

**THEODORE FINCH'S SUICIDE IN ALL THE BRIGHT PLACES NOVEL
BY JENNIFER NIVEN (2015): A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**



**Submitted as a Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for Getting Bachelor Degree of Education in English Department
Teacher Training and Education Faculty**

**By
Sintia Rahmawati
A320160059**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH EDUCATION
FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION
UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH SURAKARTA
2021**

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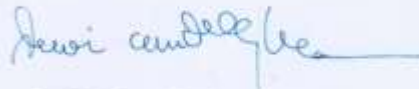
PUBLICATION ARTICLE

By

**Sintia Rahmawati
A320160059**

Approved to be Examined by the Consultant:

The Consultant



Dr. Phil. Dewi Candraningrum, M.Ed.
NIDN06091275202

ACCEPTANCE

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Accepted and Approved by the Board of Examiners
School of Teacher Training and Education
Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta

The Board of Examiners:

1 Dr. Phil. Dewi Chandraningrum, S.Pd., M.Ed.

(Head of Examiners)

2 Dr. M. Thoyibi, M.S.

(Member 1 of Examiners)

3 Dr. Abdillah Nugroho, M.Hum.

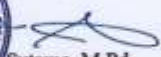
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Sutarna, M.Pd.
N: 0007016002

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The Researcher



Sintia Rahmawati

A320160059

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Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah: 1) Mendeskripsikan karakteristik Theodore Finch yang digambarkan dalam novel *All the Bright Places*; 2) Untuk mengetahui alasan yang memotivasi Finch untuk melakukan bunuh diri; dan 3) Untuk mengetahui cara-cara yang dilakukan Finch untuk membahayakan nyawanya. Jenis penelitian yang digunakan peneliti adalah penelitian kualitatif. Pada objek material, peneliti menggunakan novel *All The Bright Places* karya Jennifer Niven yang diterbitkan pada tahun 2015 oleh Knopf Publishing Group. Objek formalnya adalah bunuh diri Finch. Analisisnya menggunakan pendekatan psikologis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa karakteristik Theodore Finch dalam novel *All The Bright Places* adalah cerdas, peduli, depresi, bunuh diri, moody, cemas, agresif, dan pemarah. Alasan yang memotivasi Finch untuk melakukan bunuh diri dilihat dari aspek psikologis yang dikemukakan oleh Alfred Adler meliputi enam prinsip dasar teori psikologi individu: perasaan rendah diri, berjuang untuk superioritas, gaya hidup, minat sosial, daya kreatif, dan finalisme fiksi. Karena Finch menderita bipolar, ia mencoba untuk meringankan penderitaan itu dengan melakukan upaya yang mengancam hidupnya yang ditandai dengan beberapa tahap seperti: Kecemasan umum, Gangguan Kecemasan, tahap Stres, dan tahap Histeria ketika Finch melakukan bunuh diri total.

Kata kunci: bunuh diri, motivasi, psikologi individu

Abstract

The aims of this study are: 1) To describe the characteristics of Theodore Finch described in the novel *All the Bright Places*; 2) Find out the reasons that prompted Finch to commit suicide; and 3) The ways Finch used to threaten his life. The type of research used by the researcher is qualitative research. In material object, the researcher uses the novel *All The Bright Places* by Jennifer Niven published by Knopf Publishing Group in 2015. The formal object is Finch's suicide. The analysis uses a psychological approach. The results show that Theodore Finch's general description in *All The Bright Places* is smart, caring, depressed, suicidal, gloomy, anxious, aggressive and angry. Reasons that inspired Finch to commit suicide from a psychological perspective promoted by Alfred Adler include six basic principles of individual psychological theory: feelings of inferiority, striving for excellence, lifestyle, social welfare, creative power, and fictional finalism. Because Finch suffers from bipolar, he tries to alleviate that suffering by making life-threatening attempts that are marked at various stages such as: General Anxiety, Anxiety Disorder, Stress Stage, and Hysteria Stage when Finch commits complete suicide.

Keywords: suicide, motivation, individual psychology

1. INTRODUCTION

This research is conducted to recognize the perspective of someone who suffers from mental disorders. This is the reason behind Theodore Finch's character as well. The main character is the novel *All the Bright Places* written by Jennifer Niven. He is a person who suffers from depression because he went through some traumatic experiences from his childhood. Since then, death has often been the subject of much speculation. Finch is trying to find a way to kill himself.

All the Bright Places novel is interesting to analyze because it illustrates the main characters' 'mental health' presented by the author in the story in order to understand how such kind of illness can be arranged in an interesting story too. Indirectly, questions about this disease can be absorbed as information for readers to understand that the mental health of the characters reflects their daily actions in the story (Widyantara, et.al., 2020). The novel has basic interest through its discussion about life and death, sane and madness, reality and identity, and love.

Violet Markey and Theodore Finch are the main characters in *All the Bright Places*. The main male character, Theodore Finch otherwise known as Finch appears in the novel as a high school student, young, energetic and gloomy but suicidal. He attempted suicide by taking too many sleeping pills, hanging himself, jumping from a clock tower, or drowning himself. Then, instead of dying, Finch developed bipolar disorder. Knowing that his suicide attempts failed, Finch becomes frightened and hopeless. Until step by step, Finch began to inspire the stimulus of his life. Unfortunately, he failed, until in the end, he committed complete suicide. The case that occurs through Finch character in the novel seems to have agreement with Adler's individual psychology.

Novel has elements, such as themes, characters, and plot. Exploring character is an interesting aspect. It is because characters created by the author are imaginary people. Moreover, it is interesting to analyze Jennifer Niven's *All the Bright Places* because there are many issues in this novel that can be explored by developing the character of the human mind that influences society and the future of it. In addition, this research will be addressed through a psychological approach. The theory of analytical psychology that will be applied in this research

is individual psychology by Alfred Adler. Therefore, individual psychology is used to find out in depth what will happen if one is forced to face a precarious situation. Adler's statement seems to apply that one acquires the following law in the development of all psychic events: "we cannot think, feel, will or act without a sense of goal" (Adler in Widyasura, 2009).

By choosing Jennifer Niven's novel *All the Bright Places* with the theory of Adler, this study deals to create something fresh for analysis. *All the Bright Places* tells more about how Finch searches for the meaning of life and the plight of his suicide or death. Jennifer Niven as a writer clearly describes Finch's character way of thinking until he decides to commit suicide.

In this regard, the researcher would like to look at the broader mental health problem by looking at the correlation of several theories and signs about the need to killing one's self. Finch mentioned that he feels dead and empty inside, which is a common reaction for those who are depressed and need suicide prevention. Therefore, the researcher conducts a research entitled "THEODORE FINCH'S SUICIDE IN JENNIFER NIVEN'S NOVEL *ALL THE BRIGHT PLACES* (2015): A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE".

2. METHOD

In analyzing *All The Bright Places* by Jennifer Niven, the researcher uses qualitative research. A psychological approach is used as a method to understand the personality development of the main character, Theodore Finch. In this study, the researcher uses a psychological approach named Alfred Adler's Theory of Individual Psychology. Alfred Adler's Theory of Individual Psychology is used as a tool to analyze the novel, to find out the main character's mental illness and its influence on his life until he commits suicide.

Primary data are taken from words, phrases, sentences, and dialogues in Jennifer Niven's 2015 novel *All The Bright Places* by Jennifer Niven. Secondary data for this study are collected from other sources relevant to the research, such as articles, journals, websites, and academic books that support this research.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Characteristics of Theodore Finch in *All The Bright Places*

Theodore Finch's general description in the novel *All The Bright Places* is intelligent, loving, depressed, suicidal, depressed, anxious, aggressive, and angry. Finch's split personality with rapid mood swings is a characteristic of people with bipolar disorder. This is in line with the research of Adam, et.al (2017) who stated that people with bipolar will exhibit extreme and uncontrollable behaviors. Some of its features include: showing excessive joy; speaking very fast and difficult to understand; having insomnia and not even sleeping through the night; unable to distinguish what is real and what is imaginary; difficulty staying still, moving constantly or walking back and forth; and becoming more aware of the surrounding environment.

A study by Widyantara, et al (2020) explained that the main character who will lead the story throughout its development involves two characters known as Theodore Finch and Violet Markey. Furthermore, the non-dynamic little characters help shape the changes that take place in the main characters including Charlie Donahue, Shank-Kravitz, Eleanor Markey, Gabe Romero, Amanda Monk, Ryan Cross, Mr. Embry, ma'am. Marion Kresney, En. Black, ma'am. Linda Finch, Kate Finch, Decca Finch, Mr. Ted Finch, Rosemary, Josh Raymond, Mrs. Sheryl Markey and Mr. James Markey. The presence of these two characters is to facilitate Niven's task in delivering the story as a whole as one of the two characters will then leave his narrative task to a better place.

3.2. The Reasons which Motivate Finch to Do Suicide

Theodore Finch's general description in the novel *All The Bright Places* is intelligent, loving, depressed, suicidal, depressed, anxious, aggressive, and angry. Finch's split personality with rapid mood swings is a characteristic of people with bipolar disorder. This is in line with the research of Adam, et.al (2017) who stated that people with bipolar will exhibit extreme and uncontrollable behaviors. Some of its features include: Shows excessive joy; Speaks very fast and difficult to understand; Having insomnia and not even sleeping through the night; Unable to distinguish what is real and what is imaginary; Difficulty staying still, moving

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3. 2. Reasons That Motivate Finch Suicide

The reasons that motivate Finch to commit suicide are seen from a psychological aspect. It refers to the application of the theory of individual psychology proposed by Alfred Adler. Adler proposed six basic principles of the theory of individual psychology. The principle is inferiority feeling, striving for superiority, style of life, social interest, creative power, and fictional finalism.

In *All Bright Places* , Finch's feelings of inferiority are caused by his mental illness. Finch suffers from bipolar disorder, though he didn't get a diagnosis until later. Finch's low self-esteem led him to commit suicide. His bipolar disorder made him feel worthless and deserving of death.

In Finch's character, Finch desperately strives to overcome his own illness by showing superiority. Superiority is described as rebellious and bizarre behavior. In Violet Markey's words, Finch is the "legend of Bartlett". He knows a lot about it. Finch's relationship with his father will change after his mental health deteriorates. To fend off the discomfort evoked by the bully, Finch shows his superiority. When Gabe Romero, one of Finch's schoolmates, bullies him, Finch must fight him.

Theodore Finch is bipolar disorder and he also has a chaotic lifestyle. Finch experienced a bad life because he was described as weird, depressed, suicidal,

aggressive, troublesome, caring, anxious, and depressed. This chaotic lifestyle became his motivation to commit suicide.

In *All Bright Places*, Finch is a creative person who sees death in a unique way. With his creative powers, Finch is free from his bipolar disorder. Finch writes about death in a different way. He thought death was something gloomy, dark, but peaceful. He wanted to decide his own death by finding news about the suicide from newspapers and the internet. He also writes about ideas about death in his digital diary. The creative power of his views on death prompted Finch to commit suicide.

Social interest in romantic relationships became Finch's motivation for suicide. Because he loved Violet so much, he didn't want her to suffer from her bipolar disorder, so he decided to end his life.

In *All the Bright Places*, Finch's fictional finalist in suicide is that he is so desperate with his mental illness that he decides to commit suicide. Finch had arranged suicide from the beginning until death was the 'final' achievement in his life.

The case of Theodore Finch in the novel seems to fit Adler's individual psychology. Through his theory, Adler argues that understanding human personality is only possible if there is an understanding of the person's purpose. For Adler (1955), people are born with a weak and inferior body, a condition that leads to feelings of inferiority and dependence on others. That is, low self-esteem is a natural condition for everyone, and is a source of human effort. Humans continue to develop themselves from minus to plus. On the other hand, few people find it difficult to balance their feelings of inferiority. People with an inability to cope with feelings of inferiority exacerbate it, which leads to the development of low self-esteem complexes. People with low self-esteem complexes have bad opinions about themselves and feel helpless and unable to face the demands of life. The inferiority complex can arise from three sources in childhood: organic inferiority, indulgence, and neglect.

This research is similar to Aljannah's (2017) study. This shows the ability to rekindle the spirit for life through suicidal failure in the main character named

Veronika. People's natural desires push Veronika to overcome feelings of inferiority. In addition, social interests influence Veronika to create her own strengths, so that she can change her lifestyle to understand the purpose of life.

3.3 The Ways Finch Threatens his Life

When Finch was very bipolar, he tried to alleviate his suffering by making life-threatening efforts. The analysis was made based on his mental illness which was characterized by several levels such as: (1) general anxiety, (2) anxiety disorder, (3) stress, and (5) hysteria. Those criteria are based on Sigmund Freud's theory of anxiety found in a book entitled *The Psychology of Anxiety* by Eugene E. Levitt.

a. Stage I: General Anxiety

Finch's first stage of general anxiety is reflected in taking extreme actions that threaten his life. First, Finch found himself, on a winter day, standing on the edge of the bell tower of Bartlett High School, six stories high, committing suicide. But his attempt fails because he has to save Violet who will kill herself as well. He also tried to commit suicide by hanging himself from the ceiling of his house.

Later, he tried to commit suicide by inhaling carbon dioxide from inside the car. Finch went to his garage, started the car engine then he sat on the floor inhaling smoke from the vehicle. Carbon monoxide gas is a poisonous gas, and if a person inhales large amounts of carbon monoxide, he or she can suffer from hypoxia and in some fatal cases, it can cause death.

b. Stage II: Anxiety Disorder

The second level of anxiety that Finch experienced was anxiety disorder. At this point, all of Finch's frustrations are discarded during adrenaline pumping activities, including night running and extreme driving. From Finch's point of view, night running and extreme driving show how he felt throughout his life until he revived himself.

c. Stage III: Stress

The third level of anxiety as a mental illness is stress. In the level of stress Finch went through, he threatened his life by taking so many pills that he died. Finch also tried to immerse himself in the bathtub and in the Blue Hole lake.

d. Stage IV. Phobia

The fourth level of anxiety is phobia. At this stage, Finch's phobia shows when he thinks that he should stay awake at all times.

e. Stage V. Hysteria

Finch's anxiety becomes hysterical at the end of the story. Suicide or total suicide is the worst state of hysteria because for some individuals they decide to end their lives on the grounds that they are completely worthless to themselves and others in their environment. He sank into his stress and decided to commit suicide by drowning himself in the Blue Hole

The above findings are in line with the study conducted by Adiguna, et.al (2021). Their research explains that Theodore Finch's obsessions and mental illness at *All The Bright Places* are explained in several components, one of which is based on the level of anxiety disorder presented by Levitt. Anxiety disorder occurs in Finch who always feels overly anxious and depressed. This excessive anxiety makes Finch lose control of himself. So, he often commits actions that can endanger himself. Finch's bipolar disorder is caused by adaptive and maladaptive, social, psychological, and biological fears. These factors are implicit in Finch's problems as a teenager growing up in a slum. Her parents are divorced This has a bad effect on her thinking. Her father is suspected of having bipolar disorder, so she believes her mental illness was inherited from her father. As a mental patient, Finch was obsessed with suicide. He considers his life in this world useless and only adds to the burden of his parents.

4. CONCLUSION

Theodore Finch's general description in the novel *All The Bright Places* is intelligent, loving, depressed, suicidal, depressed, anxious, aggressive, and angry. Finch's split personality with rapid mood swings is a characteristic of people with bipolar disorder

The reasons that led Finch to commit suicide are seen from a psychological aspect. This refers to the application of the theory of individual psychology proposed by Alfred Adler. Adler proposes six basic principles of the theory of

individual psychology. The principle is inferiority feeling, striving for superiority, style of life, social interest, creative power, and fictional finalism. First, Finch's inferiority feeling prompted him to commit suicide. His bipolar disorder made him feel worthless and deserving of death. Second, in Finch's character, Finch strives hard to overcome his own illness by showing superiority. Superiority is described as rebellious and bizarre behavior. Third, Theodore Finch is bipolar disorder and he also has a chaotic lifestyle. Fourth, the creative power of his views on death prompted Finch to commit suicide. With his creative powers, Finch is free from his bipolar disorder. Finch writes about death in a different way. He thought death was something gloomy, dark, but peaceful. Fifth, social interest in romantic relationships became Finch's motivation for suicide. Because he loved Violet so much, he didn't want her to suffer from her bipolar disorder, so he decided to end his life. Sixth, in *All the Bright Places*, Finch's fictional finalism in suicide is that he is so desperate with his mental illness, that he decides to commit suicide. Finch had arranged suicide from the beginning until death was the 'final' achievement in his life

As Finch suffers from bipolar miserably, he tried to alleviate his suffering by making life-threatening efforts. This analysis was made based on his mental illness which was characterized by several levels such as: (1) The general level of anxiety was when Finch attempted suicide by jumping from a school tower, hanging himself from the ceiling, and inhaling carbon dioxide from inside the car; (2) The level of anxiety disorder is when all of Finch's frustrations are removed during adrenaline pumping activities, including night running and extreme driving; (3) The stress level is when Finch threatens his life by taking too many pills to death. Finch also tried to immerse himself in the bathtub and in the Blue Hole lake; (4) The stage of hysteria is when Finch commits suicide completely

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