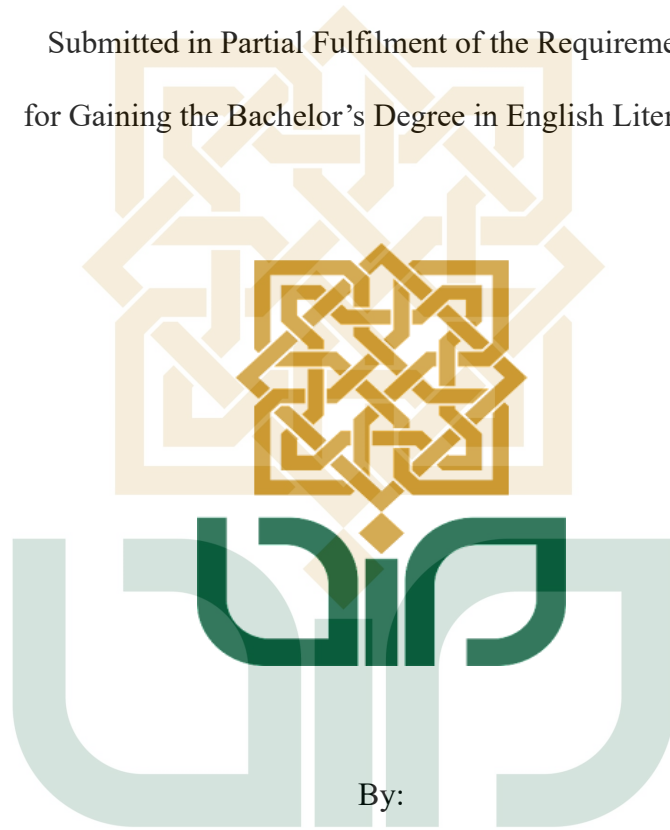


**UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF BETRAYAL TRAUMA ON
SEXUAL ABUSE VICTIMS IN *SPOTLIGHT* (2015) AND *QORIN* (2022)**

A GRADUATING PAPER

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for Gaining the Bachelor's Degree in English Literature



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A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

I certify that this graduate paper is definitely my own work. I am completely responsible for the content of this graduating paper. Other researcher's opinion or finding included in this research is quoted or cited in accordance with ethical standards.

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MOTTO

It will pass, everything you've gone through, it will pass

-Rachel Vennya

If God helps you start, He will help you finish.



DEDICATION

This graduating paper is dedicated to myself, Syabina Ayu Tri Astiti. Thank you for every sleepless night and every moment you chose to keep going when it felt easier to give up. You showed up even when no one was watching. You stayed even when it got heavy. This degree isn't just a piece of paper. It's a reminder of your strength, resilience, and growth. Behind every assignment, every exam, and every step forward, there was a version of you that kept believing even with doubts in your heart. You did it. And you did it with grace. Congratulations!

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UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF BETRAYAL TRAUMA ON SEXUAL ABUSE VICTIMS IN *SPOTLIGHT* (2015) AND *QORIN* (2022)

By: Syabina Ayu Tri Astiti

ABSTRACT

This study aims to compare and analyze two characters who are victims of sexual abuse, which has an impact not only physically or emotionally, but also touches on deeper aspects, namely psychological well-being and even affects their faith. This study compares two characters who have experienced the same traumatic experiences that have an impact on the victims' psychology, even though they experienced the same traumatic event, it is likely that their responses to its impact will differ. The subjects being compared in this study are the character Patrick in the film *Spotlight* (2015) and the character Zahra in the film *Qorin* (2022). Both share similarities in terms of the cause of their trauma, but they express different impacts of the trauma, particularly in terms of their psychological well-being and faith. To analyze this research, a qualitative descriptive method was used to analyze the representation of trauma in films, using Jennifer J. Freyd's Betrayal Trauma theory and Saroglou's framework on religious dimensions to examine the extent to which the impact of sexual abuse trauma affects the lives of victims, particularly in psychological aspects that influence faith. The results of this study confirm that betrayal trauma in the context of sexual violence by religious authorities can impact the psychological well-being of victims. However, its influence on their faith or spirituality can vary. Additionally, environmental factors in each film also play a significant role in the victims' struggles and recovery processes. *Qorin* depicts Indonesian social life characterized by care and mutual connection, while *Spotlight* portrays Patrick's life in an American environment marked by Western individualistic and liberal culture.

Keywords: betrayal trauma, psychological impact, faith, sexual abuse, religious leaders

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membandingkan dan menganalisis dua karakter korban pelecehan seksual yang berdampak tidak hanya bersifat secara fisik atau emosional, tetapi juga bisa menyentuh aspek yang lebih dalam, yakni kesejahteraan psikologis dan bahkan mempengaruhi keimanan mereka. Penelitian ini membandingkan dua karakter yang mengalami pengalaman traumatis yang sama yang berdampak pada psikologis korban, meskipun mereka mengalami peristiwa traumatis yang sama, kemungkinan besar respon mereka terhadap dampaknya berbeda. Objek yang menjadi pembanding dalam penelitian ini adalah karakter Patrick dalam film *Spotlight* (2015) dan tokoh Zahra dalam film *Qorin* (2022). Keduanya memiliki kemiripan dalam hal penyebab trauma, tetapi mereka mengekspresikan dampak trauma yang berbeda khususnya kesejahteraan psikologis dan keimanan mereka. Untuk menganalisis penelitian ini, digunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif untuk menganalisis representasi trauma dalam film, dengan teori Betrayal Trauma dari Jennifer J. Freyd serta kerangka kerja Saroglou tentang dimensi agama untuk melihat sejauh mana dampak trauma pelecehan seksual mempengaruhi kehidupan korban, khususnya dalam aspek psikologi yang mempengaruhi keimanan. Hasil penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa trauma pengkhianatan dalam konteks kekerasan seksual oleh otoritas agama dapat berdampak pada psikologis korban, tetapi pengaruhnya terhadap iman atau spiritual mereka dapat bervariasi. Selain itu, faktor lingkungan dalam masing-masing film juga berperan penting dalam perjuangan dan proses pemulihan para korban. *Qorin* menggambarkan kehidupan sosial di Indonesia yang ditandai dengan kepedulian dan keterikatan satu sama lain, sementara *Spotlight* menampilkan kehidupan Patrick dalam lingkungan Amerika yang bercirikan budaya Barat yang individualis dan liberal.

Kata Kunci: trauma pengkhianatan, dampak psikologis, keimanan, pelecehan seksual, pemimpin agama.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COVER	i
A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT.....	ii
NOTA DINAS.....	iii
MOTTO	v
DEDICATION.....	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	vii
ABSTRACT	x
ABSTRAK	xi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	xii
TABLE OF FIGURES.....	xv
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background of Study	1
1.2 Research Questions	4
1.3 Objective of Study	5
1.4 Significances of Study	5
1.5 Literature Review	5
1.6 Theoretical Framework.....	8
1.6.1 Betrayal Trauma by Jennifer J Freyd	8
1.6.2 The Big Basic Religious Dimensions Theory	9
1.6.3 Film Theory	10
1.7 Methods of Research	11
1.7.1 Type of Research	12
1.7.2 Data Sources	12
1.7.3 Data Collection Technique	12
1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique	12
1.8 Paper Organization	11
CHAPTER II INTRINSIC ELEMENTS.....	14
2.1 Film Summary	14

2.1.1 <i>Spotlight</i> (2015).....	14
2.1.2 <i>Qorin</i> (2022).....	15
2.2 Theme	16
2.2.1 <i>Spotlight</i>	16
2.2.2 <i>Qorin</i>	17
2.3 Plot.....	17
2.3.1 Plot in <i>Spotlight</i>	18
2.3.2 Plot in <i>Qorin</i>	20
2.4 Characters and Characterizations	21
2.4.1 Major Character	22
2.4.2 Minor Character	25
2.5 Setting.....	27
2.5.1 <i>Spotlight</i> Setting.....	27
2.5.2 <i>Qorin</i> Setting.....	30
2.6 Point of View.....	32
2.6.1 Point of View in <i>Spotlight</i>	32
2.6.2 Point of View in <i>Qorin</i>	33
CHAPTER III ANALYSIS	34
3.1 Psychological Impact of Betrayal Trauma due to Sexual Abuse	35
3.1.1 Anxiety.....	35
3.1.2 Dissociation	38
3.1.3 PTSD.....	44
3.1.4 Intrusive Re-Experiencing	45
3.1.5 Avoidance	49
3.1.6 Hyperarousal	51
3.2 Crisis of Faith in the Wake of Betrayal Trauma.....	55
3.2.1 Believing	56
3.2.2 Bonding.....	59
3.2.3 Behaving	60
3.2.4 Belonging.....	62

CHAPTER IV CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION	66
4.1 Conclusions	66
4.2 Suggestions.....	67
BIBLIOGRAPHY	68
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	71



TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Zahra Character in <i>Qorin</i>	24
Figure 2.5 Patrick McSorley Character.....	22
Figure 2.3 Raudhatul Jannah Boarding.....	31
Figure 2.4 Ustad Jaelani's Private Office.....	32
Figure 2.5 Boston Globe Offices 2001s.....	28
Figure 2.6 Busy Urban Areas of Boston	29
Figure 3.1 Zahra had a nightmare	37
Figure 3.2 Patrick's hand is full of injection marks	40
Figure 3.3 Patrick's emotional recall of trauma	46
Figure 3.4 Zahra's hallucinations.....	48
Figure 3.5 Patrick's emotional response.....	52
Figure 3.6 Zahra shows fear.....	53

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Betrayal trauma is a form of psychological trauma that occurs when a person experiences betrayal from individuals or institutions that should provide protection and security (Freyd, 1996). According to Freyd, it occurs when victims not only experience abuse or violence but also face emotional conflict due to perpetrators who have a position of authority or trust in their lives. In cases of sexual abuse, especially those committed by authority figures such as religious leaders, the trauma experienced by victims is often more complex due to unequal power relations and dependence on the perpetrator.

Sexual abuse by authority figures is a complex form of betrayal trauma. Sexual abuse occurring in religious institutions has been documented in *Spotlight* (McCarthy 2015) and *Qorin* (Ginanti 2022). Both films show how victims of sexual abuse initially trusted the perpetrators, a priest in *Spotlight* and a religious teacher in *Qorin*, but then suffered as a result of sexual abuse and an unequal power relationship with their religious leaders. The victims experienced trauma as a result of these events.

Based on Sagrolou's (2011) theory of the Big Basic Religious Dimensions, this trauma can disrupt various aspects of the victims' religious lives. Fear of

religious leaders and a crisis of faith cause victims to withdraw emotionally and lose direction in practicing their religion. This is evident in changes in attitude, withdrawal from religious activities, and the loss of faith in the religious values they once held dear.

Spotlight, by Tom McCarthy, is an investigative drama film that exposed the child sex abuse scandal committed by Catholic priests in the Boston Diocese. The movie is based on a true story and focuses on The Boston Globe's *Spotlight* team of investigative journalists, who exposed systematic abuse and the Church's attempts to cover it up over the years. One of the victims is Patrick McSorley, who was abused by priests when he was a child at a church in Boston. Patrick is one of the victims who was severely impacted by what he experienced as a child. He grew up with anxiety, depression, and drug addiction problems. In the movie, he talks to the *Spotlight* team about how the abuse ruined his life and made it difficult for him to find a way out of suffering.

Meanwhile, *Qorin*, by Ginanti Rona, tells the story of a mystical ritual in an Islamic boarding school. Behind the supernatural nuances, this movie also touches on the issue of sexual harassment experienced by one of the characters, Zahra. She becomes one of the victims of sexual harassment by Ustad Jaelani, a religious teacher at the pesantren who has power over female students. He uses the guise of religion and spiritual manipulation to approach and manipulate victims. Zahra feels trapped by fear of threats and pressure from a figure she is supposed to respect. When trying to uncover this crime, she faces difficulties due to Ustad Jaelani's status as an authority figure in the pesantren. In addition, the mystical elements in the

movie reinforce her fears, as Zahra feels controlled by supernatural forces associated with the *Qorin* ritual performed by Ustad Jaelani. Finally, Zahra experienced some severe effects due to the sexual harassment she experienced. The effects of this trauma are shown through several scenes that show her unstable psychological and emotional condition.

Research shows that individuals who experience sexual abuse in religious settings often face unique challenges, including feelings of guilt and shame, which can further complicate their healing process (Eshuys, D. M., 2008). Strong trust in religious leaders often makes it difficult for victims to recognize abuse as a form of violence, or even feel guilty about what happened. In addition, social and cultural factors such as pressure to maintain the good name of religious institutions can also hinder victims in seeking justice and healing. The culture of silence surrounding this issue leads to a lack of accountability for perpetrators, so the cycle of abuse continues unchecked (Denney, 2022).

The study conducted by Gómez et al. (2021) showed that victims of abuse in religious contexts tend to experience more severe psychological impact than victims in other settings, mainly due to deep feelings of betrayal. This is in line with the findings of Carolyn Holderread Heggen (2015) who highlighted how sexual abuse by church leaders resulted in significant trauma that affected all aspects of the victim's life, compounded by the church's inadequate response to the allegations. Not only does this impact on the psychology of the victim, but the experience of abuse can also shake their trust in religion and institutions that are supposed to be a sanctuary.

The trauma caused by betrayal in religious settings often leads to a significant crisis of faith, where victims struggle to maintain trust in religious institutions. In many cases, victims experience a crisis of confidence, begin to question their beliefs, or even withdraw completely from the religious community. This feeling of alienation is caused not only by the abuse itself but also by the institution's failure to protect victims or deal transparently with allegations of abuse.

Oakley et al., (2018) found that victims who felt betrayed by their faith community tended to experience higher psychological distress, including depression and PTSD, compared to those who experienced abuse outside of a religious context. This shift is related to the collapse of assumptions about safety and trust, especially when the perpetrator is a religious leader. Similarly, research in the UK revealed that victims of spiritual abuse in faith communities often withdraw from church participation and experience decreased self-esteem, anxiety, and disruptions in their spiritual identity.

Despite presenting the same narrative of sexual abuse in a religious environment, victims like Patrick in *Spotlight* and Zahra in *Qorin* show different reactions and psychological journeys in dealing with the trauma being betrayed by someone they trust. Using a comparative approach, this research aims to explore the various psychological and faith impacts of betrayal trauma as represented in *Spotlight*, against the backdrop of Christian church in America, and *Qorin*, which is set in an Islamic pesantren in Indonesia.

1.2 Research Questions

According to the explanation of the background of the study, this research is intended to answer the following question:

1. How did the trauma of betrayal experienced by Patrick and Zahra as victims of sexual abuse by religious authorities affect their psychological well-being, as depicted in the films *Spotlight* and *Qorin*?
2. How does betrayal trauma affect the religious faith of Patrick in *Spotlight* and Zahra in *Qorin*?

1.3 Objective of Study

This study explores how betrayal trauma resulting from sexual abuse by religious authorities impacts the psychological well-being of victims as depicted in *Spotlight* and *Qorin*, with a particular application of Jennifer Freyd's betrayal trauma theory. Moreover, since the incident occurs in a religious environment, it also attempts to find out how betrayal trauma affects the religious faith of these victims, with a reference to Saroglou's framework of religious dimension.

1.4 Significances of Study

This research can be used as a reference for English Literature department future research to understand the various impacts of betrayal trauma, especially in the context of religious institutions, through a comparative literary case study in *Spotlight* representing the Western Christian context and *Qorin* representing Indonesian Muslim context. Thus, it can be an example of the application of Jennifer J. Freyd's betrayal trauma theory to literary characters.

1.5 Literature Review

A lot of research on betrayal trauma has been conducted, particularly in the

field of psychology. Williams (2019), for example, focused on the impact of betrayal trauma on mental health. This research revealed that betrayal, particularly by a trusted person, such as an authority figure or family member, can lead to serious psychological disorders, including anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). He asserts that betrayal not only damages interpersonal relationships but can also affect an individual's belief system more broadly, including faith in religious institutions and associated authorities. The results of this study are relevant to this current research as it relates betrayal trauma to the context of religious institutions.

Furthermore, another relevant study is by Leo et al., (2021). Their study examined data from five academic databases and applied strict inclusion criteria to ensure the reliability of the sources. While earlier research often focused on how religious faith can help individuals cope with trauma, this study investigated the reverse: how trauma may alter, challenge, or even weaken a person's religious beliefs. The findings revealed that trauma could lead individuals to doubt or abandon their faith, offering a deeper understanding of trauma's potential to reshape spiritual identity.

Another relevant study is Durà-Vilà et al., (2013) who did research on how nuns, as victims of sexual abuse by priests, integrate their traumatic experiences within their religious frameworks. The results showed that many of the nuns interpreted their trauma either as a divine test or as an opportunity for spiritual growth through forgiveness. By doing so, they were able to transform their suffering into a meaningful spiritual journey, facilitating emotional healing and

a deeper connection to their faith.

In literary field, a recent research on *Qorin* has been conducted by Santabudi et al., (2024). Their research applied a qualitative approach using new historicism as its method of analysis. Their study examined how the character of the religious leader in *Qorin* reflects real-world issues of clerical abuse. The cleric, who is expected to guide the faith of his followers, instead becomes a source of trauma for the female students under his authority. The authors highlight that the film mirrors actual incidents of sexual abuse involving religious figures in Indonesia, positioning the narrative of *Qorin* as a reflection of everyday social reality rather than mere fiction.

Similar to research by Williams, Leo et.al., and Durà-Vilà et al., this paper examines the impact of trauma from sexual abuse on one's psychological well-being and faith. However, unlike these previous studies, this one does comparative analysis of literary characters—one from Western, Christian context, and the other one represents Indonesian, Islamic context. Moreover, unlike Santabudi's research, this one analyzes *Qorin* in comparison to *Spotlight*, from psychological perspective.

Thus, this research makes an important contribution to filling this gap. This research aims to deepen the understanding of the traumatic impact of betrayal on the faith of victims of sexual abuse in the context of religious institutions, which are often perceived as places of refuge and trust. The analysis of these two films provides a new dimension in understanding how such trauma is explored in popular culture, which can enrich the academic discourse on trauma, religion and

sexual abuse.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This research applies a comparative approach. Comparative literature aims to study literary works from different cultures, languages, and times and understand how they represent reality (Engberg-Pedersen, 2019). The comparative analysis is to understand deeply the impacts of betrayal trauma that the characters in two different films experience. Moreover, as the research objects are films, it also applies film theory. This section describes two main theories used.

1.6.1 Betrayal Trauma by Jennifer J Freyd

Betrayal Trauma theory developed by Jennifer J. Freyd is used in this research to analyze the impact of betrayal trauma on sexual abuse victims. Freyd (1996) defines betrayal trauma as trauma that occurs when individuals are betrayed by someone they trust or by an institution that has a position of authority in their lives. In the context of sexual abuse perpetrated by religious figures, this betrayal not only damages victims physically and emotionally but can also destroy their trust in the surrounding world, including the religion they profess. Using this theory, this study aims to explore the impact of interpersonal and institutional factors, both psychologically, faith-based, and how they affect their well-being.

Freyd (1996) also points out that the trauma of betrayal in an institutional context, such as a religious institution, can intensify the psychological impact experienced by victims. When a figure who is supposed to provide protection, such as a religious leader, sexually abuses them, victims not only feel personally betrayed, but also lose a sense of security in the spiritual system they trust. Freyd

also states that betrayal by trusted individuals or institutions often leads to difficulties in trauma processing. In a psychological context, victims of sexual abuse who experience the trauma of betrayal tend to face deep internal conflicts. They are caught in the dilemma of maintaining their relationship with their former religion or spirituality, while on the other hand, they feel anger and disappointment towards the religious figure who has betrayed them.

Overall, using the betrayal trauma theory, this study aims to understand more deeply how the betrayal trauma experienced by victims of sexual abuse in the context of religious institutions not only affects their faith, but also affects their psychological well-being. A deeper understanding of the impact of this trauma is expected to make a significant contribution in supporting victims' recovery through more psychologically and spiritually sensitive interventions.

Furthermore, to understand how the trauma affects the victim's spiritual beliefs or faith, this research uses Saroglou's framework of basic religious dimensions, namely believing, bonding, behaving, and belonging. This framework is used to answer the second research question.

1.6.2 The Big Basic Religious Dimensions Theory

To analyze this study, the researcher used Sagrolou's theory of the big four basic religious dimensions and cultural variation. According to Sagrolou (2011) four basic dimensions of religion and individual religiosity that are partially distinct, although interconnected: believing, bonding, behaving, and belonging. These dimensions are presumably universally present across religions and cultural contexts and delimitate religion from other similar constructs. They reflect distinct

psychological processes (cognitive, emotional, moral, and social), respective goals, conversion motives, types of self-transcendence, and mechanisms explaining the religion-health links.

In addition, Sagrolou (2011) explains that these four dimensions have different ways of shaping a person's religious experience, including how each person deals with trauma. Religious beliefs and metaphysical matters are part of the belief dimension, which helps a person understand the suffering they experience. The relationship dimension encompasses religious actions or behaviors such as worship and adherence to religious rules, which can help a person cope with inner turmoil. An emotional connection with God or a divine power is part of the behavioral dimension, which can provide a person with a sense of calm, hope, or protection during difficult times.

However, the belonging aspect relates to a sense of community within a religious group, which can serve as a source of social support during a crisis. The four dimensions help explain how trauma victims, such as Patrick in *Spotlight* and Zahra in *Qorin*, experience a crisis of faith or instead maintain their beliefs in their thoughts, feelings, actions, and religious social relationships.

1.6.3 Film Theory

Everything in a film has meaning when analyzed more deeply through several components. They include cinematography, mise-en-scene, editing, sound, and narrative. In mise-en-scene, through her book, Villarejo said that mise-en-scene consists of 6 important components: setting, costume, lighting, hair (styling), makeup, and figure behaviour (Villarejo, pg. 29, 2021). This study focuses on only

two aspects: lighting elements and character behavior. Lighting elements convey mood, inner conflict, and emotional intensity visually, while character behavior reflects emotional responses, coping mechanisms, and changes. Analysis can be conducted more deeply by limiting the focus to these two components, without expanding the scope of the study excessively.

The first component that is quite important is lighting. Lighting can show the meaning behind a scene in a film. Through illumination, a character's behaviour can also be identified. According to Villarejo, there are three lighting points, namely key light, fill light, and backlight (Villarejo, pg. 32, 2021). Key light provides the primary or key light source. It tends to illuminate most strongly the shot's subject, and it also tends to cast the strongest shadows. Fill light, on the other hand, is usually positioned opposite the direction of the key light, with a position of 120, and is typically used to fill empty light from the key light so that it can give dimension to the subject. While backlight light comes from behind, it separates the subject from the background. (Villarejo, pg. 32-33, 2021)

The second component is character behavior. It refers to the physical actions, gestures, posture, and facial expressions of characters, all of which are crucial in visual storytelling. According to Villarejo, character behavior within the mise-en-scène helps the audience understand a character's psychology, motivation, and relationships without the need for explicit dialogue. It is through movement, stillness, and expression that emotional and psychological depth is conveyed (Villarejo, pg. 32-33, 2021).

1.7 Methods of Research

1.7.1 Type of Research

This research applied qualitative descriptive method as the data were in the form of word descriptions rather than numbers. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is a means for understanding and exploring the meaning of a social phenomenon, either individuals or groups. This method helped the researcher get the meaning based on interpretations of the objects of study.

1.7.2 Data Sources

The data sources of this research consist of primary and secondary data. The primary data were obtained from the contents of every single scene in *Spotlight* (2015) and *Qorin* (2022), including dialogues of the main character and other characters. The researcher also paid attention to audio visual or images in the films. The secondary data or supporting data were derived from some sources related to the issue of betrayal trauma and sexual abuse within the context of religious institutions.

1.7.3 Data Collection Technique

The researcher did observation and some steps to collect the data. Observation is the process of gathering open-ended, first-hand information by observing people and places at the researcher's site (Creswell: 2012, p.213). First, she identified the intrinsic elements such as theme, plot, character, characterization, and setting and collected the data based on the dialogues and moving images, especially ones that are relevant with the two research questions.

1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique

The next stage of the research involves descriptive techniques to evaluate

the data and clarify the overall results. To gain a better understanding of the collected data, the research process includes several steps. The researcher also uses film theory to examine aspects of cinematography and *mise-en-scene*. The next step is to analyze the data based on the research questions related to the theory of betrayal trauma and Sagrolou's framework of basic religious dimensions.

1.8 Paper Organization

This research is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is an introduction that consists of the background of the Study, research questions, objectives of the study, scope of study, significance of the study, literature review, theoretical approach (betrayal trauma theory and Sagrolou's framework of basic religious dimensions), method of research (type of research, data source, data collection technique, and data analysis technique), and paper organization. The second chapter explains the intrinsic elements of *Qorin*'s and *Spotlight*'s. It contains a theme, a Film summary, plot, characters, characterizations, and setting. The third chapter provides the analysis of the data using the betrayal trauma theory by Jennifer J Freyd and Saroglou's framework. The last chapter is the conclusion of the research, including suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

4.1 Conclusions

Based on the comparative analysis of *Qorin* and *Spotlight*, this research found that betrayal trauma does have a significant impact on both psychological well-being and faith. On the one hand, it can trigger a variety of psychological responses, such as anxiety, dissociation, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as experienced by victims in both films under discussion.

On the other hand, at a deeper level, it can have a significant impact on the victim's faith. Zahra, the main character in *Qorin*, experienced a loss of identity after being harassed by religious authorities at the institution where she studied. However, thanks to the social support she received from her fellow students, Zahra was able to deal with her trauma and maintain her faith. On the contrary, in *Spotlight*, the betrayal trauma Patrick experienced from the church priest and his family's disbelief in his confession only worsened his condition. He has difficulty managing his emotions, withdraws from his social environment, and experiences a profound loss of faith in the religious institutions he previously believed in.

The findings in this research aligns with Williams's study that when religious authority figures become sex offenders, victims not only experience personal betrayal but also damage to their spiritual beliefs. However, through the experience of Zahra, this research learns that the presence of social support and the response of the surrounding environment could be crucial factors in the

recovery and reconstruction of the victim's faith.

4.2 Suggestions

Having completed this research, the researcher realized that there is still much potential that could be developed. The researcher suggests that future research should examine potential connections between these films and other stigma-related issues. For further research, the researcher suggests analyzing other perspectives, such as power relations or external factors that influence the psychological condition of the victim, such as social support, cultural background, or the prevailing legal system. However, the researcher also realizes that this research still has limitations. Therefore, constructive criticism and suggestions from readers are highly anticipated to improve and develop further research.

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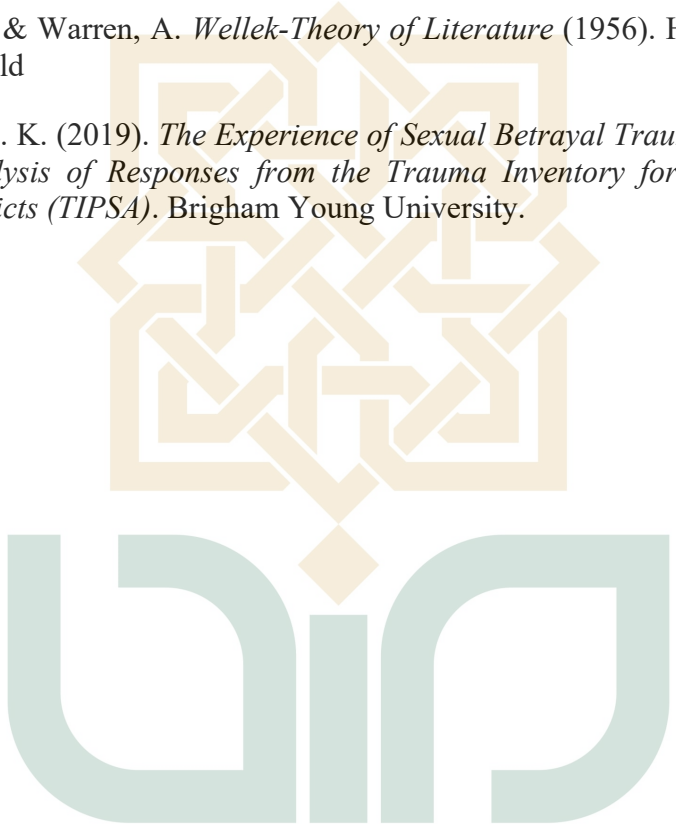
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