

**JUDITH HERMAN'S TRAUMA RECOVERY OF THE
MAIN CHARACTER IN *A GOOD PERSON* 2023**

THESIS

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK
IBRAHIM MALANG**

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**JUDITH HERMAN'S TRAUMA RECOVERY OF THE
MAIN CHARACTER IN *A GOOD PERSON* 2023**

THESIS

Presented to
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2026**

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I state that the thesis entitled "*Judith Herman's Trauma Recovery of The Main Character in A Good Person 2023*" is my original work. I do not include any materials previously written or published by another person, except those cited as references and written in the bibliography. Hereby, if there is any objection or claim, I am the only person who is responsible for that.

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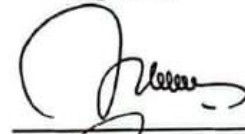
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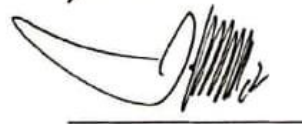
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MOTTO

” And do not lose hope in God’s mercy”

(QS. Az-Zummar:53)

”Keberhasilan bukanlah milik orang yang pintar. Keberhasilan adalah kepunyaan mereka yang senantiasa berusaha”

(BJ Habibie)

DEDICATION

The author has completed this thesis which of course is not spared from the support and prayers of his loved ones. Therefore, the author presents this thesis to:

1. My dearest parents, Mr Subiakto and Mrs Sulikah. To Father, the strongest man I have ever met, who always strives for the best and sets an exemplary example for his children. My dear Mother, your presence makes our home feel warmer and full of love. Father and Mother, thank you for your unwavering love, your constant prayers, all the sacrifices you have made, and thank you for making our home the most precious place to return to.
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May Allah reward my beloved family for their kindness.

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ABSTRACT

Rochmah, Hidayatur (2026) *Judith Herman's Trauma Recovery of The Main Character in A Good Person 2023* Thesis. English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Humanities, Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University Malang. Supervisor: Dr. Ahmad Ghozi, M.A

Keywords: Trauma, Recovery, Identity, Judith Herman, Film A Good Person

This study analyses the trauma and the trauma recovery process of the main character in the film *A Good Person*. The study aims to examine the impact of trauma on identity and the stages of trauma recovery experienced by the main character. This study uses Judith Herman's Trauma and Recovery theory as its theoretical framework. The research method used is literary study. Data were obtained from dialogues, narratives, and scenes in the film that represent the impact of trauma on the main character's identity and social relationships, as well as illustrating the stages of trauma recovery experienced by Allison. The results of the study indicate that trauma significantly affects Allison's identity and social relationships. Trauma caused Allison to lose her sense of direction in life, self-control, and life purpose, as well as to become dependent on painkillers and withdraw from her social environment. Furthermore, this study found that Allison experienced the three stages of trauma recovery as outlined by Judith Herman, namely establishing safety, remembrance and mourning, and reconnection. In the first stage, Allison built a sense of security through her involvement in the rehabilitation community. In the second stage, Allison began to confront and share her traumatic experiences with the rehabilitation community. In the final stage, Allison began to rebuild social relationships with her family and those around her. This research shows that the process of trauma recovery is not only related to an individual's psychological healing, but also involves social support and the reconstruction of one's identity.

مستخلص البحث

رخمة، هداية (2026). التعافي من الصدمة وفقاً لنظرية جوديث هيرمان لدى الشخصية الرئيسية في فيلم "شخص صالح" (2023): دراسة قائمة على نظرية جوديث هيرمان في دراسات الصدمة. رسالة جامعية، قسم الأدب الإنجليزي، كلية العلوم الإنسانية، جامعة مولانا مالك إبراهيم الإسلامية الحكومية بمالانغ. المشرف: الدكتور أحمد غوزي، الماجستير.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصدمة، التعافي، الهوية، جوديث هيرمان، فيلم «شخص صالح».

يحلل هذا البحث الصدمة النفسية وعملية التعافي منها لدى الشخصية الرئيسية في فيلم A Good Person. ويهدف البحث إلى دراسة تأثير الصدمة على الهوية، وكذلك مراحل التعافي من الصدمة التي تمرّ بها الشخصية الرئيسية. ويعتمد هذا البحث على نظرية «الصدمة والتعافي» لجوديث هيرمان بوصفها أساساً نظرياً للدراسة. المنهج البحثي المستخدم هو الدراسة الأدبية. وقد جمعت البيانات من الحوارات، والسرد، والمشاهد في الفيلم التي تمثل تأثير الصدمة على هوية الشخصية الرئيسية وعلاقاتها الاجتماعية، إضافة إلى المشاهد التي تُظهر مراحل التعافي من الصدمة التي تمرّ بها أليسون. وأظهرت نتائج البحث أن الصدمة أثّرت بشكل كبير على هوية أليسون وعلاقاتها الاجتماعية. فقد تسببت الصدمة في فقدان أليسون لاتجاه حياتها، وسيطرتها على نفسها، وأهدافها الحياتية، كما جعلتها تعاني من الاعتماد على المسكنات والانعزال عن محيطها الاجتماعي. وإلى جانب ذلك، توصّل البحث إلى أن أليسون مرّت بثلاث مراحل للتعافي من الصدمة كما أوضحتها جوديث هيرمان، وهي: تأسيس الأمان، والتذكّر والجداد، وإعادة الاندماج. ففي المرحلة الأولى، بنت أليسون شعوراً بالأمان من خلال مشاركتها في مجتمع إعادة التأهيل. وفي المرحلة الثانية، بدأت في مواجهة تجربتها الصادمة والكشف عنها أمام مجتمع إعادة التأهيل. أمّا في المرحلة الأخيرة، فقد بدأت بإعادة بناء علاقاتها الاجتماعية مع عائلتها والأشخاص المحيطين بها. ويُظهر هذا البحث أن عملية التعافي من الصدمة لا ترتبط فقط بالشفاء النفسي للفرد، بل تشمل أيضاً الدعم الاجتماعي وإعادة بناء الهوية الذاتية.

ABSTRAK

Rochmah, Hidayatur (2026) *Judith Herman's Trauma Recovery of The Main Character in A Good Person 2023* Skripsi Program Studi Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Dosen Pembimbing: Dr. Ahmad Khozi, M.A.

Kata Kunci: Trauma, Pemulihan, Identitas, Judith Herman, Film A Good Person

Penelitian ini menganalisis trauma dan proses pemulihan trauma tokoh utama dalam film *A Good Person*. Penelitian bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengaruh trauma terhadap identitas serta tahapan pemulihan trauma yang dialami tokoh utama. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori *Trauma and Recovery* dari Judith Herman sebagai landasan teoritis. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah literary study. Data diperoleh dari dialog, narasi, dan adegan dalam film yang merepresentasikan dampak trauma terhadap identitas dan relasi sosial tokoh utama, serta menunjukkan tahapan pemulihan trauma yang dialami Allison. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa trauma memengaruhi identitas dan hubungan sosial Allison secara signifikan. Trauma menyebabkan Allison kehilangan arah hidup, kontrol diri, dan tujuan hidup, serta mengalami ketergantungan terhadap obat penghilang rasa sakit dan menarik diri dari lingkungan sosialnya. Selain itu, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa Allison mengalami tiga tahapan pemulihan trauma sebagaimana dikemukakan Judith Herman, yaitu *establishing safety*, *remembrance and mourning*, dan *reconnection*. Pada tahap pertama, Allison membangun rasa aman melalui keterlibatannya dalam komunitas rehabilitasi. Pada tahap kedua, Allison mulai menghadapi dan mengungkapkan pengalaman traumatisnya kepada komunitas rehabilitasi. Sementara pada tahap terakhir, Allison mulai membangun kembali hubungan sosial dengan keluarga dan orang-orang di sekitarnya. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa proses pemulihan trauma tidak hanya berkaitan dengan penyembuhan psikologis individu, tetapi juga melibatkan dukungan sosial dan rekonstruksi identitas diri.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the research background, research questions, problems of the study, significance of the research, scope and limitations of the research, and definitions of key terms relevant to this study.

A. Background of the Study

Trauma is a mental health issue that is gaining increasing attention in society, particularly among adolescents and young adults. A study conducted in 24 countries involving 68,894 respondents showed that more than 70% of respondents had experienced at least one traumatic event in their lifetime, and approximately 30.5% had experienced four or more traumatic events (Benjet et al., 2016). Another study also found that 80.4% of adolescents had been exposed to at least one type of trauma during childhood. Experiencing trauma during adolescence can also increase the risk of developing various psychological disorders such as depression, stress disorders, and anxiety (Stangeland et al., 2024). These data indicate that traumatic experiences are frequently experienced by people globally. Trauma is not only understood as a psychological problem, but also a social phenomenon that is important to study and address

Psychological trauma is a condition in which a person has experienced a frightening or distressing event. People who have experienced trauma often find it difficult to go about their daily lives. Trauma that is not promptly treated appropriately can lead to psychological disorders such as feelings of guilt, self-rejection and so on (Fauzi, 2023). Trauma can hinder a person's emotional and

social functioning in daily life (Krisdyaningsih, 2021). According to Herman, their physical and mental responses are still influenced by the traumatic events they have previously experienced (Herman, 1992).

Trauma can arise when a person experiences negative events such as accidents, physical abuse, sexual abuse, the effects of war, the loss of a loved one, bullying, and natural disasters. People who have experienced trauma often face many obstacles in their daily lives, such as difficulty controlling their emotions and difficulty forming social relationships and integrating into their environment. Recent research indicates that traumatic experiences can disrupt a child's daily activities, leading to emotional changes, behavior changes, and mental health issues (Tong Chien, Wai & Tung Lau, 2023). Many individuals who have experienced trauma often misuse drugs in an attempt to cope with unresolved emotional wounds (Mustofa, 2023).

Films can be studied within the field of literary studies because they can be analysed as narrative texts and because films also possess the same intrinsic structure as literary works, such as characters, plot, conflict, theme, etc. In line with developments in contemporary literary studies, films can be considered objects of literary study, as the concept of 'text' is no longer viewed as solely written works or print media, but can encompass visual and audiovisual media. As explained in the study of Wahyudi (2018) entitled *Reading the Possibility of Film as an Object of Literary Research*, which states that by the end of the 20th century the definition of "text" had expanded to include film, television, video and digital audio (Wahyudi, 2018). Therefore, this research falls within the realm of literary studies,

as film is viewed as a narrative text that can be read and analysed using literary theory or trauma studies.

Trauma is not merely a psychological experience, but a narrative experience that can be represented through visual and narrative texts in film. As a medium of visual communication, film not only conveys a narrative, but also serves as a medium for conveying emotional messages to the audience (Ikhwan et al., 2025). Films play a role in shaping society's perspectives and ways of thinking through narratives that address various topics and social issues (Putri Ariyanti, 2025). The messages in films can be observed through various elements, such as plot, dialogue, scenes and so on.

Film is a medium of communication that can be used to address the issue of trauma. Therefore, this study selected this title and subject matter because the issues of trauma and recovery from trauma are explored in the film *A Good Person*, making it relevant to this research. The film *A Good Person* (2023) is an inspiring example that also explores the themes of trauma and recovery, specifically through the traumatic experiences of the main character, Allison. Allison suffers trauma after being involved in a car accident she caused, an accident that resulted in the death of her future sister-in-law. The accident left Allison depressed and her life in shambles. Following the accident, Allison broke off her engagement and severed ties with her fiancé's family; she became addicted to OxyContin, lived in isolation and was constantly despondent. Drawing on Judith Herman's theory of trauma and recovery, this study explores the trauma and recovery process experienced by Allison. The scope of the analysis focuses on how the film portrays the traumatic

experiences that affect the main character's identity and social relationships, as well as how the process of trauma healing experienced by Allison is reflected through aspects of the narrative and dialogue that mirror her psychological state. In the process of trauma recovery, social support such as family and friends is crucial (Sippel et al., 2024). Trauma healing requires the formation of new, supportive connections (Herman, 1992).

To examine the process of trauma healing, this study draws on Judith Herman's (1992) theory of Trauma and Recovery. The trauma recovery process has three main stages, namely, safety (building a sense of security within oneself), remembrance and mourning (remembering and accepting the traumatic experiences endured), and reconnection (re-establishing relationships with social life) (Herman, 1992). Using this framework, the film *A Good Person* can be viewed as a film that narrates a character's journey through the stages of trauma towards self-recovery. By applying this theory, this study aims to reveal the process of the stages of trauma recovery experienced by Allison.

Judith Herman's theory of trauma and recovery has been widely used to examine issues relating to trauma and recovery from trauma. Research by (Ayu Meilani R & Anas, 2025) to study the film entitled *Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati* using Judith Herman's theory, the study identified the form of trauma experienced by the main character. The study by (Umer & Aziz, 2022) examined the film *Ordinary People* (1980); it analysed the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) experienced by the main character and described the main character's recovery process using Judith Herman's three-stage model of recovery. In addition

to using films as research subjects, Judith Herman's theory can also be applied to examine issues of trauma in literary works. There is a study by (Sarungu & Andayani, 2023) which examines Colleen Hoover's novel *It Ends With Us*, and a study by (Rodiaismi, 2025) which examines the novel *The Tearsmith* by Erin Doom. Both studies examine traumatic experiences and the recovery process using Judith Herman's theory. Furthermore, there is a study by (Li & Zhao, 2025) which examines William Shakespeare's play *Hamlet* using Judith Herman's theory. This study examines female trauma in *Hamlet*, focusing on traumatic experiences, the symptoms of trauma that emerge, and efforts to recover from trauma. In addition to examining literary works, Judith Herman's theory can also be used to analyse a song, as demonstrated in the research conducted by (Todano et al., 2025) which explores the emotional journey, traumatic experiences and recovery process depicted in Olivia Rodrigo's album GUTS. In the study by (Panggabean, 2023), the research discusses ways of regaining consciousness for survivors of childhood sexual violence. The study uses Judith Herman's theory to explain how trauma can rob victims of their consciousness.

There are two previous studies that have analysed the film *A Good Person* (2023) from various perspectives. The study by (Yahya et al., 2025) analysed types of PTSD, Allison's defence mechanisms, and also described the dynamics of the Id, Ego, and Superego in the main character. The study by (Septian & Dewi, 1945) focuses on analysing and comparing grief experiences in two films, namely *Till* and *A Good Person*. These grief experiences include comparing the causes of grief and the effects of grief.

This study aims to fill a gap in previous research, as none of the earlier studies that used the film *A Good Person* as their subject have analysed the issues of trauma and trauma recovery using Judith Herman's theory. It is hoped that this study will raise public awareness that films are not merely a form of entertainment but can also serve as a medium for conveying and depicting social issues, such as trauma. Analysing the film *A Good Person* can provide an understanding and insight into how a film can convey the issue of trauma and the process of trauma recovery.

B. Problems of the Study

Based on the background outlined above, this study aims to examine and answer two main questions, namely:

1. How does trauma affect the identity and social relationships of the main character in the film *A Good Person*?
2. How does the main character recover from trauma based on Judith Herman's trauma theory?

C. Objectives of the study

Based on the background outlined above, this study aims to examine and answer two main questions, namely:

1. To analyse how trauma can affect the main character's identity and social relationships
2. To analyse how the main character recovers from trauma based on Judith Herman's theory of trauma and recovery.

D. Significance of the Study

The significance of this research falls into two categories: theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this research is expected to expand the scope of literary and trauma studies in film analysis. This study demonstrates that films can depict how trauma affects an individual's identity and social relationships, as well as illustrate the trauma recovery process, which can be analysed using Judith Herman's theory of trauma and recovery. In practical terms, this study is expected to serve as a reference for future researchers examining issues of trauma in film or literary works.

E. Scope and Limitation

This study focuses on the issue of trauma in the character of Allison in the film *A Good Person* (2023). This study positions Allison as the primary subject of trauma and focuses on the impact of her trauma on her social relationships and her journey or stages of trauma recovery. The analysis of the stages of trauma recovery is based on Judith Herman's theory of Trauma and Recovery, which comprises three stages: establishing safety, remembering and mourning, and reconnecting. The research data is limited to scenes and narratives or dialogues that contribute to an understanding of Allison's journey of trauma recovery.

F. Definition of Key Terms

1. Trauma

Trauma is an emotional condition caused by painful experiences such as accidents, natural disasters, the loss of a loved one, bullying, and so on (Tong Chien, Wai & Tung Lau, 2023).

2. Trauma Recovery

Trauma recovery is the process by which a person comes to terms with their trauma in order to rebuild a sense of safety, reconnect with their social environment, and achieve new life goals (Herman, 1992).

3. Social Relations

Social relationships are bonds that arise from interaction between two or more people (Andryani et al., n.d.).

4. Identity

Identity is a concept that describes the uniqueness of an individual and their attachment to a social group, so that identity can be understood as a process that is formed through social interaction and life experiences (Buckingham, 2008).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE RIVIEW

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework used in this study. The discussion includes the approach used, film studies, Judith Herman's theory of *Trauma and Recovery*, trauma studies in popular culture.

A. Psychological Approach

The psychological approach is one approach that aims to analyze the psychological aspects of a work. This approach focuses on understanding the mental state, character, and emotions experienced by the characters. The psychological approach allows researchers to analyze how experiences and emotions can shape an individual's personality and behavior. This is supported by research from (Nabila et al., 2025) which shows that the trauma of abandonment can affect the emotional state and social relationships of Lotso in the film *Toy Story 3*. Thus, the psychological approach serves to analyze how the relationship of psychological experiences influences the actions and behavior of characters in the story.

A psychological approach to film analysis focuses on the mental and emotional aspects of characters, as depicted through dialogue, actions, and storyline. Psychological experiences such as trauma, depression, and loss are often depicted in films. Using a psychological approach, researchers can understand how certain experiences shape identity, change character traits, and influence social relationships.

A psychological approach is relevant to this study because it focuses on the traumatic experiences experienced by the main character in the film *A Good Person*. This study aims to analyze how trauma affects identity and social relationships, as well as the trauma recovery process based on Judith Herman's theory of Trauma and Recovery.

B. Film Studies

This research focuses on analyzing films as texts depicting traumatic experiences. Through analysis of narrative structure and character development, film studies can help explain how the experience of trauma and the process of recovery are depicted in films.

1. The Film Functions as a Visual Text

Films are a form of audiovisual media that serve to convey social messages or moral values to the audience. Social messages and moral values in films can be conveyed through images, symbols, characters and dialogue (Asri, 2020). Meaning in a film can be constructed through these elements. Consequently, the elements within a film can also represent psychological experiences, including trauma and the healing process.

2. Character Formation and Development in Films

In films, the main character plays a key role in conveying the film's message. Characters in films can be categorised according to their roles, characterisation and development. Types of characters include the main character, supporting characters, antagonists, protagonists and others (Sardiana et al., 2024). Character development in films can be achieved through dialogue, social interactions, visual

expressions and the characters' actions. In the context of trauma films, characterisation focuses on the characters' psychological or emotional states.

3. Supporting Characters in Films

Supporting characters in a film play a vital role in the development of the plot. Supporting characters can help to create conflict and influence changes in the main character's attitudes, emotions and decisions. Supporting characters play a role in helping the main character to resolve conflicts within the story. In the context of trauma, supporting characters in a film can play a role in providing support to encourage change in the main character, for example, by assisting the main character in the process of recovering from trauma.

C. Trauma and Recovery by Judith Herman

According to Judith Herman in her book *Trauma and Recovery*, trauma is a response to a horrific or distressing experience endured by an individual. Herman explains that trauma leaves the victim in a state of helplessness and can destroy their connection with their surroundings. Traumatic events can cause the victim to be constantly haunted by feelings of guilt and to struggle to reclaim their sense of self. Traumatic experiences overwhelm the psychological systems that normally help a person maintain a sense of control, connectedness, and meaning (Herman, 1992). Traumatic events can disrupt fundamental human relationships, such as those with family, friends, partners, and the community (Herman, 1992).

According to Herman, the process of trauma recovery involves several key stages: safety, remembrance and mourning, and reconnection. Herman explains that establishing a sense of safety and receiving support, rebuilding social relationships,

recounting the traumatic event, and grieving are factors that have a significant impact on the process of trauma recovery. Thus, based on Herman's explanation, it is evident that trauma can affect the victim's identity as well as their social relationships (Herman, 1992).

1. Trauma Affects Identity and Social Relationships

According to Judith Herman, trauma can damage an individual's identity. Herman explains that a person's identity is formed through safe and supportive relationships. Before experiencing a traumatic event, a person has a stable identity, knows who they are, has a purpose in life, and has good relationships with others. However, traumatic experiences can make individuals feel a loss of control over themselves and their lives, leading to doubts about themselves and others. As a result, trauma survivors often experience an identity crisis, manifested by decreased self-esteem, feelings of guilt, and a loss of confidence in their life goals and social relationships (Herman, 1992). Trauma survivors experience an identity crisis because they feel that their old identity has been lost due to the traumatic experience. Therefore, after experiencing a traumatic event, trauma survivors must rebuild their understanding of their identity.

Traumatic events not only affect a person's psychological state but also undermine fundamental trust. Herman explains that humans build a sense of security, identity, and trust through relationships with others. These relationships provide protection and support that help individuals understand themselves and their environment. When someone experiences a traumatic event, they feel abandoned, unprotected, and disconnected from relationships or support from

family, friends, partners, and society (Herman, 1992). Therefore, traumatic events disrupt the victim's social relationships and environment. Trauma survivors still need support and protection from those around them, but they also feel afraid to trust others. This condition often causes trauma survivors to withdraw from their surroundings, making it difficult for them to rebuild interpersonal relationships (Herman, 1992). This condition can create feelings of loneliness, alienation, and disconnection from their environment. Therefore, according to Herman, trauma not only changes the way trauma survivors view themselves but also affects the way they form relationships and interact with their social environment.

2. The Stages Trauma and Recovery

Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) is a suitable theoretical framework for studying trauma and recovery. Herman outlines three stages of trauma recovery, a theory widely used in sociological and psychological research. According to Herman, these three stages of trauma recovery include establishing a sense of safety, rebuilding one's identity, and reinterpreting the traumatic experience.

1. Establishing Safety

Herman emphasised that the first stage of the trauma recovery process is to establish a sense of safety for the individual. Herman emphasised that the trauma recovery process occurs in stages; the first stage is to ensure the safety of the individual who has experienced trauma. Creating a sense of safety requires actions that make the victim feel in control (Herman, 1992).

In the context of trauma, the success of creating a sense of safety depends on the relationships with those around the trauma survivor. For example, trauma

survivors will feel safe when they receive support from those closest to them, such as family, friends, the community and partners. Guidance and care are forms of support that can aid the recovery process, creating a safe environment for trauma survivors. According to Herman, this stage requires the restoration of ego functions and the development of self-care and self-soothing skills.

2. Remembrance and Mourning

The second stage of the trauma recovery process involves recalling and coming to terms with the trauma experienced. This is the process through which survivors recount the traumatic experiences they have endured. Through this process, traumatic memories that were previously difficult to express become an integral part of the survivor's life story.

This stage demonstrates that maintaining a sense of safety and confronting the past are aspects that can facilitate the trauma recovery process. Trauma survivors must recount their experiences and emotions surrounding the trauma. This second stage can help trauma survivors revisit their emotions and understand the meaning of the events they have experienced.

This stage also represents a period of mourning for the loss caused by the traumatic experience. This process plays a vital role in emotional recovery. The aim of this second stage is to re-experience the traumatic event, so that the trauma is not entirely forgotten. This enables trauma survivors to move forward and rebuild their lives (Herman, 1992).

3. Reconnection

The final stage of the trauma recovery process is reconnection. At this stage, trauma survivors must rebuild their social connections by trying to reconnect with friends. Rebuilding relationships with others enables trauma survivors to rediscover their values.

The key to success at this stage is that trauma survivors must have the courage to make decisions that confront the fears which have long held them back. To face their fears, trauma survivors must begin to dare to try various physical activities, such as martial arts training or venturing into the wilderness. These activities can help trauma survivors overcome the fears they feel. By facing their fears, trauma survivors can restore their self-esteem and regain full control over themselves (Herman, 1992).

Rebuilding relationships also means forming a new identity, so trauma survivors must learn to engage in social interactions, such as forming family ties, friendships or relationships with a partner. At this final stage, trauma survivors can rediscover their purpose in life. The traumatic experiences they have endured can motivate them to take part in activities aimed at preventing future violence (Herman, 1992).

D. Trauma Studies in Popular Culture

Studies of trauma in popular culture focus on how the entertainment media particularly films can depict a person's traumatic experiences. Trauma in popular culture is not merely viewed as an individual experience, but as something shaped by the social environment. Depictions of trauma are presented through narrative,

visuals and characters. The portrayal of trauma in popular media can spark in-depth discussions about mental health or emotional experiences that cannot be expressed directly. The use of cinematography, symbols, and character portrayals in films can highlight various aspects of the trauma experienced by characters, such as the psychological impact and the process of trauma recovery (Pohan et al., 2024).

In popular culture, trauma is often a central theme in character development in films, particularly in the teen drama and psychological drama genres. Trauma is depicted as a response to violent or traumatic experiences, which often manifests itself through disturbing memories (Caruth, 1995). Consequently, trauma is often depicted in films through memories or flashbacks. This is clearly evident in the film *A Good Person*, in which the character Allison suffers trauma following an accident that killed her future sister-in-law.

Films play a role in highlighting social issues and offering solutions to such trauma (Jayanti et al., 2024). Studies of trauma in film not only depict the psychological state of characters but also analyse how support from family, the wider community and society can play a vital role in the success of the trauma recovery process. Successful trauma recovery occurs thanks to the support of those closest to the victim, such as friends, family or partners (Sippel et al., 2024). In popular culture, the issue of trauma is often raised to raise public awareness of mental health issues, particularly among teenagers. Research conducted by (Ikhwan et al., 2025) indicates that research addressing the issue of trauma aims to encourage society to understand and support victims. Through a trauma-informed approach, films can also analyse characters' traumatic experiences, environmental support,

social interactions, and the process of trauma recovery. Trauma studies in film can also highlight how narrative and visual structures play a role in shaping the meaning of trauma and the process of recovery.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methodology employed in this study. The research methodology covers the research design, data sources, data collection techniques, and data analysis procedures.

A. Research Design

This research uses a literary study method. The subject of this study is the film *A Good Person* (2023). Data were collected from dialogue, narration and scenes that demonstrate how trauma can influence the main character's identity and social relationships, and reflect the stages of Allison's trauma recovery. The researcher watched the film repeatedly, identified data relevant to the research issues, and analysed it using Judith Herman's theory of trauma and recovery to address the research questions.

B. Data Source

The data sources for this study are divided into one categories. Data was obtained from film *A Good Person* (2023), directed, produced and written by Zach Braff. *A Good Person* was released in limited release in the United States on 24 March 2023 and was released nationwide on 31 March 2023 by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. The film is in English and has a running time of 129 minutes. Data was obtained from dialogue and scenes that illustrate the impact of trauma on identity and social relationships, and the process of trauma recovery experienced by the main character.

C. Data Collection

This study employed several stages to collect data by watching the film repeatedly in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the plot, character development and the portrayal of the characters' emotions. Subsequently, scenes relevant to the topic under analysis were identified, such as those depicting Allison's trauma, her emotional responses and her interactions with other characters. The final stage of data collection involves transcribing the dialogue relating to the issues of trauma and trauma recovery to be analysed.

D. Data Analysis

The analysis of the research data in this study is based on Judith Herman's theory of Trauma and Recovery. To address the two research questions in this study, the collected data were analysed with regard to the impact of trauma on identity and social relationships, based on Judith Herman's concepts. To address the second research question, the data were categorised according to Judith Herman's three stages of trauma recovery: establishing safety, remembering and mourning, and reconnecting.

CHAPTER IV

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses and analyses research findings on trauma and the trauma recovery process of the main character in the 2023 film *A Good Person*, based on Judith Herman's theory of trauma and recovery. The discussion includes an analysis of data obtained from scenes, dialogue and imagery that depict issues of trauma and the trauma recovery process.

A. Trauma Affects Identity and Social Relationships

In this section, the researcher presents data illustrating the effects of trauma on the identity and social relationships of the main character in the 2023 film *A Good Person*. This analysis is based on Judith Herman's theory of trauma and recovery, specifically regarding how trauma can influence the way individuals perceive themselves and form relationships with others.

1. The impact of Trauma on Allison's Identity

Following the accident, Allison experienced trauma that altered her sense of self. Before the accident, Allison was known as someone with a clear and secure future. However, as a result of the accident, she lost her sense of self and her identity. Judith Herman explains that trauma destroys three key aspects: self-control, social relationships and the meaning of life (Herman, 1992). The breakdown of these three aspects has an impact on the victim's emotional, psychological and social well-being. The researcher then presents data showing that

someone who has experienced a traumatic event may lose their sense of purpose or face an identity crisis.

Pitcure 1



(Mum told Allison to go outside, 17:23)

Mama: You gotta get out of this living room. Take off your pajamas, and get your ass, and go get a job. I'm sick of this crap

The data suggests that the traumatic events Allison experienced caused her to lose her way in life. These traumatic events robbed Allison of her former stable life, her bright future, her good job, and her strong social connections. This is evident in the dialogue “*You gotta get out of this living room. Take off your pajamas, and get your ass, and go get a job. I’m sick of this crap.*” In which Allison’s mother tells her to leave the house to look for work. Herman argues that trauma can cause an individual to lose their sense of purpose in life and their sense of self-control (Herman, 1992). Thus, the scene shows that Allison is no longer leading the productive life she once did, and reveals that she is experiencing an identity crisis because she has lost her sense of direction and the ability to maintain the role she played before the traumatic event.

Picture 2



(Allie asks for pills, 16:12)

Picture 3



(Allie takes drugs, 36:16)

Allison: Hey, Mama, can you tell me where my pills are?
Mom: Which one? We said we were going to wean off of them. Remember?
Allison: Did we?
Mom: Yes.
Allison: because "we" are in pain and "we" need more.
Mom: They're not give you more, Allie.
Allison: They have to!
Mom: No, they don't.
Allison: I need them!

The data shows that trauma can damage a person's identity and psychological, consistent with Herman's view that trauma can destroy self-control (Herman, 1992). In the data, Allison's fractured sense of identity is depicted

through her reliance on drugs as a coping mechanism. In the dialogue, Allison says “*I need them!*”, This indicates that Allison was no longer able to cope with the emotional pain without the aid of medication. Allison’s mother stopped giving her the medication because she had exceeded the recommended duration of use. Having become addicted to painkillers, Allison tried to replace them by taking drugs. Allison’s actions show that the decision to take drugs was driven by her own impulses, as her dependence on medication had taken control of her. Allison’s addiction to medication was a form of coping with her trauma. Allison's dependence on drugs also reflects the loss of her identity. Before the accident, she was a stable individual, but after the accident, her life changed. After the traumatic event, she became a disoriented individual, unable to control herself, and dependent on drugs to survive. Thus, Allison's addiction to drugs not only shows the psychological impact of trauma, but also illustrates the damage to her identity. As Herman said, trauma can make an individual no longer the same person as before the traumatic event occurred (Herman, 1992).

2. The impact of trauma on social relationships

According to Judith Herman, traumatic events can damage family relationships, friendships, romantic relationships and communities (Herman, 1992). People who have experienced trauma often feel abandoned and tend to withdraw from those around them. Before the traumatic event, Allison had stable social relationships, such as with her fiancé, his family and her friends. The data presented below illustrates how the trauma has affected Allison’s social relationships.

Picture 1



(mama Allison opened the curtains of the house, 15:42)

Mom: It's so dark in here.

Allison: No please, don't open that. Mama, that is so bright!

Mom: did you go to physical therapy today?

Allison: um, well, I tried to, but I overslept.

Mama: Allie....

Allison: What? I don't need PT. I don't

The data indicates that the traumatic event has affected Allison's social relationships. In the scene where her mother wants to open the curtains and Allison stops her, Allison's reaction suggests a tendency to isolate herself from the outside world. This attitude indicates that Allison feels she is safer when she shuts herself away in her home. Furthermore, she lies about the reason for missing her therapy session, claiming she overslept, when in fact she simply wishes to avoid the activity. This is evident in the dialogue: "*I don't need PT. I don't*". The state of Allison's house also suggests that she does not wish to interact with the outside world, this is evident from the fact that her house is closed off and dark.

Picture 2



(Allison avoids her ex-fiance's father, 42:09)

Daniel: Allison, don't go.

Allison: This was a mistake.

Daniel: No. No, it isn't. Trust me, I know how hard it is to get here. It's damn near impossible, and you did it. Don't run away now because of me.

Allison: There are thousands of meetings. I'll find another one.

Daniel: Well, yeah but this one has the best snacks.

In the data, the dialogue and scenes suggest that trauma may affect Allison's ability to maintain relationships with others. In Allison's lines, "*This was a mistake.*" Dan "*I'll find another one.*", it is evident that she is trying to avoid interaction with Daniel, who is the father of her former fiancé. Allison's attitude towards Daniel indicates that his presence is perceived as a trigger for memories and feelings of guilt regarding her traumatic experience. Allison's behaviour reflects avoidance mechanisms typically employed by individuals who have experienced trauma. This aligns with Herman's view that trauma drives a person to withdraw from past relationships due to feelings of shame, guilt, and low self-esteem (Herman, 1992).

Picture 3



(Allison met her ex-fiance's nephew, 01:12:29)

Allison: I'm Allison.

Nephew: Yeah, I've seen you before. Why do I know you?

Allison: I'm not sure what I'm supposed to say.

Nephew: You were Nathan's fiancée. You were in the car.

Allison: I was, yeah

Nephew: Weren't you driving? Wasn't she driving?

Daniel: We're in the program together.

Nephew: But I thought you said it was her fault. How could you bring her into our house? Get out of our fucking house!

Allison: okay

Nephew: You shouldn't be here! This is our house! My mom grew up in here! I sleep in her bedroom. I use her sheets!

The third piece of information reveals that Allison is related to Rayan, the son of the woman who died in the car accident caused by Allison. Rayan is also the nephew of Allison's fiancé. “*But I thought you said it was her fault. How could you bring her into our house? Get out of our fucking house!*”, The dialogue shows that Allison's presence is a source of emotional pain for Rayan, so their relationship is very strained and marked by rejection. Rayan's anger and hatred towards Allison are clearly evident; this is because Allison was the cause of his parents' death. The film shows that the accident not only traumatised Allison, but also became a source of emotional pain for Rayan, which in turn influenced the way Rayan treated Allison. Thus, this evidence aligns with Judith Herman's view that trauma can damage a person's relationships.

Picture 4



(the nephew of the ex-fiancé asked Allison, 01:21:24)

Nephew: Tell me why you ended it with Nate. My mom would want you guys to be together still.

Allison: Ryan, I don't even know what to say to that.

The fourth piece of information shows that, following the accident, Allison broke up with her fiancé. Although Allison did not explicitly express any feelings of guilt, her response, “*Ryan, I don't even know what to say to that.*” Her bewildered reaction showed that the traumatic event had weighed heavily on her relationship with her fiancé, causing her to feel guilty. Allison realised that her fiancé's sister's death had been caused by a car accident in which he had been the driver. Consequently, Allison ended the relationship with her fiancé because she felt she was unworthy of continuing it.

The four points above are consistent with Judith Herman's view that Allison's traumatic experiences can destroy her social relationships with her community, family, friends and boyfriend. Traumatic experiences also cause a person to withdraw from past relationships, due to feelings of shame, guilt and low self-esteem. In this context, Allison appears to tend to avoid or withdraw from her surroundings and the people around her.

B. Trauma Recovery Process of the Main Character

In this section, the researcher presents data illustrating the process of trauma recovery in the main character of the 2023 film *A Good Person*. The data was analysed using Judith Herman's theory. According to Herman, the process of trauma recovery involves three stages, namely, establishing safety, remembrance and mourning, reconnection.

1. Establishing safety

According to Herman, the initial stage of the trauma recovery process is to ensure the safety of the trauma survivor, namely by creating a sense of security both physically and psychologically (Herman, 1992). The people around the individual who has experienced trauma play a vital role in creating this sense of security. One example is the role of the group; the group can be of great assistance in speeding up the trauma recovery process. According to Judith Herman's view that the initial stage of trauma recovery involves creating a sense of physical and emotional safety, by attending supportive rehabilitation sessions, Allison began to rebuild the sense of safety lost as a result of the traumatic event. The following data illustrates the stages involved in creating a sense of safety.

Pitcure 1



(Allison attends a meeting, 44:21)

In the film *A Good Person*, the early stages of Allison's recovery from trauma are depicted through a scene in which she attends a rehabilitation meeting. This marks Allison's first step towards breaking out of the social isolation she had previously imposed on herself. According to Judith Herman, if a community shares a common traumatic experience such as an accident, a natural disaster, or violence the victims will understand and support one another in recovering from their trauma (Herman, 1992). By attending rehabilitation group meetings, Allison has placed herself in a safe environment where she can receive support and meet people who understand her situation.

Pitcure 2



(Allison chats with Daniel, 57:03)

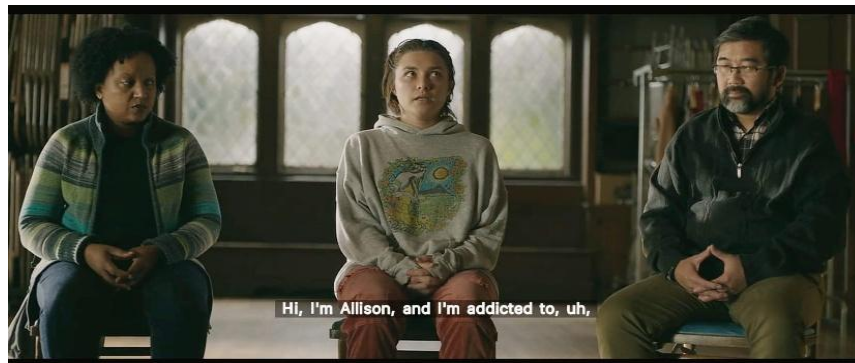
Allison: I don't know how to do this.
Daniel: What?
Allison: Start all over. How you do it?
Daniel: Takes work.
Allison: Can I tell you a secret?
Daniel: Sure
Allison: I'm not sure I have the will.

The second set of data shows that Allison's efforts to build a sense of security can be seen through supportive interpersonal relationships. This is

consistent with Herman's view that the people around trauma survivors play a vital role in creating a sense of security. The data reveals that Allison still harbours doubts about starting her life anew, and this indicates that the trauma continues to affect her, as seen in the lines "*I don't know ho to do this.*" Dan "*I'm not sure I have the will*". Daniel's presence here plays a vital role in fostering a sense of safety within Allison. In this context, Daniel's response is crucial to Allison's trauma recovery process, given his position as the father of her former fiancé and the father of the victim who died in the accident. Consequently, Daniel's tendency to blame Allison would be a natural reaction for him. However, Daniel's response does not blame her; instead, he supports Allison through his supportive response. This interaction demonstrates that Allison has progressed through the stage of establishing a sense of safety.

2. Remembrance and Mourning

According to Judith Herman, the second stage of the trauma recovery process involves the survivor recounting the traumatic event in full and in depth (Herman, 1992). This process is not merely a retelling of the event, but plays a vital role in the survivor's emotional recovery. The process of recalling the trauma also involves mourning the loss experienced by the victim. The following data illustrates how Allison recalls the traumatic event.



(Allison recounts a traumatic event, 01:03:57)

Allison: Hi, I'm Allison, and I'm an addict.

Participant: Hi. Allison.

Allison: I...Um...I was the driver of a car that was in a really bad accident. Two people died. The women was..The women was about to be my sister-in-law. We were on our way to try on my wedding dresses. And then we weren't. it wasn't my fault. I wasn't on drugs or booze, or drunk, or anything. But..uh, surviving that day was, is the most painful thing I will ever have to live through. I got hurt, too. The put a hole in my head. And, um, that helped because at least I had something I could blame the pain on. But then that healed... and I was still hurting. And I guess that's why I didn't realize how bad it was because to me...I was still in so much pain. I was, um, prescribed them for physical pain, and they really helped with that. They really did. But they made me numb. Blissfully numb. Without them I want to die. Every day. I've never said that out loud before. Um...I've never really faced reality without them. And I don't know if I'll be able to handle what I see, but I'm here to try.

In the film *A Good Person* the stages of remembrance and mourning are clearly evident in these scenes and dialogues. Allison openly recounts her traumatic experience at a rehabilitation meeting. She also describes the pain she has felt in the aftermath of the accident she endured. In the line “*But..uh, surviving that day was, is the most painful thing I will ever have to live through*”, it is clear that Allison feels immense guilt, which is what causes her emotional pain. In the line “*Two people died. The women was..The women was about to be my sister-in-law*”, this dialogue shows that Allison is grieving over the accident that killed her future sister-in-law. This scene reflects that Allison has entered the stage of remembrance and mourning, where she is not avoiding the trauma but is beginning to face it. This

process enables trauma survivors to move forward and rebuild their lives (Herman, 1992).

Overall, the data from the second stage indicates that Allison has moved beyond the stage of remembrance and mourning. This is evident from Allison's efforts to openly recount her traumatic experience to members of the rehabilitation community. Through this process, Allison has begun to confront the reality of the accident and the guilt she feels, she has also acknowledged her addiction to using medication as a painkiller. Through this process, Allison's trauma recovery is set to progress well.

3. Reconnection

The final stage of the trauma process is reconnection. According to Herman, in the final stage of trauma recovery, survivors must rebuild social relationships, such as those with friends and family. Rebuilding relationships with others enables trauma survivors to rediscover their values. The third stage will be successful if trauma survivors have the courage to make the decision to face the fears that are holding them back. These fears can also be overcome by engaging in physical activities such as exercise. Below are some data illustrating the third stage of the recovery process.

Picture 1



(Allison regularly attends rehab, 1:48:42)

Picture 2



(Allison started swimming regularly, 01:49:22)

Picture 3



(Allison is back to playing the piano 01:49:23)

The final stage of trauma recovery—or the ‘reconnection’ stage—in the film *A Good Person* is evident in the significant changes in Allison’s life, as she strives to rebuild her social relationships. Figure 1 shows that Allison regularly attends rehabilitation meetings; in fact, she lives at the centre. This indicates that Allison is

serious about recovering from her trauma. Support from friends at the rehabilitation community is also crucial to Allison's trauma recovery process. According to Herman, support from the community plays a vital role in protecting victims from fear, despair and loneliness (Herman, 1992). Therefore, Allison's involvement in the rehabilitation community will provide her with a supportive environment that can boost her self-confidence, give her a sense of security, and make her feel accepted. From Judith Herman's perspective, trying out various physical activities can aid the process of trauma recovery (Herman, 1992). In this film, Allison also takes part in physical activities that form part of the community's routine, namely swimming, and she has also taken up playing the piano again. This shows that Allison has resumed positive activities. Engaging in these positive activities demonstrates that Allison is now able to manage her emotions without relying on painkillers. The support from her friends at the rehabilitation centre has also played a vital role in Allison's recovery process.

Pitcure 4



(Allison hugged her mother, 01:55:27)

Picture 5



(Allison works as a singer, 01: 56:25)

Picture 6



(Allison sits in front of her fiancé's house with her fiancé and her niece, who works as a singer., 02:02:05)

According to Herman, rebuilding social relationships also means forming a new identity (Herman, 1992). Allison rediscovered a sense of purpose in her life following her rehabilitation. The data indicates that Allison has successfully rediscovered a sense of purpose in her life. Her relationship with her fiancé and his family has also begun to improve, and she is no longer dependent on painkillers. Figure 4 shows Allison attending her final session at the rehabilitation community, this session marked the final stage of her trauma recovery process. Allison's attendance at the final meeting indicates that she has successfully navigated the trauma healing

process, during which she has re-established relationships with those around her and successfully broken free from her dependence on medication. According to Herman, a successful trauma recovery process is one in which the victim has rediscovered their identity and purpose in life. This is evident in Figure 5, which shows that Allison has taken on a productive social role by securing a job as a singer. In the final image, it is clear that Allison's relationship with her fiancé and his family has improved. The scene in the final image shows that Allison is beginning to feel comfortable and safe again within the relationship she had previously avoided following the accident, as seen in the scene where she is sitting in front of the house with her fiancé and her nephew. Allison's state indicates that she is no longer overwhelmed by guilt, which had previously compelled her to withdraw from her social environment and avoid those around her. Overall, the data from the reconnection phase indicates that Allison has successfully completed this stage. This is evident in the fact that she has resumed her normal activities, rediscovered her interests and purpose in life, and built social relationships with those around her.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In this chapter, the researcher presents conclusions based on the analysis in the previous chapter. She also provides suggestions for future research on the issues of trauma and trauma recovery.

A. Conclusion

This study analyses the impact of trauma on an individual's identity and social relationships, as well as the stages of the trauma recovery process depicted in the 2023 film *A Good Person*, based on Judith Herman's work. Based on the data findings and the results of the analysis, the researcher concluded that trauma has an impact on Allison's identity and her social relationships. The impact of trauma on identity, or an identity crisis, is demonstrated through Allison's situation, in which she lacks a stable life and has lost self-control, becoming a drug addict and attempting to use drugs as a form of self-control loss. Furthermore, Allison also struggles to form social relationships. She tends to isolate herself and avoid contact with people associated with her traumatic event.

This study also examined the process of Allison's trauma recovery as depicted in the film *A Good Person*. Allison's trauma recovery took place in stages, consistent with Judith Herman's theory, namely establishing safety, remembrance and mourning, and reconnection. During the establishing safety stage, attending meetings and interacting with Daniel were important factors that helped Allison feel

safe. Allison felt that these meetings provided a safe environment where she could receive support and meet someone who understood her situation. Meanwhile, during the remembrance and mourning stage, Allison began attending rehabilitation meetings regularly and actively participating in the community's activities. This involvement encouraged Allison to open up and share her traumatic experiences with the rehabilitation community. The final stage, reconnection became evident when Allison began to lead a normal life, found a purpose in life, and rebuilt her social relationships with others.

B. Suggestion

This study uses the 2023 film *A Good Person* as its subject, examining the issues of trauma and trauma recovery through the lens of Judith Herman's theory. Previous research using the 2023 film *A Good Person* as its subject remains limited. Consequently, future researchers are encouraged to analyse the film using different approaches or theories, such as psychological theories, mental health theories, and others. This film also raises various issues that are worth exploring in greater depth. Consequently, research on the 2023 film *A Good Person* is expected to continue to develop and contribute to studies in literature, film, culture, and psychology.

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