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AN ANALYSIS OF HOLDEN'S PSYCHOLOGICAL ANXIETY IN THE NOVEL "THE CATCHER IN THE RYE" BY J.D. SALINGER

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Abstract

Our research aims to analyze the psychological problems experienced by Holden Caulfield, namely anxiety symptoms as the main character in the novel "The Catcher in The Rye" by studying his behavior and relationships or interactions with other characters in the novel. Holden has habits that are unusual for ordinary people and has poor interactions with other characters in the story, which makes his mental condition worse. We use qualitative research methods by collecting, analyzing, and describing primary data from the novel "The Catcher in The Rye" by J.D. Salinger in 1951. Then we also took other data from online sources. The results of this research show that Holden has anxiety disorders which are indicated by mental and physical symptoms and also he has interactions with other characters that influence his anxiety. Suggestions that researchers can give for further research are to include solutions to solving social anxiety problems experienced by teenagers. This is because in this journal, the author does not include a solution to this problem.

Keywords: Psychology, Anxiety, Mental, The Catcher in The Rye

Abstrak

Penelitian kami bertujuan untuk menganalisis permasalahan psikologis yang dialami oleh Holden Caulfield, yaitu gejala kecemasan sebagai tokoh utama dalam novel "The Catcher in The Rye", dengan mempelajari tingkah lakunya dan hubungannya atau interaksinya dengan tokoh lain dalam novel tersebut. Holden memiliki kebiasaan yang tidak biasa bagi orang awam dan memiliki interaksi yang buruk dengan karakter lain dalam cerita sehingga hal tersebut membuat kondisi mentalnya semakin buruk. Kami menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan cara mengumpulkan, menganalisis, dan mendeskripsikan data primer dari novel, "The Catcher in The Rye" karya J.D. Salinger pada 1951. Kemudian, kami juga mengambil data lain dari sumber daring. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Holden mempunyai gangguan kecemasan yang ditandai dengan gejala mental dan fisik serta terdapat interaksi dengan karakter lain yang mempengaruhi kecemasannya. Saran yang dapat peneliti berikan untuk penelitian selanjutnya adalah menyertakan solusi dalam mengatasi masalah kecemasan sosial yang dialami remaja. Sebab, dalam jurnal ini penulis tidak menyertakan solusi permasalahan tersebut.

Kata Kunci: Psikologi, Kecemasan, Mental, The Catcher in The Rye

1. Introduction

Anxiety disorder is a mental illness characterized by depressive symptoms including sad, empty, or irritable mood along with cognitive and somatic alterations that impact the individual's functioning as defined by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (Schäfer et al., 2017). Individuals with anxiety often avoid social situations, which can trigger anxiety or panic attacks. Without proper treatment, symptoms can worsen over time, impacting performance at school or work and straining relationships with family and friends. Although anxiety can affect anyone, teenagers are particularly susceptible due to the challenges and pressures of transitioning from childhood to adulthood. (Dias et al., 2016) Problem anxiety interferes with the sufferer's ability to sleep or otherwise function. It is remarkable that teenagers are particularly at risk to having irritability as a symptom of a number of emotional problems, including anxiety. Factors like bullying, traumatic events, and a history of neglect contribute to the heightened vulnerability of teenagers to anxiety. The psychology of anxiety is often found in various novels, one of which is "The Catcher in the Rye".

There are reasons why researchers analyze the novel "The Catcher in the Rye" as the object of their research, including how the novel depicts the struggle of the main character in struggling in his life while having several signs of mental illness and the way the novel presents a story of the life of a teenager who is seen as "problematic". by school, family, and friends.

In previous research, (Kurniawan & Risyad, 2021) researchers analyzed Holden's anxiety with various symptoms such as physical and mental symptoms such as; excessive sweating, difficulty finding peace of mind, going to the bathroom during panic attacks, and dropping out of school. These symptoms of anxiety are caused by his life background, such as the absence of a parental figure, the death of a family member, and witnessing a suicide.

This research focuses on analyzing Holden's behavior which shows signs of anxiety and how Holden's interactions with other characters affect his mental state and offers insights into the nature of his anxiety using a psychoanalytic approach.

2. Literature Review

Literary works can be divided into three, namely drama, poetry, and prose or fiction (Damayanti et al., 2023). In this research, the researcher chose literary works in the form of prose (fiction), namely novels, as the focus of study. "The Catcher in the Rye" is a classic coming-of-age novel written by J. D. Salinger during World War II and published in 1951 by Little, Brown and Company. The story revolves around the two-day journey of a sixteen-year-old named Holden Caulfield, who is returning home from Pencey Prep School after academic

failure led to his dropping out. The novel delves into Holden's experiences and flashbacks, revealing factors that contribute to his mental well-being struggles.

Holden, the protagonist, faces challenges in coping with life, particularly in a school setting, and harbors a negative outlook. This perspective is likely shaped by his history of emotional neglect from his family, the loss of a sibling, and exposure to incidents of bullying and suicide. These past traumas appear to have profoundly impacted Holden, hindering his ability to perceive the world positively and contributing to the development of an anxiety disorder.

3. Research Method

The research method used in this research is qualitative descriptive research. (Hutajulu & Herman, 2019) explained that qualitative research is research that explores and understands the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems. This means that this study does not include statistics, but research data that is included in the form of words and phrases. Referring to the previous discussion, although it may be incidental, descriptive qualitative research is research conducted based on truth, in order to achieve the research goal of obtaining data in the form of words and phrases. This research was conducted to understand how the anxious behavior shown by Holden Caulfield and Holden's interactions with other characters led him to the mental disorders he experienced. The object studied in this research is a novel entitled "The Catcher in the Rye" written by J. D. Salinger during World War II and published in 1951 by Little, Brown. Researchers collect data through several steps: 1) Understand the contents of the novel by reading it several times, 2) Write down important information related to the research focus, 3) Organize the information that has been obtained and sort it again to suit the research topic. The theory used to analyze the data is Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Holden's Behavior Which Shows Signs of Anxiety

4.1.1. Excessive sweating

Primary hyperhidrosis (PH) is a clinical condition defined as excessive and localized sweating, which primarily affects the hands, armpits, feet, and face (Dias et al., 2016). The literature reports an incidence of 1% which is more common in young adult patients.

“Anyway, I kept walking and walking up Fifth Avenue, without any tie on or anything. Then all of a sudden, something very spooky started happening. Every time I came to the end of a block and stepped off the goddam curb, I had this feeling that I'd never get to the other side of the street. I thought I'd just go down, down, down, and nobody'd ever see me again. Boy, did it scare me. You can't imagine. I started sweating like a bastard--my whole shirt and underwear and everything.” (Salinger, 1951, p.204)

The passage above is an example of an incident in the novel that proves Holden's panic when he was crossing the road. In this incident we can see that Holden is having a really hard time trying to get to the other side of the road. His panic made him sweat uncontrollably, causing him to have to sit on a bench for a long time to just calm himself down.

4.1.2. Difficulty Finding Peace Of Mind

All people on earth definitely want a peaceful mind, but there are several factors that can hinder the goal of achieving a peaceful mind, one of which is anxiety. People who have anxiety will definitely find it difficult to find peace in their minds because they are disturbed by various things. One of them is remembering bad experiences that happened in the past.

“That's the whole trouble. You can't ever find a place that's nice and peaceful, because there isn't any. You may think there is, but once you get there, when you're not looking, somebody'll sneak up and write "Fuck you" right under your nose. Try it sometime. I think, even, if I ever die, and they stick me in a cemetery, and I have a tombstone and all, it'll say "Holden Caulfield" on it, and then what year I was born and what year I died, and then right under that it'll say "Fuck you." I'm positive, in fact.” (Salinger, 1951, p.210)

The passage above shows an incident where it was very difficult for Holden to find peace in his mind. Wherever Holden goes he always feels uneasy and anxious. This restless mind makes Holden always think that whatever he does, he will be faced with something bad, whether bad news, bad people, or failure that will destroy everything. Naturally, this was driven by his past of always encountering violent people. So this

makes Holden see the world as a place full of bad people and it is difficult for him to find peace.

4.1.3. Isolating Himself

When someone feels anxious and then feels like going alone or looking for a quiet place, it indicates that he is experiencing social anxiety. Usually, they will go from the crowd to a quiet place such as a restroom to isolate themselves so they feel calm.

“When I really worry about something, I don't just fool around. I even have to go to the bathroom when I worry about something. Only, I don't go. I'm too worried to go. I don't want to interrupt my worrying to go.” (Salinger, 1951, p.42)

The passage above is an example of one of the symptoms of anxiety, namely isolating himself. This incident was shown by his attitude which said that he wanted to go to the toilet even though he did not urinate there. His desire to isolate himself from the crowd always arises when he experiences panic when he is in a crowd. Going to the restroom to isolate himself has always been a solution for him to overcome the anxiety that arises when he is in a crowd.

4.1.4. Failure at School

The cause of failure at school can be triggered by the child's mental pressure from home, school, the surrounding environment, or friendships (Strodl et al., 2015). Attending school itself can be tiring, but people with anxiety may find it more difficult than others because they have to control their thoughts to focus on studying but sometimes, they are unable to do so because of intrusive thoughts.

"How many subjects did you carry this term?" Mr. Spencer asked.

"Five, sir." Holden answered.

"Five. And how many are you failing in?" Mr.Spencer asked again.

"Four." Holden said.

(Salinger, 1951, p.9-10)

The passage above shows that Holden is a person who has problems in terms of his education. During his life, he had failed five times in managing school-related

matters, especially at Pencey Prep School. At his school, he stated that he had failed four times out of a total of five subjects in class and this made him leave Pencey. The anxiety that disturbs his mind is the reason Holden cannot give his best effort at school. This is what made him fail in his education at school.

4.2. Holden's Interactions With Other Characters

4.2.1. Schoolmates

Social relationships with peers and teachers have an important role in students' mental conditions and learning outcomes at school. These relationships serve as a resource to support learning and influence feelings of stress (Wentzel et al., 2017). That is why many students are less successful in their education because of the minimal role of the social environment, especially their schoolmates. The failure they experienced occurred because of poor treatment from their schoolmates.

“He started walking around the room, very slow and all, the way he always did, picking up your personal stuff off your desk and chiffonier. He always picked up your personal stuff and looked at it. Boy, could he get on your nerves sometimes. "How was the fencing?" he said. He just wanted me to quit reading and enjoying myself. He didn't give a damn about the fencing. "We win, or what?" he said.”
(Salinger, 1951, p.20)

According to the text above, friends in class are one of the causes of social anxiety or the cause of failure. In the evidence above, we can see that there are acts of bullying between peers at school which causes discomfort from the disturbance. This can trigger prolonged stress which increases Holden's level of mental disorders so that Holden cannot finish school.

4.2.2. Teacher

According to (Hoferichter & Raufelder, 2022)found that teacher support buffered the development of students' academic exhaustion a symptom of stress and burnout. Therefore, teachers have an important role in improving students' mental health and their success at school. However, if teachers do not provide enough support or even put pressure on students, it will cause mental damage to students and also failure at school.

"Did you? Tell the truth, boy." "Well, I sort of glanced through it a couple of times," I told him. I didn't want to hurt his feelings. He was mad about history. "You glanced through it, eh?" he said--very sarcastic. "Your, ah, exam paper is over there on top of my chiffonier. On top of the pile. Bring it here, please." It was a very dirty trick, but I went over and brought it over to him--I didn't have any alternative or anything. Then I sat down on his cement bed again. Boy, you can't imagine how sorry I was getting that I'd stopped by to say good-bye to him." (Salinger, 1951, p.10)

Based on the evidence above, we can see that Spencer, Holden's teacher, has a cynical character. This is proven by Holden's behavior of shouting, this is one of the causes of Holden's social anxiety and his failure at school because Holden feels he is always being blamed. This interaction between Holden and his teacher, Spencer, is what brings Holden to the anxiety he experiences and also leads to his failure to complete school.

4.2.3. Romance

We remember our personal past for many reasons (Aydin & Buyukcan-Tetik, 2021). We remember our personal past for many reasons. One of them is the beautiful memories we share with the people we love. A partner is someone whose memories are deeply imprinted in our memory. These beautiful memories can be recalled over and over again even though the person is no longer with us at the moment.

"Jane Gallagher. Jesus . . . I couldn't get her off my mind. I really couldn't. "I oughta go down and say hello to her, at least."

"Why the hell don'tcha, instead of keep saying it?" Stradlater said.

I walked over to the window, but you couldn't see out of it, it was so steamy from all the heat in the can.. "I'm not in the mood right now," I said. I wasn't, either. You have to be in the mood for those things. "I thought she went to Shipley. I could've sworn she went to Shipley." I walked around the can for a little while. I didn't have anything else to do. "Did she enjoy the game?" I said. (Salinger, 1951, p.34)

Jane Gallagher, the girl who lives next door to Holden, is one of the few people that Holden really cares about. He remembered playing checkers with her and how she placed the king in the back row. He also remembered how she cried when her stepfather arrived on the porch and how he kissed her all over her face. Holden feels strong attraction and feelings for Jane, but he never calls her or tries to see her, even though he knows she is in New York. He was afraid she had changed, afraid she would reject him or he would ruin their friendship. He also felt jealous and angry when he learned she was dating Stradlater, her roommate, who was a womanizer. Holden's interaction with Jane, or rather his lack of interaction, shows that he is very insecure and conflicted about his feelings.

4.2.4. Strangers

Apart from the people we know, the strangers we meet in life will affect our mental state. The people around us, whether we know them or not, also play a role in our mental condition. When we meet strangers at a good time and in good condition, this does not rule out the possibility that it will have an effect on our mental condition in the future. Vice versa, when we meet strangers in bad conditions and at bad times, this also does not rule out the possibility that it will have a bad effect on our mental condition, as experienced by Holden.

Then Sunny said something for the first time. "Hey, Maurice. Want me to get his wallet?" she said. "It's right on the wutchamacallit."

"Yeah, get it."

"Leave my wallet alone!" "I awreddy got it," Sunny said. She waved five bucks at me. "See? All I'm takin' is the five you owe me. I'm no crook."

All of a sudden I started to cry. I'd give anything if I hadn't, but I did. "No, you're no crooks," I said. "You're just stealing five--"

"Shut up," old Maurice said, and gave me a shove.

"Leave him alone, hey," Sunny said. "C'mon, hey. We got the dough he owes us. Let's go. C'mon, hey."

"I'm comin'," old Maurice said. But he didn't.

"I mean it, Maurice, hey. Leave him alone."

(Salinger, 1951, p.107)

Sunny, a young prostitute, is hired by Maurice, the elevator owner, to entertain Holden in his hotel room. Holden, still a virgin, feels nervous and guilty about the whole situation and tries to talk to Sunny instead of having sex with her. He told her he was recovering from surgery, which was a lie, and that he was 22, which was another lie. He also asked her questions about her life, but she did not want to talk to him. Holden pays her five dollars, but Maurice returns and asks for another five dollars, saying they agreed on ten. Holden refuses to pay and Maurice punches him in the stomach, while Sunny takes money out of his wallet. Holden feels humiliated and violated by this encounter and declares he is a defeated movie hero. He also thought about committing suicide but decided against it because he didn't want anyone to see his dead body. Holden's interactions with Sunny and Maurice show him to be very naive and immature, and to have a distorted view of reality and himself.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion of the research conducted by the author, it can be concluded that Holden Caulfield suffers from anxiety disorders which are indicated by mental and physical symptoms such as; Excessive sweating, Difficulty Finding Peace Of Mind, Isolating Himself, and Failure at School. Then Holden Culfield also has interactions or relationships with other characters that influence his anxiety, such as his relationship with; his Schoolmates, his Teacher, his Romance Person, and Strangers that he meets. All of these things really influence the anxiety disorder he experiences during the story.

Therefore, as a channel for further research, future research efforts should emphasize not only the identification and understanding of social anxiety but also the development and implementation of effective solutions. By incorporating practical strategies, interventions, or support mechanisms, researchers can make significant contributions to the field and provide valuable insights that go beyond mere recognition of the problem. This versatile approach ensures a more holistic understanding of social anxiety in adolescents and forms the basis for real-world applications that can have a positive impact on their lives

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