AZA’S MENTAL ILLNESS REFLECTED IN TURTLES ALL THE WAY DOWN NOVEL: A PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This study aims to: (1) describe the type of Aza’s mental illness reflected in the novel *Turtles All The Way Down*; (2) the cause of Aza’s mental illness; (3) how Aza solves her mental illness. This research was analyzed using descriptive qualitative methods. The technique of data collection in this study apply the results of Miles & Huberman research based on reduction, which includes: the process of selecting data, writing summaries, coding, creating clusters, creating partitions and writing memos. The researcher uses the theory of psychoanalysis from Sigmund Freud. The results of this study indicate that the type of Aza’s mental illness is Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), the Id has the most powerful role than Ego and Superego. The causes of Aza’s mental illness are obsessive thought and compulsive behavior. Although Aza has not fully recovered, she is already better because she has done several treatments, such as therapy, medication, and strong motivation.

Keywords: mental illness, psychoanalytic theory, Turtles All The Way Down’s novel

1. INTRODUCTION

In this world there are many of problems which had by people. Not only the frequencies of problem, but also the time by one and other are different. There is a problem that just happened right now, also problems that occur since they was born.
For example about mental illness which occur since someone born. DSM-IV, “a mental disorder is a psychological syndrome or pattern which is associated with distress (e.g. via a painful symptom), disability (impairment in one or more important areas of functioning), increased risk of death, or causes a significant loss of autonomy”. Mental illness is psychological disorders cause damage to certain body parts that make the offender different from normal people. According to World Health Organization (WHO) there are five types of mental illness, they are bipolar, schizophrenia, anorexia, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD).

Some people who suffer from mental illness sometimes feel hopeless about their situation, because they are different and insulted. But there are mental illness sufferers who choose to get up and see the positive side that they have. It is because they believe that everything God has created will have a message that can be taken.

There are two object study in this study, such as material and formal object. In material object the researcher used John Green novel with the title *Turtles All The Way Down* (2017) published by Dutton Books in New York, NY 10014. Whereas the formal object is the mental illness found in Aza as the main character in *Turtles All The Way Down* using psychoanalytic theory.

There are two reasons why the researcher is interested to analyze this novel. First, about the author of this novel. Because the researcher see that John Green as the author of *Turtles All The Way Down*, so the researcher believes that this novel is great to be analyzed. As the last novels before, such as *Looking for Alaska, Paper Town, The Fault in Our Star*, and so on become an international bestseller and many people analyzed it as a thesis. So, the researcher increasingly interested to analyze John Green’s novel entitle *Turtles All The Way Down*.

The second reason is about the story line of this novel. *Turtles All The Way Down* has main theme about mental illness. It is interesting to be analyzed, because mental illness is still familiar in social communities. It makes the mental illness sufferers are more noticed. The story line is unexpected story that makes this story
more interesting. The setting of this story is in Indiana, rarely novel takes Indiana as the setting. So it also increase the knowledge of the reader about Indiana.

This study using Psychoanalytic theory by Sigmund Freud that helps the researcher to find data of the issue based on his three structure, namely Id, Ego, Superego in novel Turtles All The Way Down. With that theory, the researcher focused to analyze the main Character of this novel, she is Aza Holmes. To make it proven, the researcher selecting and collecting the data by narration and dialog on that novel as the evident. Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in analyzing AZA’S MENTAL ILLNESS REFLECTED IN TURTLES ALL THE WAY DOWN NOVEL: A PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE.

2. METHOD
Type of the data in this study is descriptive qualitative research, because it does not need the numeric and statistic data. Creswell (1994, p: 18) stated that, qualitative research can also be described as an effective model that occurs in a natural setting that enables the researcher to develop a level of detail from being highly involved in the actual experiences. Using descriptive qualitative methods means providing detailed descriptions, explanation, and interpretation of the data to be obtained from a research. Miles & Huberman (1994, p: 10) stated that the analysis consists of three activities that occur simultaneously, namely: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing / verification. In this technique data collection, the researcher only focused on data reduction. The technique that used to collect the data in this research is based on reduction data proceed, they are: the process of selecting data, writing memories, coding, making cluster, making partitions, and writing memos. Data analysis technique is the process of collecting data systematically to facilitate researchers in obtaining conclusions. Conclusions will be easily obtained when the data analysis technique is correct. According to Miles & Huberman (1994, p: 10) analysis consists of three activities that occur simultaneously: data reduction, data
This research study uses triangulation method.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Finding

3.3.1 The type of Aza's mental illness in *Turtles All The Way Down* novel.

The type of Aza's mental illness in Turtles All The Way Down novel is Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). The OCD on Aza will be depicted using the Psychoanalytic Approach by Sigmund Freud. David Rapaport in *The Structure of Personality Theory* (1960) book stated that Sigmund Freud developed the psychoanalytic theory of personality development, which argued that personality is formed through conflicts among three fundamental structures of the human mind: the id, ego, and superego.

The DSM-5 requires the following specific elements for an OCD diagnosis:

3.3.1.1 Obsession

And then two or five or six hundred minutes pass before you start to wonder, *Wait, did I get all the pus out? Was there pus even or was that only sweat? If it was pus, you might need to drain the wound again.* The spiral tightens, like that, forever. (Turtles All The Way Down, 2017: 61)

Id on Aza is very strong. She can suddenly have thoughts and desires that are not controlled.

…. I felt like a perfectly normal person, who was not cohabitating with a demon that forced me to think thoughts I hated thinking, and I was just feeling, like, *I’ve been better this week. Maybe the medicine is working,* when from nowhere the thought appeared: *The medicine has made you complacent, and you forgot to change the Band-Aid this morning.*

I was pretty sure I had actually changed the Band-Aid right after waking up, just before I brushed my teeth, but the thought was insistent. *I don’t think you changed it. I think this is last night’s Band-Aid.* Well, it’s not last night’s Band-Aid because I definitely changed it at lunch. *Did you, though? I think so. You THINK so? I’m pretty sure. And the wound is open.* Which was true. It hadn’t yet scabbed over. *And you left the same Band-Aid on for—God—probably thirty-seven hours by now, just letting it fester inside that warm,
moist old Band-Aid. I glanced down at the Band-Aid. It looked new. You didn’t. I think I did. Are you sure? No, but that’s actually progress if I’m not checking it every five minutes. Yeah, progress toward an infection. I’ll do it at the bank. It’s probably already too late. That’s ridiculous. Once the infection is in your bloodstream—Stop that makes no sense it’s not even red or swollen. You know it doesn’t have to be—Please just stop I will change it at the bank—YOU KNOW I’M RIGHT. (Turtles All The Way Down, 2017: 153-154)

Conversation in mind as quote above often happens to Aza. She often feels like a normal person but suddenly when she remembers about her Band-Aid, her id always appears and has long and complicated conversations for her to think that she hasn't changed her Band-Aid and likely will be infected. Then Ego tried to calm down that she had changed her Band-Aid.

3.3.1.2 Compulsion

Could be sweat, of course, but also might be water from the river, or worse still seropurulent drainage, a sure sign of infection, so you find the hand sanitizer in the medicine cabinet and squeeze some onto your fingertip, which burns like hell, and then you wash your hands thoroughly, singing your ABCs while you do to make sure you’ve scrubbed for the full twenty seconds recommended by the Centers for Disease Control, and then you carefully dry your hands with a towel. And then you dig your thumbnail all the way into the crack in the callus until it starts bleeding, and you squeeze the blood out for as long as it comes, and then you blot the wound dry with a tissue. You take a Band-Aid from inside your jeans pocket, where there is never a shortage of them, and you carefully reapply the bandage. You return to the couch to watch TV, and for a few or many minutes, you feel the shivering jolt of the tension easing, the relief of giving in to the lesser angels of your nature. (Turtles All The Way Down, 2017: 60-61)

Aza does the ritual, which is to replace her Band-Aid. In the quote above, the ego plays a role in carefully replacing the band-aid. In addition, there was a Superego which took part in convincing Aza that she had rubbed her hands as recommendated by the Centers for Disease Control.

3.3.1.3 Protraction

“Wrong,” Daisy said. “For instance, there is very little high-quality romantic Chewbacca fiction the internet, and I am just one person, who can only write
so much. The world needs Holmesy’s Wookiee love stories.” There was a brief pause in the conversation. I felt my arms prickling with nervousness, sweat glands threatening to burst open. And then they went back to talking, the conversation shifting this way and that, everyone telling stories, talking over one another, laughing. I tried to smile and shake my head at the right times, but I was always a moment behind the rest of them. They laughed because something was funny; I laughed because they had. (Turtles All The Way Down, 2017: 118)

Aza felt uncomfortable when hanging out with Mychal, Daisy and Davis. Especially when they are talking about Star Wars. Because she is not at all interested in that story. Nervousness arises and the sweat glands threaten to burst open. The superego works when she has to respect them, so she tries to enjoy the moment.

3.3.2 The causes of Aza’s mental illness

The causes of Aza's mental illness caused by two things, namely her obsessive thought and compulsive behavior. As the quotations below:

3.3.1.4 Obsessive thought

“I don’t follow how that would make you fictional.”
“I mean, I don’t control my thoughts, so they’re not really mine. I don’t decide if I’m sweating or get cancer or C. diff or whatever, so my body isn’t really mine. I don’t decide any of that—outside forces do. I’m a story they’re telling. I am circumstances.” (Turtles All The Way Down, 2017: 197)

When Aza consulted with Dr. Karen Singh, psychiatrist, Aza tried to explain how she feels so far. She felt uncomfortable with the obsessive thoughts that bothered her and the anxiety she had.

3.3.1.5 Compulsive behavior

Ever since I was little, I’ve pressed my right thumbnail into the finger pad of my middle finger, and so now there’s this weird callus over my fingerprint. After so many years of doing this, I can open up a crack in the skin really easily, so I cover it up with a Band-Aid to try to prevent infection. But sometimes I get worried that there already is an infection, and so I need to drain it, and the only way to do that is to reopen the wound and press out any blood that will come. Once I start thinking about splitting the skin apart, I literally cannot not do it. I apologize for the double negative, but it’s a real double negative of a situation, a bind from which negating the negation is truly the only escape. So anyway, I started to want to feel my thumbnail biting into the skin of my finger pad, and I knew that resistance was more or less futile, so beneath the cafeteria table, I slipped the Band-Aid off my finger and
dug my thumbnail into the callused skin until I felt the crack open. (Turtles All The Way Down, 2017: 10)

The quote above shows the initial reason Aza cut her fingerprint. Because it was the wound that eventually developed in worry to replace her band-aid.

3.3.3 Aza’s way of solving her mental illness

The type of mental illness suffered by Aza in the novel Turtles All The Way Down is Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). According to the Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (MFMER), there are two treatments carried out by people with OCD, namely psychotherapy and medications. Not only those two treatments, but Aza also gets huge support from the loved ones.

3.3.3.1 Psychotherapy

The quote below shows that Aza is doing some therapy suggested by Dr. Sigh is practicing breathing, taking medicine, and others. This is enough to make it back to normal.

… Some days I fell deeper into spirals than others, but changing the Band-Aid sort of worked, and the breathing exercises and the pills and everything else sort of worked. (Turtles All The Way Down, 2017: 228)

Aza felt that when she was overly anxious, she would imagine turning in a spiral. She often fall in the spiral of her mind. But when her consciousness could still be felt, she tried to overcome it as much as possible by carrying out the therapy suggested by Dr. Singh.

3.3.3.2 Medication

I went to the bathroom when I got home and examined the cut. The swelling seemed down. Maybe. Maybe the light in the bathroom just wasn’t strong enough for me to see clearly. I cleaned it with soap and water, patted it dry, applied hand sanitizer, and then rebandaged my finger. I also took my regular medication, and then a few minutes later an oblong white pill I’d been told to use when panicky. (Turtles All The Way Down, 2017: 159)

One part of Aza’s concern was the wound on her finger. It affects the OCD that will continue to emerge when thinking about changing Band-Aid. So to reduce it
all Aza to heed enough the advice of Dr. Sigh, one of them is to be regularly in taking
the medicine.

3.3.3.3 Strong motivation
Despite of mental illness sufferers doing therapy and medication as their treatment, if
there is no support for recovery from themselves and the people around them, it will
certainly be useless.

After the nervous-making car trip, my brain was revving up. I told myself that
having a thought was not dangerous, that thoughts aren’t actions, that
thoughts are just thoughts.
Dr. Karen Singh liked to say that an unwanted thought was like a car driving
past you when you’re standing on the side of the road, and I told myself I
didn’t have to get into that car, that my moment of choice was not whether to
have the thought, but whether to be carried away by it. (Turtles All The Way
Down: 297)
Aza began to think positively and calm her thoughts. She has been able to
control her mind and so as not to follow the flow. This is one effective way to cure it
from OCD because it all depends on how a person controls her mind.

Over the next few months, I kept going. I got better without ever quite getting
well. Daisy and I started a Mental Health Alliance and a Fan-Fiction
Workshop so that we could list some proper extracurriculars on next year’s
college applications, even though we were the only two members of both
clubs. We hung out most nights, at her apartment or at Applebee’s or at my
house, sometimes with Mychal but usually not—usually it was just the two of
us, watching movies or doing homework or just talking. It was so easy to go
out into the meadow with her. (Turtles All The Way Down: 333-334)

Finally, a few months later Aza began to get better in continue her life. In her
new life, Aza is more active in her activities. And her friendship with Daisy is getting
tighter.

3.2 Discussion
Aza is the main character in John Green's Turtles All the Way Down (2017) novel, she
is the main subject of this research. In the analysis above it has been explained that
Aza’s mental illness is an issue that has been discussed by researchers. The type of
mental illness suffered by Aza is OCD. To fulfill the object study, the researcher
analyzed based on three parts. The first is to use the Psychoanalytic Perspective from Sigmund Freud, the second is to explain cause Aza suffered from mental illness and the last is how Aza deals with her mental illness.

The first is Psychoanalytic Perspective by Sigmund Freud, there are three structures of personality, they are: Id, Ego and Superego. Of the three structures above, the biggest id influences Aza’s mental illness. Ego and Superego Aza act as supporters in realizing the desire of Id. Second is because Aza suffered from mental illness. Aza did feel abnormal like other humans. She realized that she was different, especially on her mental health.

The last is how Aza solves her mental illness. Aza has had a psychotherapy with Dr. Karen Singh (her Dr. Psychiatry) and has taken medicine. But the most effective way to cure mental illness is strong motivation in herself and support from loved ones. Aza has got it. Even though Aza has not been completely cured of mental illness, but she feels better.

4. CONCLUSION
The researchers used Turtles All The Way Down (2017) novel by John Green as an object study by analyzing Aza's mental illness using a psychoanalytic perspective. The researcher assumes several conclusions in this study. First, Aza's mental illness type is Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). When analyzed using Psychoanalytic theory by Sigmund Freud, the role of Aza's Id is stronger than Ego and Superego.

The second, Aza’s metal illness is caused by two factors, namely obsessive thought and compulsive behavior. Both are equally strong in influencing Aza’s mental health. When Aza ‘obsessive thought actively works, compulsive behavior supports it.

The last is how Aza solves her mental illness. In dealing with her mental illness, Aza did three treatments, namely psychotherapy, medication and strong motivation. First is the psychotherapy that she meets Dr. Karen Singh routinely. Next is medication, Aza has taken the medicine given by Dr Singh. She had several times changed medication because of the developing condition. The last is a strong
motivation, she gets motivation from herself, mom and Daisy, her best friend. Although not fully recovered, but Aza feels better and prepared to move on.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


