

**DEATH AS A MEANINGFUL CHOICE REFLECTED IN JOJO
MOYES' *ME BEFORE YOU* (2012): AN EXISTENTIALIST
PERSPECTIVE**



**Compiled as one of the requirements to complete the Strata I Study
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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kematian sebagai pilihan penuh makna di novel *Me Before You* (2012) menggunakan pandangan eksistensialisme. Hal itu dilakukan untuk menentukan tiga tujuan: pertama untuk mengenali penyebab pemeran utama memilih untuk mati, kedua untuk mendeskripsikan bagaimana pilihan kematian digambarkan dan yang terakhir untuk mengungkapkan alasan penulis mengangkat ide tersebut dalam novel. Tipe penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif. Dalam metode ini, menggunakan dua tipe data yaitu data primer dan data sekunder. Data primer adalah kutipan dari novel *Me Before You* yang ditulis Jojo Moyes. Data sekunder adalah data yang diambil dari biografi penulis, artikel, buku, internet, jurnal dan sumber lain yang mendukung dalam analisis. Hasil dari analisis ini yang pertama untuk mengenali penyebab pemeran utama memilih untuk mati dalam novel *Me Before You* yaitu berdasarkan dua penyebab yakni penyebab internal dan penyebab eksternal. Penyebab internal terdiri dari menjadi tidak normal, menjadi kesakitan, menjadi temperamental, dan menjadi depresi. Penyebab eksternal terdiri dari menjadi tidak mandiri dan menjadi malu. Kedua bagaimana pendeskripsian pilihan kematian berdasarkan karakter, latar tempat, peristiwa dan gaya bahasa. Terakhir mengungkapkan alasan penulis mengangkat ide tersebut karena terinspirasi dari berita yang didengar dari radio, saudaranya yang membutuhkan perawatan selama 24 jam dan melakukan penelitian tentang sindrom quadriplegia.

Katakunci: *me before you*, eksistensialisme, pilihan, kematian

Abstract

This research aims to determine the death as a meaningful choice in *Me Before You* novel (2012) using existentialist perspective that was done by setting three goals: the first to identify the causes of the main character to choose to die, the second to describe the choice of death depicted in the novel and the last to reveal why the author addressed the idea in the novel. The type of this research is qualitative research. In this method, the researcher used two types of data namely primary and secondary data. The primary data is a quotation of *Me Before You* written by Jojo Moyes. The secondary data were taken by the biography of the author, article, books, journal, the internet and other sources to support the analysis. The first result of this research to identify the causes of the main character to choose to die divided into two internal causes namely being abnormal, being pain, being temperamental and being depressed and external causes namely being dependent and being ashamed. The second result is how the choice of death depicted in the novel through characters, setting, events and style. The last, the reason of the author addressing the idea in the novel because the author inspired by the news about a young man who is a quadriplegia sufferer

from the radio, her two relatives who need treatment for 24hours, and doing research about quadriplegia syndrome.

Keywords: me before you, existentialism, choose, death

1. INTRODUCTION

Death will surely be experienced by every being, because death is a cycle of life. According to medical world, death is divided into two namely natural and unnatural deaths. Death becomes a taboo topic to be discussed in everyday life, but death is an interesting topic that will not be finished if discussed. Death is also a favorite topic to be discussed in stories in several novels, one of which is Jojo Moyes 'Me Before You' novel. *Me Before You* novel won an award from the American Library Association as the winner of women's fiction. Previous research found by researchers discussed from two different perspectives. First, in terms of linguistic perspectives (Dewi,2017; Aresta,2018; Fatimah,2018; Melani,2018; Syukra,2018) and second in terms of literature, some use psychological theory (Saribu,2018; Sejati,2018), existentialism theory (Adibah,2018; Dhani,2018) and sociological theory (Wahyuningsih, 2018).

Most studies about *Me Before You* employed linguistic perspective and literary perspective in terms of psychology and existentialism that focused on the despair and existence of the main character. *Me Before You* novel has a lot of portrayals of decision making by the characters, one of them is the decision to choosing death that aims to give meaning in life and to solve the problem. Based on the description in the novel, there searcher takes the issue of death as a meaningful choice from an existentialist perspective.

There is previous study that has similarities to those investigated by researcher. First, namely Adibah (2018) the main difference in research conducted by Adibah with researchers is that the research focuses on Will's existence and essence to determine his life. While researchers focus on choosing death as a meaningful choice in Will's life. Second, Kacerauskas (2009) that addresses death in the perspective of existential phenomenology,

in this study the researcher explained death based on an existentialist philosophy perspective.

Related to the death as a meaningful choice, existentialist perspective used to answer the problem statements. Existentialism is a philosophical thinking began with human subjects, not only the subjects who thought that did, support, and lived that determines individual existence, freedom, and choice. Existentialism is divided into two, namely ungodly and godly. Ungodly/atheistic figures include Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Simone de Beauvoir. Then the Godly/theistic figure, Soren Kierkegaard ; two contemporary Roman Catholic French, Gabriel Marcel & Jacques Maritain; two Protestant theologians, Paul Tillich & Nicholas Berdyaev and Buber are important contemporary theologians (Bigelow, 1966, pp. 203-204). Based on Jean Paul Sartre's book entitled *Existentialism and Humanism* and *Being and Nothingness* the researcher embraces Existentialism into several parts such as the pursuit of being, nothingness, existence and essence, freedom and alienation.

2. METHOD

This research was descriptive qualitative research. According to Creswell (2007, p. 22) stated that qualitative research is a means of understanding individual meanings or groups regard social or human problems. The research process involves appearing questions and procedures; data is usually collected in participant settings, data analysis inductively constructing from specific matters to general themes and making researchers interpretation of the meaning of data. The object of this research is the novel *Me Before You* by Jojo Moyes published by Penguin Group in 2012. The data sources are taken to conduct this study are divided into two types. They are primary data and secondary data. In conducting the study, the researcher used the technique based on Miles and Huberman (1994, pp. 10-11) the analysis process was divided into three steps, namely, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Causes of Choosing Death

In this novel, the causes of choosing death divided into two causes. First, internal causes such as emotion and physical condition namely being abnormal, being pain, being temperamental and being depressed. Second, external causes such as influence from other people or the environment namely being dependent and being ashamed.

Based on internal and external causes, Will, who was once a normal and healthy person, turned abnormal, always felt pain all the time, became temperamental because what he wanted was not come true and became depressed after a deadly accident that happened to him. William became independent because he had to rely on the assistance of wheelchairs and other people for 24 hours and felt ashamed of the pity of others when they saw him.

3.2 The Choice of Death Depicted in the Novel

In this novel, the choice of death depicted in the novel through character, setting, event and style. The character divided into three character namely desperate character, loving character and caring character. Desperate character is described by the figure of William John Traynor, the figure who wants to end his life because of an accident that claimed his perfect life.

The family of Will is a loving character, his mother named Camilla Traynor is an independent woman who pours her love for William and always does everything that is best for Will's health after the accident, his father Steven Traynor shows his affection for Will by agreeing and supporting ideas from Louisa (Will's caregiver) and her sister Georgina Traynor who cares and rejects her brother's decision to end his life, because it will have an impact on his life and the lives of his parents in society.

The last character category is a caring character, described by Louisa Clark who was William's caregiver for 6 months who always entertained Will and encouraged him to change his mind to not end his life. Nathan,

will's physiotherapist is also very concerned about William's health; Nathan always hopes that William will change his mind.

The setting divided into five places they are Small-town in United Kingdoms where Will lives after an accident, he lives with his parents and gets a full treatment, London is the residence and place of work of William and also as a place of accident experienced by William.,Mauritius in Africawas William's last vacation spot with Louisa and Nathan before Will decided to continue to end his life, Switzerlandis where Will ends his life at the Dignitas Clinic and Paris is a place that William willed to be visited by Louisa after Will's death.

The event is something was happened in the story. The event isdivided into three categories. They are event of accident, events that occurred in London, precisely when William crossed the road going to work on a rainy day. He was hit by a speeding motorbike from the opposite direction. William lost consciousness and woke up as a quadriplegia sufferer who claimed his perfect life. Event of struggle, incident when William struggled to stay afloat but he decided to end his life, his family who continued to fight for Will by striving for the best for his health and life had to end up giving up Will's decision to end his life and Louisa Clark who fought as Will's caregiver who always provided motivation and support for Will to change his decision must end up letting the decision taken by Will.

The event of death, William's last day before Will ended his life in dignity in Switzerland. Will was in a spacious and comfortable room accompanied by his mother, father, and younger sister, and then followed Louisa who left from small town to Switzerland on the last flight. The last, through style, the researcher found the figurative language in the novel. The figurative language that is found is sarcasm. The sarcasm expressed by William asto express anger or irritation because of his condition.

3.3 The Reason Why JojoMoyes Addressed the Idea in the Novel

The author addressed her idea in *Me Before You* novel because of the following reasons:

3.3.1 The author inspired by her experience and environment

In writing the novel Jojo Moyes has two relatives who need treatment for 24 hours. She thinks that if someone lives with these conditions will definitely ask themselves about the quality of life and what they can do for others. Then she was increasingly inspired when she heard the news in the radio of a young British former rugby player who had an accident that left him paralyzed, a few years after his accident he persuaded his parents to bring him to an end. Surely people will judge his parents who brought their children to end his lives, but the fact that what the young man wants is to play sports in his life until he closes himself and his parents know quadriplegia sufferers are the conditions that are impossible to heal.

3.3.2 The author conducted research about quadriplegia syndrome

She read a lot of newspapers. Assisted suicide has become a big problem in the US. As for the case of quadriplegia, she spends a lot of time in the chat room asking lots of questions, and watching lots of videos on YouTube about their daily lives.

3.4 Discussion

The researcher found that the story presented was the inspiration of the author from the news of the quadriplegic syndrome she heard from the radio. She also conducted research by reading the newspapers, watched quadriplegic sufferer daily activities on YouTube and her two relatives who need 24-hours care.

Based on the study above, researchers have analyzed the problem of death as a meaningful choice. The main factor in choosing death is from internal causes, such as not being able to accept the situation and what is lived is not a choice of life. The external causes can also affect someone. Such as feeling embarrassed when among normal people and feeling independent because they always need help from other people.

Based on existentialism perspective humans are essentially free to choose their life choices. The decision making process is basically giving meaning to life. In choosing and deciding someone will find anxiety to ensure that the chosen one is

a good choice for themselves and others. The choices taken by Will Traynor are existential choices. Existentially, the choice taken by someone based on freedom is the better choice for them. The choice taken by Will is the better choice, even though for others Will's choices are not a good choice and the choice to choose death is an alternative solution to the problem that befell him. According to Sartre, human cannot choose the worst choice, human always choose the better choice. William knew that the life he lived was not the life he chose. If he does not choose to end his life, it means that Will does not want to give meaning to his life.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion in the previous chapter. The researcher will make a conclusion. Firstly, there are two causes of choosing death, such as internal and external causes. The internal causes are being abnormal, being pain, being temperament and being depressed. The external causes are being dependent and being ashamed.

The author depicted the idea in *Me Before You* novel by describing the following process, such as characters, setting, event and style. The character is divided into three namely desperate characters, loving character, and caring character. The setting is divided into five categories they are Small-town in United Kingdom, London, Mauritius in Africa, Switzerland and Paris. The events are divided into three categories. They are event of accident, event of struggle and event of death and the style was found is the figurative language that is sarcasm.

The author discusses the idea of choosing death inspired by her experience and environment and conducted research about quadriplegia syndrome. Jojo Moyes has two relatives who need treatment for 24 hours. She was increasingly inspired when she heard the news in the radio of a young man who being a quadriplegic sufferer. As for the case of quadriplegia, she spends a lot of time in the chat room, asking lots of questions, and watching lots of videos on YouTube about their daily lives.

The last based on existentialism perspective human is essentially free to choose their life choices. The decision making process is basically giving meaning to life. In choosing and deciding someone will find anxiety to ensure that the chosen one is a good choice for themselves and others. According to Sartre, human cannot choose the worst choice. Human always choose the better choice. The choices taken by Will Traynor are existential choices. Existentially, the choice taken by someone based on freedom is the better choice for them.

The choice taken by Will is the better choice, even though for others Will's choices are not a good choice and the choice to choose death is an alternative solution to the problem that befell him. William knew that the life he lived was not the life he chose. If he does not choose to end his life, it means that Will does not want to give meaning to his life. There are previous studies that have similarities to those investigated by the researcher. First, namely Adibah (2018) the main difference in research conducted by Adibah with researchers is that the research focuses on Will's existence and essence to determine his life. While researchers focus on choosing death as a meaningful choice in Will's life. Second, Kacerauskas (2009) that addresses death in the perspective of existential phenomenology, in this study the researcher explained death based on an existentialist philosophy perspective.

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