships to gangs and violence (Bond, as cited in Harmond & Henkin, 2016). Bucher (2006) also mentions common themes in young adult books such as coming-of-age; accepting responsibility; and learning to deal with parents, other adults, and friends. It can be found that one book may focus only on one theme, but as the story continues, the theme may unravel the issues faced by young adults. The characteristics and themes of young adult literature are related to each other; nevertheless all of the themes mentioned above are not necessarily to be covered in one book.

After Dark (2007) covers many themes such as friendship, interest in the opposite sex, problems with parents, and puberty that can be found throughout the story. It can also

be considered a "good young adult literature" by matching the characteristics discussed previously such as written from young people's perspective, the characters do not depend on any adults, represents many ethnic and cultural groups, optimistic, and deals with emotions. All of those themes are depicted from the main character's journey in understanding and overcoming loneliness.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study aims to answer what forms of loneliness are depicted in the main character in Haruki Murakami's *After Dark*. By performing close reading, the narration and dialogue of the characters were gathered as textual evidences. To understand the forms as a whole, any dialogues and narrations that depict any condition of being lonely is scrutinized according to the theories of focalizations. The narrations and dialogues were separated from its focalizer and focalized object according to formula by Bal (1985). The two types of focalization are External Focalization (EF) and Character-bound

Focalization (CF) and also two types of focalization's level: 1 (fully external) or 2 (external, but also character-bound) according to how the focalizer perceives the object. The two types were further distinguished by its context of senses which is either perceptible (p) or non-perceptible (np). After analyzing the focalization in great details, the data were further categorized into the type of their loneliness and the way they cope with it based on Mijuskovic's theory (1995). From there, the interpretation of the findings were made.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the thorough analysis of *After Dark* (2007), it is found that Mari Asai's loneliness consists of four significant forms which are aloneness, isolation, loneliness, and alienation that are depicted differently according to different types of focalization. The four forms are based on some sources and ways to overcome loneliness that she reveals and finds throughout the story. It is discovered that the main character succeeds in overcoming her loneliness through three ways:

seeking solitude, having conversation, and building relationships. The whole matters also convey significant findings in regards to Young Adult Literature and loneliness in a cultural context.

Mari Asai's four forms of loneliness are explored and depicted through the focalization in the story of *After Dark* (2007). The focalization mostly focuses on Mari's problem and anxiety with her loneliness throughout the night journey that she goes through. The focalizations of the narrator and the characters of the novel have a major role in depicting the loneliness that Mari Asai experiences. The focalization used can be scrutinized into two types according to its focalizer, which are External Focalizer (EF) and Character-Bound Focalizer (CF). The two types can be scrutinized according to their level of perceptions which depends on the closeness of the perspective, namely level one and two. Different types and levels of focalization construct different forms of loneliness.

Through the use of different types of focalization, Mari Asai's loneliness is found to be complex when analyzed deeper. Based on Mijuskovic's forms of loneliness (2014), Mari's loneliness is constructed from aloneness, loneliness, alienation, and isolation that she goes through. All of the forms are experienced by Mari Asai throughout the story. Each form is also found to complement and affect each other based on the types of focalization that construct each form of loneliness experienced by the main character. The forms of loneliness are shown based on a continuum scale proposed by Killeen (1998) who places loneliness according to its negativity and positivity (in a sense of being forced to being chosen by someone consciously). Aloneness is the most positive form since being alone is not necessarily forced by situation, but when it is forced it can gradually manifest into isolation, loneliness, and alienation. Accordingly, the forms are presented in the following order: aloneness, isolation, loneliness, alienation.

The use of different types of focalization depicts each form of loneliness differently. External Focalization (EF) in *After Dark*

(2007) is only found in the narrator-focalizer, while the Character-Bound Focalization (CF) is in the characters. Aloneness is the only form that is focalized through External Focalization on the first level, while the rest of the forms are mostly focalized through the second level of CF. Through the first level focalization, the concept is only perceived by a subject who may not experience loneliness directly, thus making the loneliness depicted only from the surface. Meanwhile, the second level of focalization implies that the character's mind and emotion are re-affirmed and re-perceived by the other characters before it can be decided whether a character is actually lonely or not. Aloneness is mostly depicted through physical matter that can be perceived through the senses, while the rest of the forms are perceived through mental comprehension. The application of CF is important to understand what is happening inside the mind of the characters. Without the characters directly focalizing their loneliness, the issue cannot be constructed and presented in great details, only by the

EF's assumptions. CF on a second degree is also important in constructing and depicting others' loneliness. It helps the characters to understand one's loneliness from others' perspective which is useful for the main character to solve her problems regarding loneliness.

Aloneness is a state of being alone. Mijuskovic (2014) defines that aloneness is essentially spatial and temporal; in other words, it refers to a condition of being physically alone. Mari Asai is introduced by the focalizer to the reader as a character, with physical aloneness. Her physical aloneness is constructed from the perceptible senses of the focalizer which happens to be either the narrator or other people aside from Mari herself. Her aloneness is interpreted and represented through an External Focalizer and second level of Character Bound Focalization. In this stage of loneliness, this physical aloneness is neither negative nor positive since being alone is not necessarily being lonely-a term referring to Oxford Online

Dictionary which means sad because one has no friends or company.

In the beginning of *After Dark* (2007), Mari is introduced and described based on her physical aloneness by the narrator-focalizer through External Focalization (EF). Through the visual sense, the focalizer describes Mari's aloneness. The visual descriptions include Mari sitting by herself in a four-person table, choosing to read a book in contrast to other guests who hangout and have conversations with others late at night, and waiting for no one at a Denny's restaurant. From those gestures, it can be concluded that Mari for some reasons chooses to stay awake until morning to be alone regardless of the people around her. This is the first sign of her physical aloneness.

However, Mari's aloneness seems to be paradoxical. Mari intended to stay by herself in the beginning, but she chooses to do it in a crowded place rather than the deserted ones. This indicates Mari does not want to be alone in the first place or she wants to blend in the crowds to feel less alone.

Nevertheless, her lone presence only highlights her aloneness, especially in the eye of the narrator-focalizer, which makes her interesting to be the heroine of this story. Mari's aloneness is very striking that her presence implies psychological complexities.

Mari's aloneness hinted other forms of loneliness which is isolation in a more complex meaning which implies that she has other psychological problems rather than physical.

Isolation is a feeling that depends on one's surrounding. The feeling of isolation is caused when someone is lonely by being different from the people around him/her (Mijuskovic, 2014). Mari Asai is conscious about her personal isolation, by making herself different from the people around her. Character-Bound Focalizations can be found as she reveals her thoughts and emotions but still manage to keep her distance from the other characters about sensitive matter like her real reasons for running away and her sister.

Compared to the topic of aloneness, External Focalization and Character-Bound Focalization are rare to be found in this topic of isolation. Throughout the story, Mari slowly reveals some parts of herself from her perspective or in this context is called Character-Based Focalization (CF). One significant finding is that although Mari is willing to interact with other people, she is found to be dodging questions that require her to reveal matters about her sister, Eri Asai, and her reasons for staying awake.

Other than Mari's own Character-Based Focalization, several CFs from other characters are also found. Takahashi shares his perspective about how Mari seems to be someone who does not like to communicate with other people. Eri also shares her perspective about Mari's attitude towards everyone. Even Eri Asai, Mari's sister, sees the isolation that Mari builds. It seems that Mari is really isolating herself towards everyone that she knows and using many ways to do it: speaking Chinese among Japanese people, staying away from the people that she

knows, and reading book away at home at night. In terms of External Focalization, the narrator appears to be rarely focalizing Mari's isolation.

The next form that can be seen in Mari is alienation which is the form of loneliness which happens to be the most extreme form of being lonely. Mijuskovic (2012) also states that alienation is the outcome of an intense form of loneliness. In this form of loneliness, Mari is found to be the only one who talks about it. Depicted through second degree of focalization (CF2), Mari reflects to her past experiences and people's perception of her. Mari's alienation comes from the topic that she avoided the most which happens to be her sister, Eri Asai, and also her parents and peers.

Mari signifies the use of Character-Based Focalization on the second degree in seeing her-self through her parents' eyes. Since she was a child, Mari already experienced alienation. This alienation is affected by her parents who always seem to compare her with her sister. When she focuses on her parents' negative perception, Mari also compares herself to her sister from believing

others' negative perspectives. Her alienation seems to be the result of people's comparison of her from her sister which makes Mari jealous of her sister. Mari does not deny that her sister is amazing, implying her jealousy. Mari is not only accepting, but also affirms that she looks less pretty than her sister. Mari also learned the comparison in an extreme way when she was bullied by her classmates. Mari's parents, the people around her, and even her class mates alienate her directly and indirectly. The alienation seems to be appeared due to Mari's attitude and appearance; Mari seems to be "too different" from others and she does not have the confidence to be different.

In this form, it can be seen that the sources of Mari's alienation are the attitudes of her parents and colleagues in treating her. The people around her perceive her rather negatively and it contributes to her state of loneliness. Mari implicitly realizes that she has many problems about her relationship with Eri and her parents. People's comparison of the two sisters and her parents' high expectation seems to

shape her as a person filled with loneliness.

Mari's acknowledgment of her alienation completes the previous two forms: aloneness and isolation. It manifests from Mari's childhood and manifests into her current state of mind. From all of the forms mentioned before it can be seen that she experiences a severe loneliness.

Loneliness is a state of mind when someone desire to be with or accepted by someone else but could not. In terms of loneliness, Mari never actually states the emotion implicitly, but by going through its other forms such as alienation, isolation, and aloneness, she must have been lonely in her own state of mind. On the other hand, the other characters share their experiences of loneliness to help Mari identify her own experience. This happens to be the only form to be presented through CF1 or CF2 and EF2 rather than EF1. It implies that the state of loneliness is rather hard to be expressed through perceptible senses. The state of loneliness needed to be expressed either through the character's own focalization (CF1) or

by being empathetic towards the other character (EF2/CF2).

It is eventually revealed through second level of CF2 that Mari Asai's problems are the source of her loneliness. Mari always sees how other people compares her to her sister, but she never really talks about Eri and even refuses to bring the subject. Mari reveals how she actually idolized Eri at some point in her life through CF on a second level. It seems that Mari is even jealous of her sister since she is successful in life. As Eri's little sister, Mari wants to get her attention and it makes her feel lonely.

Other than her relationship with Eri that gets worse, Mari's experience of being bullied also has a major role in her loneliness. Mari perceives herself as someone with low self-esteem, and it means that in this moment she is already in a better state. In these focalizations, Mari often reflects and looks back at her experience to justify her current emotions. Mari seems to be traumatized and it seems to signify that she is still helpless and lonely. It

means that Mari Asai's loneliness has rooted deep inside her mind.

Mari Asai experiences many forms of loneliness throughout her life, but she is slowly getting out of her misery throughout a-one-night-event in the story. There are three ways to conquer loneliness, according to Mijuskovic (2014), which are having a communication, having an intimate relationship, and embracing the aloneness and seeking for solitude instead. In After Dark (2007), Mari does not use the three ways in significant order since the ways are not a prescriptive way for everyone. Mari's way to solve her loneliness is analyzed according to each form. The most type of focalization found in this section is CF2. The other characters help Mari to perceive her problems through some other perspectives that is depicted through CF2.

Solitude can come when someone has experienced loneliness to the extent that person is tired from getting hurt by others and try to just be with themselves in order to not getting hurt anymore (Mijuskovic, 2014). At the point the story takes place, Mari has come to term about her loneliness. In

the beginning of the story, she reveals that she chooses to be alone as a way to be running from her problems. It means that Mari has had enough of everything to the point that she cannot think about anything. She also willingly isolates herself from the people around her as a form of self-protection. Mari would rather be hurt by her own loneliness rather than be hurt from what other people say anymore. This coping mechanism is indirectly shown through Mari herself with CF1 and also the narrator perceptions of her with EF2.

From the very beginning, Mari tries to embrace her aloneness. She denies having a fight with anyone, but her desire to be alone is previously revealed that she does not want to think about her sister. Mari can stay home and solve it there, but since the sources of her loneliness are her own family, she prefers to be by herself. Even when people are questioning about it, she does not want to think about it even for a second. It seems that Mari just want to run away from everything.

Towards the end, after Mari communicates with Kaoru, Korogi,

and Takahashi, she seems to reach the state of solitude. The narrator-focalizer even focalizes Mari's emotion of being completely by herself. The narrator senses that Mari somehow embraces being by herself in a positive manner. She finally feels some kind of peaceful emotion for the first time in days. It implies that Mari's nights have been very restless and full of painful thoughts. This is also the first time the narrator-focalizer takes charge in focalizing Mari's solitude. It may mean that Mari's loneliness is very remarkable to the point that external perceptions may see the drastic changes that Mari goes through.

The setting seems to also symbolize Mari's progress in solving her loneliness. As depicted by the narrator-focalizer, the love hotel that she discovered becomes a safe haven for Mari. A love hotel that is supposed to be a shabby place for brief meeting of sexual conduct changes into a comforting place for Mari to embrace being alone. When even the narrator focalizes the room in a negative manner by using the words such as 'mysterious' and 'odd', the room still

evokes in Mari positive emotions. It seems to represent Mari's feeling that begins to accept herself. What happens in the love hotel shows that Mari gradually conquers her loneliness. However, to fully conquer it, she needs to open herself to others and build intimate relationships.

By having conversations with others, someone can share thoughts and find mutual emotions in others. It is one potential way to solve loneliness, according to Mijuskovic (2014), although by having conversations with others does not mean getting completely affirmed by the other person, since emotions are limited to words. Mari Asai is accepting strangers' offers to go with them throughout the night, even when she intended to be alone in the first place. It means that Mari is still willing to communicate with others to see whether they can help her or not. Mari's most important conversations seem to be with Kaoru and Korogi, where they share their experience of loneliness that seems to be related with each other. Most CF1 and CF2 are found to be used in these interactions.

The first person whom Mari reveals herself to is Kaoru. When Mari shares her perception about what her parents' think about her, Kaoru tries to perceive it differently. Kaoru also helps to perceive Mari's personality from her own experience. Mari focuses on her perceptions about her parents negatively, but Kaoru offers to perceive her parents positively. When Kaoru sees another possibility of what Mari's parents may think, Mari seems to consider about the possibility rather than arguing.

The next person that can relate to Mari's loneliness is Korogi. When Mari tells Korogi how she views the problems with her sister, Korogi responds with rather positive focalization about Mari's condition. Mari perceives Eri's condition in a negative way since she is only makes her feel lonely. But, Korogi's perspective helps her to get another insight for what might really happen with Eri, just like how Kaoru's perceive her parents. Korogi states that she can relate to Eri's state which is helpless and lonely. It is an insight

for Mari to realize that her sister is also lonely like Mari, even lonelier.

Mari is slowly overcoming her loneliness because of others' positive perspective of not only herself, but also her sister, and their relationship through having conversations. Towards the end, Mari is found to be less isolated and may possibly feel less lonely than before. But, the most eventful moment of Mari's breaking her own isolation is by building an intimate relationship.

According to Mijuskovic (2014), an intimate relationship/companionship means reaching outwards one self's to conquer separation or physical aloneness. This intimate companionship's ideal form would be a form of friendship. Mari is not used to an intimate relationship since she is always by herself. Although she mentions some friends that she met in high school, it is possible that the friends are closer to acquaintance. The closest relationship she has is with her sister. But, throughout her night journey, an acquaintance turned friend helps Mari to conquer her loneliness, namely Takahashi.

Takahashi is one of the most important characters in the story since he knows both sisters. He helps to bridge Eri, Mari, and their relationship by revealing his perspective that is shown through CF2. Takahashi and Mari's relationship eventually helps Mari to encourage her to build the relationship with her sister once again. The relationships that Mari built with Takahashi and Eri eventually help her overcoming her loneliness.

Takahashi's perspective of the sister helps Mari to rethink about her problems. Takahashi interprets his perspective of Eri's desire to get close to Mari. From Mari's dialogue, it can be implied that Eri feels Mari is the one who makes their relationship grows distant. But for Mari, she does not feel as the one to blame, implying that Eri also takes charge by doing nothing to close the gap between them. Takahashi only reminds her that Eri's emotion is also valid because everyone feels a same thing differently. It seems that Takahashi feels Eri is just the same with Mari, feeling lonely and blaming each other

for it. Although Mari feels distanced to her sister, Takahashi wants to help her that she is not the only one who feels that way. It may help Mari to focus on herself as a victim and realize that other people may be as lonely as she is. When Mari understands this, she can get out from her isolation and reach out for Eri. Takahashi reveals all he knows about Eri and wants Mari to see things differently as it may help Mari to be considerate for Eri.

Communicating with Takahashi helps Mari in understanding Eri by focalizing her differently. Because they both know Eri Asai, they end up spending lots of time together, and then Takahashi grows fond of Mari.

According to Mijuskovic (2014), the point of having in an intimate companionship is to diminish the aloneness between people, and Takahashi's intention seems to be the same. After talking with Mari, Takahashi seems to relate to her loneliness and feel as if they would be less lonely if they were together. It is also implying that Mari has her own positive and attractive traits regardless of what the society thinks

of her. In the other hand, Mari doubtfully accepts his offer, but this confession of Takahashi seems to succeed in breaking her personal isolation. Mari used to act strong towards her-self and others, but when someone offers to accompany her, she eventually lets herself to be honest.

At home, Mari reaches out to her sister for the first time in ages. It means that she listens to advices from Kaoru, Korogi, and Takahashi. She is not isolating herself anymore, and she knows that she can face her worst source of loneliness if she wants to get out of it. The narrator-focalizer seems to be the only one who focalizes Mari's emotions and thoughts for her sister. It may mean that Mari becomes transparent towards the end of the story to the extent that the narrator may understand Mari as a whole. One way that Mari knows to connect with her sister is with having an intimate relation through physical intimacy.

The narrator focalizes Mari's vulnerability that is shown through physical and other senses such as touching, kissing, and whispering. Although it is only physically, the narrator-focalizer can sense that the

distance between the characters gradually fades. Here, through the perceptible focalization, Mari seems to finally get out of her own misery and tries to reach towards someone for the first time. It may mean that Mari has overcome her complex emotions of loneliness filled with alienation, aloneness, and isolation.

In the end, Mari appears to be successful in solving her loneliness. She undergoes a series of events overnight in new places, meets strangers and acquaintance, communicates about her loneliness, accepts positive focalizations about her, and embraces the one who makes her the loneliest. A stoic Mari in the beginning who is filled with loneliness turns into an emotional Mari as she lets herself to be more honest towards everyone and most importantly herself. Everything is overcome with the help of some focalizations that encourages Mari throughout the story.

The findings discussed above show two significant issues: focalization helps to depicts the forms of loneliness and it also reveals how loneliness is overcome. Character-Based Focalization (CF2) is the most useful focalization to see how Mari Asai experiences and perceives loneliness. Aloneness, as the form of loneliness most frequently sensed through perceptible senses, is mostly found to be focalized through External Focalization (EF). Through the perceptible senses of the characters, it is hard to assume whether someone is lonely by being alone in a sense of mental state. Contradictory, isolation, alienation, and loneliness as mental states are mostly depicted through Character-Based Focalization on level one and two (CF1/CF2). This literary tool is important in seeing how the main character's problems unraveled. By willing to reveal about herself, her sister, and their relationship, Mari steps out of and overcomes her misery. The main character's loneliness begins with the shallow perception of aloneness presented through EF1 and ends with a deeper understanding of the character's loneliness revealed through CF2.

The finding shares some resemblance to Thamery and Khalifa's research (2009) on the

focalization in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). The use of internal focalization in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) is found to represent the different realities that the characters experience just like how the character-bound focalization in the present study helps to reveal the characters' different perspectives on loneliness. However, Thamery and Khalifa (2009) used Genette's focalization (1980), while the present study uses Bal's. The difference between Genette's and Bal's focalization lies in the depth of the focalization which is limited in a sense that Internal Focalization is the general view of the character rather than Bal's Character-Bound Focalization that further distinguishes the levels of focalization. The present study also differs from Thamery and Khalifa (2009) in the significant use of CF on the second level rather than the general CF. When a character is revealing his/her perspective of something in general (CF1), it is unlikely for the other characters to directly connect that perspective to themselves. But, when a character directly shares his/her perspective on an issue that the other character

experiences (CF2), the other character will get an insight and realize that his/her issue can be perceived differently. It shows that an elaborate use of focalization as a literary tool helps the character to communicate with each other more effectively.

In terms of Young Adult Literature (YA), *After Dark* (2007) succeeds in depicting and underlining the struggle of a young adult who faces loneliness. YA provides young readers to understand life's ups and downs (Bucher, 2006). Mari Asai is first presented as a girl with overwhelming emotions of loneliness. However, as time goes by she is gradually able to overcome the emotions by willing to listen to others and open her mind to different perspectives. Mari undergoes many events to overcome her loneliness, and her struggle can be a good example for young people who experience the same thing. As Nikolajeva (2014) explains, young adult fiction attempts to convey exactly an adolescent's inability to understand the world and other people; the confusion and anxiety of being young, and the discomfort

about the profound changes in mind and body. What Nikolajeva describes is portrayed through the novel's main character. First, Mari only sees the world and the society through her own glasses which makes her anxious and confused. But, when Mari lets new people into her life, she gradually changes to handle her own problems. The portrayal of Mari Asai's loneliness may inspire and encourage young people to overcome their own loneliness since it helps them to see the societies' perception towards the issues.

The novel also reveals some interesting findings regarding the characteristics of Young Adult Literature. It is common to be found in YA, the hero/heroine solves his/her own problems without depending on an adult figure such as parents (Nilsen & Donelson, 2009). Throughout the story, Mari accepts strangers' advice and those strangers happen to be adults. Although the heroine does not depend on those adult characters to solve her problem at the end of the story, it has to be highlighted that those adult character are play an important role in Mari's efforts to

identify her own problems before solving them by herself. Hence, adult figure is still important for a teen that is transitioning into adulthood. This finding can be compared to that of Chen's research (2009) on *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951). While the main character in *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) is found to be persistent in solving everything by himself rather than seeking help outwardly, which is a common phenomenon among young adults, *After Dark* shows that young adults need to listen and consider what others say about their problems, especially the adults. Most of YA works set a good example that young people need to solve their own problems, but it needs to be remembered that not everything can be overcome by oneself and getting help from adults does not lessen the strength of a young adult, just like what the present study shows.

It is also important to discuss the issue of loneliness in young adults in general and young adult literature in particular with reference to the cultural context. In the case of *After Dark* (2007)*,* the main character is set to live in a Japanese culture.

Whenever Mari talks about being lonely, other characters can relate to her. It is important for someone to be understood by others who are exposed to the same culture. It seems that the society where Mari lives in, as in the sense of reality is supposedly the society in Tokyo, where everyone experiences loneliness in the stage of young adult but the experience is frowned upon. Although the characters reveal that they can relate to the loneliness experienced at a young age, they perceive Mari's aloneness as something negative at first. It seems to imply that they can sense the problems coming from being a teenager like Mari. It shows that it is a common issue for teenager, but it also implies that a young adult that chooses to be alone at night means having problems. It seems that aloneness is culturally interpreted as something negative, yet everyone experiences it similarly. It shows that loneliness is a silent killer. The significant advice for young adult readers that can be implied from the novel then is for adolescents to be willing to seek help outwardly by having communication with others.

The whole communication with others depicted in the novel, not necessarily with adults, serves as a fantasy of Murakami for the isolated youth in Japan. Japan is known for its individualized people, especially the youths' social withdrawal that started from the 1990s until now (Suwa & Suzuki, 2013). The phenomenon of isolated youth was common in Japan, which makes it sensible if Mari cannot find someone her age to talk about her problems. The only people left to talk about the problems are the adults. As Mijuskovic (2014) states that one of the ways to conquer loneliness is by communicating, it will be hard for Mari to not find anyone to talk to. Thus, Mari only has those adults to talk about her problems with. Considering Guevarra's (2018) argument that Murakami's earlier books serve as a symbol to let young people know that they are not alone against Japan's economic obsessions, it is possible that Murakami also sends the same message through *After Dark*. With this example of a young adult who is willing to communicate about her problems with others, Murakami

addresses the desire for Japanese to interact more with each other rather than isolating themselves.

Intriguingly, the loneliness in young adult that is depicted in *After Dark* (2014) is more universal than it seems, in terms of age and maturity. A teenager, a foreigner teenager, and adults represented in the novel experiences loneliness but in different manners. Each character copes with and conquers their loneliness differently. Some characters choose to talk about it, some choose to run away from it, and some choose to just live with it. It may not be a problem that appears solely in young adulthood, but young adults need to realize that at some point loneliness can come to them and they should realize that it is something that they can solve and should be overcome by themselves.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the forms of loneliness in the main character are aloneness, isolation, loneliness, and alienation. The forms are shown to be experienced and revealed by the main character throughout the story. The main character is not only left alone by the people around her, but she also chooses to continue being alone for fear of getting hurt by others. One form intertwines with the other forms, since the four forms are on one continuum. The loneliness that is experienced by the main character seems to be a never-ending cycle until she is willing to face and conquer it.

The main character succeeds in overcoming her loneliness through three different ways: seeking solitude, having a communication, and building intimate relationships. The novel portrays the willingness of the main character to understand the loneliness that she goes through. Only by communicating with the other characters does she then understand that everyone also experiences loneliness like her. The key of solving the character's loneliness is highlighted in having communication and having intimate relationship such as friendship rather than solitude. When the character is willing to comprehend other's view of loneliness and to assure herself that she has someone to depend on, then

the weight of loneliness can be overcome.

The main character's experience of dealing with and overcoming loneliness depicted in *After Dark* (2014) is shown through different types of focalization. As different focalization helps to reveal different form of loneliness, the literary tool is very important in disclosing the issues presented in the story in great detail. It shows that what one sees is not necessarily what the others see, especially when an issue is presented through Character-Bound Focalization on the second level (CF2) rather than any other type. The other characters' perspectives which are shown through CF2 help the main character to deal with her problems. Focalization also helps the reader to see the changes that happen within the main character, especially in terms of abstract concepts such as loneliness.

In general, the findings above imply that *After Dark* (2007) has some implications. First, loneliness is universal, regardless of age. However in terms of YA, the main character is encouraged to overcome it by herself while at the same time being open-minded to others' perspective. The willingness to listen and consider others' opinion is needed for teenagers to step into adulthood. It implies that what makes an adult is being considerate toward others and not solely focusing on his/her own opinions. But in the end, everything depends on the young adult's decision on directing his/her life. It implies that the process of deciding what to do in conquering loneliness is what gives young adult the strength to be an independent adult. Another implication in terms of loneliness is that the experience is an important phase where young adult realize and reflect on his/her own capability in facing life's ups and downs.

REFERENCES

Bal, M. (1985). *Narratology introduction to the theory of narrative*. Toronto: University of Toronto press. Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/3989324/Mieke_Bal_Narratology_Introduction_to_the_Theory_of_Narrative

Bucher, K. T. (2006). *Young adult literature: Exploration, evaluation, and appreciation*. Michigan: Pearson. Retrieved from

https://www.pearsonhighered.com>assets

Campbell, P. (2010). *Campbell's scoop: Reflections on young adult literature*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press. Retrieved from https://books.google.co.id/books?id=TvHHOXZNiBsC&source=gbs_navlinks_s

Chen, L. (2009). An analysis of the adolescent problems in the catcher in the rye. *Journals of Asian Social Science*, 5(5), 143-147. DOI: 10.5539/ass.v5n5p143

Genette, G. (1980). *Narrative discourse: an essay in method*. New York: Cornell University Press. Retrieved from https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/currentstudents/undergraduate/modules/fulllist/special/english19thcentnovel/genette_for_en245_pge.pdf

Guevarra, A. U.(2018). In a world without love: society, religion and the individual in Haruki Murakami's 1q84. *QUEST: Studies on Religion & Culture in Asia,* 3,1-16. Retrieved from https://www.theology.cuhk.edu.hk/quest/index.php/quest/article/view/58

Harmond, J. & Henkin, R. (2016). The power of books: Teacher changing perspectives about using young adult books to teach social justice. *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy,* 3(2). Retrieved from http://journaldialogue.org/issues/the-power-of-books-teachers-changing-perspectives-about-using-young-adult-books-to-teach-social-justice/

Hong, T. (2016). Transformed by comics the murakamiverse, palimpsestic iconography, and cumulative meaning in the fiction of Murakami Haruki. *Image & narrative,* 17(3), 57-67. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/30601219/Transformed_by_Comics_The_Murakamiverse_Palimpsestic_Iconography_and_Cumulative_Meaning_in_the_Fiction_of_Murakami_Haruki

Killeen, C. (1998). Loneliness: an epidemic in modern society. *Journal of Advanced Nursing,* 28(4), 762-770. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.1998.00703.x

Koch, P. (2015). *Solitude: A philosophical encounter*. USA: Open Court. Retrieved from https://books.google.co.id/books/about/Solitude.html?id=dDZkCwAAQBAJ&redir_esc=y

Mijuskovic, B. L. (2012). *Loneliness in philosophy, psychology, and literature*. Bloomington: iUniverse.

Murakami, H. (2007). *After dark*. New York: Alfred A Knopf.

Nikolajeva, M. (2014). Memory of the present: Empathy and identity in young adult fiction. *Narrative works,* 4(2), 86-107. Retrieved from https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/NW/article/view/22784

Nilsen, A. P. & Donelson, K. L. (2009). *Literature for today's young adults*. Michigan: HarperCollins. Retrieved from https://books.google.co.id/books/about/Literature_for_today_s

_young_adults.html?id=DLkQ
AQAAMAAJ&redir_esc=y

Ravari, Z. K. & Bahadori. E. (2016).
A postmodernist comparative
study: Haruki Murakami and
Bijan Najdi. *Literary Quest,*
2(8), 51-68. Retrieved from
https://www.researchgate.net/p
ublication/322675448_A_Post
modernist_Comparative_Study
_Haruki_Murakami_and_Bijan
_Najdi

Suwa, M. & Suzuki, K. (2013). The
phenomenon of "hikikomori"
(social withdrawal) and the
socio-cultural situation in japan
today. *Journal of
Psychopathology,* 19, 191-198.
Retrieved from
www.jpsychopathol.it>2013>0
1b-Suwa

Thamery, A. & Khalifa, J. (2009). A
study of focalization in Woolf's
mrs Dalloway. *Journal of the
College of Arts,* 49, 15-24.
Retrieved from
https://www.researchgate.net/p
ublication/309912996_A_Stud
y_of_Focalization_in_Woolf's_
Mrs_Dalloway

Wells, A. D. (2003). *Themes found in
young adult literature: A
comparative study between
1980 and 2000* (master's
thesis). University of North
Carolina at Chapel Hill, North
Carolina, United States of
America. Retrieved from
https://ils.unc.edu/MSpapers/2
861.pdf