

SELF ACCEPTANCE OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN MATT HAIG'S MIDNIGHT LIBRARY

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ABSTRACT

This study is an analysis of the main character with the aim of showing how the main character responds and describes the problem of self-acceptance that affects her mental health. The analytical method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive analysis along with the psychoanalytic theory proposed by Sigmund Freud with the study of developmental psychology. The results of the research show that the level of self-acceptance can affect a person's life. The way the main character responds and describes self-acceptance is by looking back at her past life and embracing it in order to accept herself more as she is so she can move on and live a better life.

Keywords: Midnight Library, mental health, self-acceptance and life.

I. BACKGROUND

Humans in their social life are often involved in competition and various conflicting situations that are likely to cause conflict, internally or externally. The meaning of conflict basically starts from things that are abstract, but then the consequences can rise to a level that is tangible. In life, conflict is often a problem that knows no space and time, it can happen anytime and anywhere. As individuals, humans are required to be able to deal with their problems, but unfortunately, not every human can deal with it. In this case we often argue and find it difficult to make peace with ourselves. This is called self-acceptance.

Self-acceptance has become a frequently discussed topic, not only among teenagers but also adults, because in this modern era, they often compare their lives and themselves with others, unable to accept events in the past that make the value of self-love low. This becomes important if a person's self-acceptance is low, then it can cause negative things to happen as well such as problems with mental health disorders, doubts, excessive anxiety, learning problems, also experiencing some difficulties such as setbacks, failures and losses.

In its definition, according to Jersild in Prasetyono, self-acceptance is a willingness to accept oneself which includes physical conditions, social psychology and self-achievement, both strengths and weaknesses. Another definition was also put forward by Hurlock (2006), where he suggests that self-acceptance is the ability to accept everything that exists on oneself both the shortcomings and advantages possessed, so that if an unpleasant event occurs, the individual will be able to think logically about the good and the bad problems that occur without causing hostility, feelings of inferiority, shame, and insecurity. Sari (2002) in (Rahayu & Sri, 2012:4), states that individuals who have self-acceptance will know all their strengths and weaknesses, and be able to manage them.

In terms of terminology, Self-acceptance is based on self-esteem, as stated by Coopersmith in Desmita (2012:165). Feelings of self-worth refer to the evaluations that the individual makes and usually maintain regarding himself, this expresses an attitude of agreement or disagreement and indicates the degree to which the individual believes himself to be capable, important, successful and valuable. It can be said that self-esteem as a certain part of the attitude or as an attitude towards a particular object. Through self-esteem, a teenager can evaluate himself based on feelings of self-worth which can be positive or negative feelings and through this a person can increase self-acceptance in himself (Rosenberg in Mruk, 2006).

In relation to this research, the novel *Midnight Library* focuses on the theme of self-acceptance and the inner conflict between the character and herself. There are also many moral messages that emphasize on the importance of self-acceptance and self-love. Moreover, because most of the themes in Matt Haig's works are about self-love and mental health.

The appointment of this research topic is because the theme of self-acceptance in this novel plays a big role in the main character's life and self-acceptance itself is still widely considered as something that has no effect on life, especially on mental health.

The novel *Midnight Library* is one of Matt Haig's works related to the study of psychology. Psychoanalytic substance in the novel is not new to Matt Haig, for he has also written a similar novel entitled *Reasons to be alive* which made it a number one Sunday

Times bestseller and stayed in the UK top 10 for 46 weeks. In 2020, Matt Haig released his novel *Midnight Library*, which is about a woman named Nora, telling the story on the night she wants to commit suicide, she ends up in "The *Midnight Library*", a library between life and death with millions of books containing her life story if she makes several different decisions. In this library, she then tries to

find a life in which she is most satisfied. *Midnight Library* was shortlisted for "Fiction Book of the year" at The Booker Prize in the UK in 2021. *Midnight Library* was adapted for radio and broadcast in ten episodes on BBC Radio 4 in December 2020.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative research because the data collected are in the form of narrative literary works as well as theories and understandings used to support the analysis by analyzing and describing matters relating to self-acceptance and its impact on psychology.

The research method that the author uses is a descriptive method which can be interpreted as a problem-solving procedure investigated by describing the state of the subject or object where the research can be in the form of people, institutions, communities and others who are currently based on visible facts or what they are. While the data collection technique used by the author in this study is a literature review technique or library research

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Midnight Library is a novel by Matt Haig published on August 13, 2020 and contains 295 pages. This novel tells about a woman named Nora Seed who feels that her life is full of regrets and failures. Various painful events happened to her and so many things that were not achieved and ended in failure made it a traumatic experience for her.

In short, this story describes the main character, Nora, often takes sleeping pills and anti-depressants to reduce sleep problems as well as the prolonged stress she suffers. Until the day she was fired from her job, that moment made Nora feel that she would feel at ease and everyone would be fine if she was no longer in this world and therefore decided to end her life by taking more than the prescribed antidepressant tablet. However, when she opened her eyes, she was neither in heaven nor hell, Nora was in a library instead, with many books dominated by the color green. After spending the middle of the night in the library and carrying on some of her past lives, Nora finally returned to her life where she was dying in her room from taking an overdose of drugs, she was determined to accept her current life, improve her relationships with people and live a better life because she realized that she wanted to live longer and experience many things that she had never felt before. Nora tried to call a friend and she was taken to the hospital, after recovering, Nora lived a better life by accepting herself and all her past.

Based on the summary of the *midnight library* novel above, it can be seen and found that The main character referred to in this novel is Nora Seed because she dominates the storyline from beginning to end. This story also tells about Nora's journey in the "Midnight library" to repeat a life that she regrets in the past where it triggers depression and trauma in her present life that made her realize that she must accept life and herself to live a better life.

Based on the physiological dimension, it can be understood that Nora Seed is described as a 35-year old

woman with black hair and a mole on her left hand. She is not someone who is too concerned with appearance, this is due to a mental health

disorder that she suffers that affects her self-acceptance. Jersild (in Hurlock, 1974), mentions that people who accept themselves have realistic expectations of their situation and value themselves. When someone loves himself or herself, then he or she will appreciate himself or herself by dressing neatly, buying good food or other things that make him or her feel happy, whereas in Nora's case, she does the opposite. As explained in the character's physiological dimension, Nora has a depressive disorder that causes a sense of neglect in appearance.

Quoted from Utami, Silfa H. *Signs of People Having Depression, Pay Attention to People Closest and Embrace*, 2019. www.voice.com. One of the characteristics of people who are depressed is not paying attention to their appearance. They tend to be indifferent and appear messy. This happens because they are so busy with their thoughts that they ignore their appearance. This explanation shows the influence of self-acceptance on the physiological dimensions of Nora's character, in terms of how she looks.

In the sociological dimension, the character in the novel is seen namely from work status, position and family, outlook on life, beliefs and religion, ideology, social activities, favorite organizations, ethnicity and others. Regarding to this particular dimension, Nora is described as a person who spends her days working at Neil's place, teaching piano lessons and spending time in the apartment with Volt, her cat.

The psychological dimension of a character in the novel is mentality: norms, morals used, temperament, feelings, and personal desires, attitudes and character, intelligence, special skills and abilities. Based on the psychological dimension, Nora is told to have depression and trauma disorders, it also triggers her personality which is difficult to socialize with the outside world and often shuts down. According to Anderson (in Sugiarti, 2008: 6), self-acceptance is very influential on how a person lives his or her life. Someone who is able to truly accept himself, then he will not be afraid to look at him or herself honestly, both inside (heart/mind/feeling) and outside (behavior, appearance), because we cannot run away from ourselves, no matter what we do. Self-acceptance is needed to unite body, mind and spirit. In the problems that she suffers, Nora chooses to avoid the possibility that she will feel disappointed and afraid of the future. In fact, she also keeps her distance from Dan, her boyfriend.

The psychological dimension also includes intelligence and special skills. Nora has the ability to swim and she is also smart, it is shown in the following quote: "*I'm Kerry-Anne. Remember you from school. The swimmers. Super-brain. Didn't whatshisface, Mr Blandford, do an assembly on you once? Said you were going to end up at the Olympics?*" (Haig, 2020: 25).

The quote is the words of a woman named Kerry Anne who knew Nora when she was in school. She mentioned the words "the swimmer" and "super brain" meaning that Nora was almost heading to the Olympics to become a swimming athlete. This proves that Nora has the ability in academic and

non-academic fields. Then there was a conversation between Nora and Mrs Elm at her school library, *'on venus it is pure acid' Mrs Elm pulled a paper tissue from her sleeve and delicately blew her nose. see? With a*

brain like yours you can do anything'" (Haig, 2020: 13). As a result of Nora's low level of self-acceptance, her abilities are not developed. Nora also has a feeling of hopelessness for her life, she feels like a failure and there is nothing she can achieve.

Depression or mood disorders that cause disruption of daily activities are designated by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a global crisis and predicts that by 2020 this depressive disorder will be the number two contributor to the cause of a person's disability in life after cardiovascular. More than 350 million people in the world suffer from depression, so WHO has determined depression as one of the priorities to be addressed (Ministry of Health, 2014). Dominantly emerge are feelings of helplessness and loss of hope. The result of the most severe depression is a tendency to commit suicide, as shown by Nora wanting to commit suicide.

With regard to self-acceptance in Nora's character, Hurlock (2006) suggests that self-acceptance is the ability to accept everything that is in oneself, both shortcomings and strengths, so that if an unpleasant event occurs, the individual will be able to think logically. about the good and bad of problems that occur without causing feelings, hostility, feelings of inferiority, shame, and insecurity.

One of the factors in the problem of self-acceptance in Nora's character is her obedience, which only follows orders from her parents. According to Irwanto (1994) in the book General Psychology, the adolescent period is considered a transition period in the childhood period to the adult period, this period is considered a very important period in a person's life, especially in the formation of individual personality. When feeling insecure about their physical form, a person often feels ashamed, insecure and afraid of the views of others, that is what Nora experienced.

In this case, Nora's low level of self-acceptance is what affects her insecurity. Because Nora can't accept her body shape and becomes insecure because she cares about other people's comments and opinions.

The problem of self-acceptance that affects Nora's mental health as an adult is influenced by the role of Nora's parents when she was a child. Nora's father does not support Nora who wants to be a Pop Star or Glaciologist. Unlike his brother, Joe, who is always supported and expected by his parents. This made Nora feel unsupported and felt alone. Her life has been arranged by her parents and Nora is powerless to resist. This made Nora anxious to convey her wish again. She just resigned herself to every decision her parents made. From this incident, symptoms of anxiety emerged that affected Nora's mental health which made it difficult for her to apply self-acceptance to herself.

Another factor that affects Nora's self-acceptance is the marriage life of her parents. This became a traumatic moment for Nora so that just before her wedding day with her boyfriend Dan, Nora canceled their wedding. According

to Tirtojiwo (2012), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is characterized by a feeling of recalling a traumatic event that causes intense emotions and physical reactions with a desire to avoid the traumatic event.

With regard to self-acceptance, according to Dariyo Agoes (2007) in Adolescent Developmental Psychology, Self-acceptance is an individual's ability to be able to accept one's own existence. The results of the analysis or self-assessment will be used as the basis for an individual to be able to take a decision in the context of acceptance of one's own existence. Self-acceptance can be done realistically, but it can also be done unrealistically.

Realistic acceptance can be characterized by looking at the weaknesses and strengths of oneself objectively. On the other hand, unrealistic self-acceptance is characterized by efforts to overestimate oneself, try to reject one's own weaknesses, deny or avoid bad things from within, such as past traumatic experiences. Self-acceptance can be interpreted as an attitude of seeing oneself as it is and treating it well with pleasure and pride while continuing to strive for its progress.

"Midnight Library" is a place where Nora can live a life she regrets and did not live a long time ago. At first, Nora was adamant that she did not want to live any more, all the burdens and regrets she had been carrying so far had hurt her enough. She feels that her existence in the world only makes her worse and feels like a failure in other people's expectations. Like her father's expectation to become a swimmer and advance to the olympics or not to be like her brother's expectation and continue their music band.

According to Freud, Anxiety/Anxiety occurs when the Ego is too stressed / depressed because it is unable to balance the demands of the id, reality and the superego. Anxiety is divided into three, namely:

1. *Objective anxiety*: Fear comes from the real world.
2. *Neurotic anxiety*: anxiety because you want to satisfy
3. *Moral anxiety*: comes from morals. If the action is against moral values, feel ashamed/guilty.

The anxiety that continues to arise at every event in Nora's life is the effect of the depression she is experiencing which also affects her self-acceptance.

By agreeing to a trip in the *"Midnight Library"*, there is a development in Nora that is she wants to live a life that she regrets not having taken in the past, she wants to try to fix it because Nora also feels guilty to Dan for leaving and canceling their marriage suddenly. This shows that Nora's way of dealing with self-acceptance is by trying to live the life she wants to improve with the help of Mrs. Elm and *"Midnight Library"*. Taking this first step and wanting to see what it means to live with the person she loves, is the beginning of Nora learning to accept herself.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the discussion that has been carried out through the main character in the novel *Midnight Library* by Matt Haig, which carries the theme of self-acceptance, the following results are obtained:

It is known that from when Nora was a child to adulthood and lived her life in the "Midnight Library", there was a study of the id, ego and superego of Nora's character that influenced how Nora responded and described her self-acceptance. When she was a child, Nora felt unheard and her parents looked at Joe more and supported his dream, which made Nora's Ego want to fulfill Id's satisfaction by getting validation from his parents.

As a result of the problems she experienced as a child, which was influenced by the treatment of her parents, Nora suffered from depression when she was growing up and often avoided events that might upset her and others. This prompted her Id to attempt suicide. Until when she arrives at the "Midnight Library", her Id and Ego work with each other to choose between life and death.

The data shows that self-acceptance is presented with the delivery of Nora's story from when she was a child, teenager to adult with a mixed plot that explains in detail how Nora's character experiences character development in every life she lives in the "Midnight Library". At first, she aimed to end life and give up, changed to accept herself and continue life better with gratitude where at that time Nora's character already had a strong self-acceptance.

When she was experiencing life at the "Midnight Library", Nora accepted herself in various versions and events that led to her past traumatic moments, making Nora realize that what had happened was not her fault, it showed that Nora was responding to self-acceptance in herself, namely by going through various ways. the kind of life she had regretted and the life she had strung together as she wished with the help of Mrs. Elm. Self-acceptance is illustrated by how Nora tries to make her life better and makes herself happier.

From the study of Nora's character, this proves that *self-acceptance* is an important aspect in a human life where a person in his journey and development in his life requires self-recognition and acceptance of whatever attributes that exist in him in order to become more familiar with himself in order to achieve the happiness of life, so that life itself becomes more meaningful. Self-acceptance is not only a key in the development of life, but also plays an important role in growing gratitude.

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