

# **Bipolar Disorder in the Character of Kat Baker Reflected in *Spinning Out* (2020) of 10 Episodes**

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## **Abstract**

*This study is aimed to analyze: (1) the symptoms of bipolar disorder as reflected in the main character of *Spinning Out* (2020) series, and (2) the mental condition of the main character as a bipolar sufferer reflected in the *Spinning Out* (2020) series. The researcher uses the qualitative method to examine the problem. The object of this study is the character Kat Baker in the *Spinning Out* (2020) series. The data used in this study is collected by the researcher through some steps, namely watching and reading, identifying, classifying, and selecting. In order to answer the problem statement and draw a conclusion from this study, the selected data is analyzed by the researcher through some steps, namely displaying, explaining, and interpreting. The approach and theory that the researcher uses to analyze the problem is psychology of literature and psychoanalysis. The result of this study shows that (1) the symptoms of bipolar disorder as reflected in the main character of *Spinning Out* (2020) series are depicted through various characteristics that occur in depressive and manic episode, anxiety, low self-esteem, libido issues, and self-harm; and (2) the mental condition of the main character as a bipolar sufferer makes her become an impulsive and overprotective person.*

**Keywords:** *bipolar disorder, mental condition, psychoanalysis, *Spinning Out**

## **Introduction**

Bipolar disorder, often associated with energy and creativity, is a severe mental illness causing extreme mood swings and loss of life. It is a leading cause of lost years of life and health in people aged 15 to 44, ranking above conflict, violence, and schizophrenia. Research from Edinburgh University suggests that individuals with bipolar disorder experience faster shrinkage of the brain's memory, face

recognition, and coordination portion. Bipolar disorder can be challenging for both the individual and their family members (Sarah and Amanda, 2008:1). Psychology, the scientific study of human behavior and the mind, plays a crucial role in studying and understanding the condition, including its symptoms, causes, treatments, and impact on individuals' lives and relationships (Dar, 2022). Combining psychology and literature can provide valuable insights into human experiences and the complexities of the human soul.

## **Literary Review**

### **Psychology of Literature**

According to Wellek and Warren (1949:75), the psychology of literature can refer to several different aspects. It can involve the psychological study of the writer, both as a type and as an individual. It can also encompass the study of the creative process involved in writing. Additionally, it can involve the study of the psychological types and laws present in literary works. Lastly, it can refer to the study of the effects of literature on its readers, which is also known as audience psychology. But they suggest that only the third aspect, the psychological types and laws present in literary works, can be considered as part of literary study. This means, this study looks at how topics and cases in psychology are applied in the characters of literary works.

### **Psychoanalysis Theory**

Psychoanalysis theory explains personality changes by focusing on emotions, motivations, and internal elements. It suggests that personality develops from problems formed during early childhood and identifies three interconnected psychological systems: the id, ego, and superego (Khoirunisa et al, 2022). The id is the primitive part of the mind, consisting of selfish desires and impulses aimed at immediate satisfaction. As we mature, we must learn to control and suppress the id's demands, adapting them to the real world and other people (Rennison, 2001:38-39).

The ego, on the other hand, is the rational part of the mind (Rennison, 2001:39), representing reality-oriented aspects of the personality (Anthony et al, 2022:43). It provides the individual with a sense of self and watches over the instinctual demands of the id, deciding whether, when, and how they can be gratified. As an intermediary between the id and the superego, the ego is in charge of planning whether the id will be carried out or ignored (Husin, 2017).

The superego represents the moral and ideal aspects of the personality, controlled by moral and idealistic principles that differ from the pleasure principles of the id and the realistic principles of the ego (Husin, 2017). Freud (1989:32) suggests that when we were children, we admired and feared the higher natures in this superego, which represent our relation to our parents, and as we grew older, we internalized them. Rennison (2001:39-40) also stated that as the child develops and learns to adapt to the real world and other people, another part of the mind is created that monitors the ego in the same way that the ego monitors the id. The superego gives us our conscience, sense of right and wrong, and demands that we often behave in ways that are acceptable to society at large.

### **Bipolar Disorder**

Federman and Thomson (2010:1) suggest that bipolar disorder is a mood disorder characterized by subtle or noticeable shifts in mood due to various experiences and factors. These mood changes are considered normal and contribute to the texture and dimension of life. The intensity of mood changes can vary depending on the situation, with positive experiences leading to positive moods and negative moods resulting from frustrating or disappointing events. Strong mood changes usually have a clear connection to life events, but can become significantly imbalanced in individuals with bipolar disorder. Symptoms often first appear during late adolescence to the mid-twenties, characterized by significant life changes such as high school, college, or starting a career. Understanding bipolar disorder is seen as a crucial first step in regaining control over one's life. The age

range for bipolar disorder symptoms typically occurs during late adolescence to the mid-twenties, characterized by significant life changes.

### **Symptoms of Bipolar Disorder**

Sarah and Amanda (2008:22) mention that typical symptoms of bipolar disorder include depression, hypomania, mania, and psychosis. In addition, they also mentioned other unofficial symptoms including anxiety, low self-esteem, libido problems, and self-harm.

1. Depression

Depression is a prevalent mental health condition characterized by a persistent low mood, diminished interest in activities, fluctuations in weight and appetite, disturbances in sleep patterns, reduced physical activity, fatigue, feelings of worthlessness, guilt, impaired concentration, and suicidal thoughts.

2. Hypomania

Hypomania, also known as mania lite, is a persistent mild mood elevation characterized by a heightened sense of well-being. It is often diagnosed as Bipolar II rather than Bipolar I.

3. Mania

Typical symptoms of manic episodes encompass an extremely euphoric and unnatural mood, inflated self-importance, extreme irritability, incoherent and racing thoughts, excessive and fast speech, difficulty concentrating, reduced sleep need, excessive risk-taking, such as excessive shopping, irresponsible sexual behavior, or excessive use of addictive substances such as alcohol or illegal drugs, and lack of inhibition.

4. Psychosis

Manic episodes can lead to psychosis, a state where the person loses touch with reality and experiences wild delusions, paranoia, and hallucinations. This can occur during a fun of mania, where individuals may believe that TV is sending messages or that others are controlling them. A common

psychotic belief is having superhuman abilities, a mission to resolve global issues, and the perception of malevolent forces conspiring against the individual.

5. Anxiety

The term "anxiety disorders" serves as an overarching category that encompasses a diverse array of symptoms, such as excessive worrying, paranoia, a racing heartbeat, feelings of dread and fear, perspiration, tremors, respiratory challenges, as well as obsessive tendencies, for instance, collecting objects, engaging in repetitive behaviors, and an inability to depart from one's residence without engaging in incessant safety verifications.

6. Low Self-esteem

Self-esteem refers to an individual's self-evaluation of their own worth, encompassing their recognition of personal qualities and aptitudes, as well as their perception of themselves in light of negative statements.

7. Libido Issues

Individuals diagnosed with bipolar disorder may encounter disturbances in their sexual functioning. These issues encompass diminished sexual desire during depressive episodes, heightened sexual desire during manic phases, a pervasive deficiency in affection due to the inhibitory impact of bipolar symptoms on the development of gratifying and affectionate relationships, as well as the potential adverse effects of medication.

8. Self-harm

Termed deliberate self-harm (DSH) on occasions, self-harm represents a mechanism employed to cope with distressing circumstances. Individuals resort to various forms of self-inflicted harm, which can manifest as detrimental lifestyle habits like excessive drinking, recreational drug use, and overeating. However, DSH specifically pertains to self-harming

practices such as cutting, burning, scratching, overdosing, and ingesting non-consumable objects.

### **Coping Mechanisms**

Kramer (2010) suggests that coping mechanisms refer to both overt and covert behaviors that individuals engage in to reduce or eliminate psychological distress or stressful conditions.

### **Research Methodology**

The research method used by the researcher in this research is qualitative method. According to Creswell (2014:4), it is used to explore and understand the meaning that individuals or groups assign to a social or human problem.

The object of research used by the researcher in this study is the character Kat Baker in the *Spinning Out* series directed by Samantha Stratton and produced by Elizabeth Peterson and Derek S. Rappaport in 2020 with 45-56 minutes durations and 10 episodes. The types of research data used in this research are main data which is collected from the subtitle of the *Spinning Out* (2020) series, and supporting data which is collected from some sources, such as books, journals, and internet that are related to the research.

The method of collecting data in this research is done by the researcher through some steps, namely watching the *Spinning Out* (2020) series and reading the subtitles, identifying possible data that has been found in the series, classifying the data so that it is easy to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant data to the research, and selecting the data that has been classified.

After the data are collected, the next step is analyzing the data done through some steps, namely displaying the selected data, explaining the selected data, and interpreting the selected data that has been displayed and explained.

## **Finding and Discussion**

In this research, the researcher analyzes the symptoms of bipolar disorder and the mental condition of the main character (Kat Baker) as a bipolar sufferer as reflected in *Spinning Out* (2020) series.

### **1. The symptoms of bipolar disorder of Kat Baker**

#### **1.1 Depression**

##### **Diminished Interest in Activities**

In the first episode of the series, Kat Baker struggles with a loss of interest in her passion for skating after a failed test.

Kat : “The next test is in six months, and I can’t afford to wait that long. I have no choice. I gotta quit. You know, I can’t believe it’s all finally over. I always thought I’d make my mark, you know? After all the years of training. I thought I’d see it through to the end”  
Dave : “The end?”  
Kat : “I wanted to be remembered.”  
(*Spinning Out*, 2020, Episode 01, 24:10)

In the conversation above, Kat expresses her frustration about having to wait for the next test for six months and not being able to afford to wait that long. She feels like she has no choice but to quit. She reflects on her years of training and how she always thought she would make her mark and see things through to the end. She wanted to be remembered.

This sentiment reflects her past ambitions and aspirations in skating, which were shattered by her failure. Kat's desire to be remembered implies that she once had a strong passion for skating and wanted to leave a lasting impact. However, her current feelings of disillusionment and resignation suggest a departure from this mindset, reinforcing the idea of a loss of interest.

#### **1.2 Mania**

##### **An Extremely Euphoric and Unnatural Mood**

In the eighth episode of the series, Kat Baker displays symptoms of mania, including a euphoric and unnatural mood.

Kat : “Excuse me! How much is this stole? I want to get it for my skating coach, Dasha, who just had eye surgery, which is super intense, but it’s fine. It means she gets to see us at Sectionals, which is only, like, six days away! But me and my partner, we’re so good. We’re definitely gonna win! And I don’t even need to take my medication anymore. I haven’t for, like, a month. It’s made me a much better skater. Although my mom would freak out if she found out, but it’s fine as she’s really the crazy one, anyway. How much is the stole?”

Seller : “Three-eighty.”  
*(Spinning Out, 2020, Episode 08, 16:12)*

In the conversation above, Kat asks a pawnshop seller about a stole for her skating coach, Dasha, who recently had eye surgery. Kat assures the seller that it's fine, as she and her partner are confident in their skating abilities and their chances of winning at the Sectionals competition. She also mentions not taking her medication for a month, believing it has improved her skating skills. However, her mother would be upset if she found out.

This extreme confidence and optimism can be interpreted as an expression of an extremely euphoric and unnatural mood. Kat's mood appears elevated and overly positive, which is not in line with the typical range of emotions experienced in everyday life. Instead, it reflects an exaggerated and unnatural state of euphoria characteristic of manic episodes.

### 1.3 Anxiety

#### Excessive Worrying

The following conversation that occurs in the third episode of the series may indicate Kat's excessive worry.

Kat : “Whoa. Where’s the rest of that leotard? Is this new look Mitch’s idea, too?”

Serena: “Can you stop with that? It’s just a leotard. I should go. Mom’s gonna freak out if I’m not on the ice when she gets here. I’m fine, really. I’ll see you later.”

Jenn : “That looked intense.”

Kat : “Yeah. Did you see what Mitch has her wearing? She might as well be skating in a bikini.”



Jenn : “I’ve worn less.”  
Kat : “Exactly. Look, can you just... can you keep an eye on her for me when I’m not around, just in case.”  
Jenn : “You’re overreacting.”  
(*Spinning Out*, 2020, Episode 03, 11:37)

In the conversation, Kat comments on Serena's leotard, asking about the rest of it and questioning if the new look was Mitch's idea. Serena dismisses Kat's concerns, stating that it's just a leotard and that she needs to go on the ice before their mom arrives. Serena reassures Kat that she is fine and says goodbye, mentioning that she'll see Kat later. Jenn observes the interaction and comments on how intense it seemed. Kat shares her worries about the leotard, expressing that Serena might as well be skating in a bikini. Jenn mentions that she has worn less revealing outfits. Kat asks Jenn to keep an eye on Serena when she's not around, just in case. Jenn suggests that Kat might be overreacting.

Jenn's response suggests that Kat's worries are perceived as excessive, but Kat's persistent concern and request for surveillance indicate her inability to dismiss her worries.

#### **1.4 Low Self-esteem**

As mentioned in literary review, self-esteem refers to an individual's self-evaluation of their own worth, encompassing their recognition of personal qualities in light of negative statements. This symptom can be found in the first episode of series.

Dasha : “What you just did, that was remarkable. Here. My contact information. For when you change your mind.”  
Kat : “Thanks, but I’m done. That was my last skate. You should talk to my sister. Serena’s better than I am. She’s the one you want.”  
(*Spinning Out*, 2020, Episode 01, 37:35)

In the conversation, Dasha meets Kat at the place where Kat is skating and compliments Kat, saying that what she just did was remarkable. Dasha then offers her contact information, suggesting that Kat should reach out if she changes her mind about something. However, Kat declines the offer, stating that she is done

and that her last skate was just completed. She suggests that Dasha should talk to her sister, Serena, as Serena is better than she is and is the one that Dasha wants.

Kat's comparison of herself to her sister Serena implies that she perceives herself as inferior or less desirable. This negative self-evaluation is indicative of low self-esteem. Additionally, the use of phrases like "she's the one you want" suggests a sense of resignation or acceptance of her perceived inferiority, further highlighting Kat's negative self-perception.

### **1.5 Libido Issues**

The researcher discovered this symptom in the eighth episode of this series, where Kat Baker experienced increased sexual desire.

Kat : “Argh. I got up early and went for a run, and now I wanna have sex.”

Justin : “Oh, whoa. What has gotten into you?”

Kat : “Nothing. I just... I missed you. I'm just... I'm so in love with you, and... I don't know. I feel like the universe has brought us together or something.”

(*Spinning Out*, 2020, Episode 08, 08:12)

In this conversation, Kat enters Justin's room and runs up to Justin, as well as kisses him. Then she says that she went for a run and wants to have sex. Justin is taken aback by Kat's sudden change in mood or desire.

Kat's statement that she went for a run and now wants to have sex, coupled with her expression of missing Justin and feeling deeply in love with him, suggests a sudden and heightened libido. This abrupt change in sexual desire is consistent with the increased libido often seen during manic episodes.

### **1.6 Self-harm**

As mentioned in literary review, self-harm represents a mechanism employed to cope with distressing circumstances. In this symptom, Kat Baker hurt herself by biting her arm until it bled.

KAT WALKS INTO THE DRESSING ROOM  
AND CRIES. THEN SHE BITES HER ARM  
UNTIL IT BLEEDS.

(*Spinning Out*, 2020, Episode 01, 19:16)

In the description above, Kat walks into the dressing room and cries because she failed her skating test. Then she bites her arm until it bleeds.

Kat's response to failing her skating test by biting her arm until it bleeds suggests that she is experiencing distress and using self-harm as a coping mechanism to deal with the emotional pain of failure.

## **2. The Mental Condition of Kat Baker as A Bipolar Sufferer**

### **2.1 Impulsive**

The id represents the primitive part of the mind, driven by selfish desires and impulses aimed at immediate satisfaction, governed by the pleasure principle. In Kat's case, her manic episode, characterized by impulsive behavior, can be seen as manifestations of the id's demands for immediate satisfaction.

The following conversation shows Kat Baker's impulsive behavior.

Kat : “Excuse me! How much is this stole? I want to get it for my skating coach, Dasha, who just had eye surgery, which is super intense, but it’s fine. It means she gets to see us at Sectionals, which is only, like, six days away! But me and my partner, we’re so good. We’re definitely gonna win! And I don’t even need to take my medication anymore. I haven’t for, like, a month. It’s made me a much better skater. Although my mom would freak out if she found out, but it’s fine as she’s really the crazy one, anyway. How much is the stole?”

Seller : “Three-eighty.”

Kat : “Cool! Does this really toast four slices of bread at one time?”

Seller : “Believe it.”

Kat : “I need that, too. You have such amazing things! Ha! Hey! Hi!”

Gregg : “Hi!”

Kat : “Is that a cigarette? Can I have it?”

Twyla : “Uh... Sure!”

Kat : “Why do you have so many watches? What are you doing with this stuff?”

Gregg : “It’s for sale. You want it?”

Kat : “Cool. Wow. Yeah.”

(*Spinning Out*, 2020, Episode 08, 16:12)

From the conversation above, we know that Kat impulsively decides to buy a stole for her coach without much consideration, immediately shifting her attention to other items for sale, such as toaster and watches, then asking for a cigarette from strangers who enter the shop, without pausing to reflect on her actions. Her rapid-fire questions and comments revealed her scattered thoughts, from her coach's recent eye surgery to her decision to stop taking medication, all while expressing admiration for the items she saw. Despite the seller's bemusement, Kat's attention was fleeting, her focus jumping from one item to the next, her impulsive nature guiding her through the shop.

In Kat's case, her id wants to buy a stole for her coach, a toaster, watches, and asks for a cigarette from strangers. She acts on her desires without considering the potential consequences. Her id also decides to stop taking medication. Although Kat's superego may be present in her awareness that her mother would disapprove of her decision to stop taking medication if she knew, her ego leads her id to dismiss this concern because it makes her feel like she is a much better skater.

## 2.2 Overprotective

As we know that the id is the primitive and instinctual part of the mind. The ego, on the other hand, is the realistic part of the mind that mediates between the desires of the id and the moral constraints of the superego. Lastly, the superego represents the moral and ideal aspects of the personality. Kat's overprotective attitude can be seen as a result of the interplay between her id, ego, and superego.

The following conversation shows Kat's overprotective attitude.

Kat : "Why are you suddenly wearing eyeliner? Who drove you home?"

Serena: "Mitch. I thought he was gonna tell me to stay home because of my wrist, but he had me doing off-ice training literally all day long."

Kat : "He drove you home? Serena, I don't like the way he acts around you."

Serena: "What are you talking about?"

Kat : "I saw him slap your ass with his gloves the other day."

Serena: “Oh, my God. It was a joke.”

Kat : “Serena, you really have to be careful about who you trust.”

(*Spinning Out*, 2020, Episode 01, 32:57)

In the conversation, Kat expresses concern about Serena's interactions with Mitch, her coach. She mentions that she saw Mitch slap Serena's ass with his gloves, which she finds inappropriate. Kat advises Serena to be careful about who she trusts.

In Kat's case, her id drives her instinctual desire to protect her sister, Serena. This instinctual drive may be rooted in her deep emotional connection to Serena and her fear of harm coming to her. Kat's id wants to ensure Serena's safety and well-being, even if it means being overly cautious or suspicious of others. Her ego comes into play when she balances her instinctual drive to protect Serena (id) with the reality of Serena's situation. The ego helps Kat assess the actual risks and dangers Serena may face. Her superego may contribute to her overprotective attitude by internalizing societal beliefs about the importance of protecting loved ones. It may instill in her a sense of responsibility and duty to ensure Serena's safety, leading her to be extra cautious and vigilant.

## **Conclusion**

After the researcher analyzed the bipolar symptoms and mental condition of the main character, Kat Baker, in the series *Spinning Out* (2020), the researcher is able to draw the conclusions. In the main character of *Spinning Out* (2020), Kat Baker, symptoms of bipolar disorder are depicted through various characteristics, including diminished interest in activities that occurs in depressive episode; an extremely euphoric and unnatural mood occurs in manic episode; excessive worrying which is included in the characteristic of anxiety. In addition, Kat also perceives herself as inferior or less desirable, which is included in the characteristic of low self-esteem. Her symptoms of bipolar disorder are also depicted through her libido issue, that is increased libido during manic episode. Lastly, the symptoms of bipolar disorder are described through her behavior,

namely self-harm by biting her arm. Kat Baker's mental condition as a bipolar sufferer is also depicted through her impulsive behavior and overprotective attitude. From the lens of Freud's psychoanalysis theory, her impulsive behavior reflects the dominance of the id, with the ego struggling to control her impulses and the superego's moral standards being overridden by immediate desires. Kat's overprotective attitude is also the result of the interplay between her id (instinctual drive to protect), ego (rational assessment of the situation), and superego (internalized beliefs about protecting loved ones). These psychological forces shape her thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, ultimately influencing her overprotective attitude towards Serena.

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