

## **Anxiety and Depression Leads To Death Instinct in Entwistle's and Hall's *I am not Okay with This***

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyze a movie script from the Netflix series entitled *I am Not Okay With This* written by Jonathan Entwistle and Christy Hall which was adapted from a comic book by Charles Forsman with the same title. This study focuses on discussing the psychological aspects experienced by Sydney Novak as the main character. This study uses a qualitative approach and is presented with a descriptive method. The data collection techniques used include literature review, observation, and note-taking method. The object of the research used is the *I am Not Okay With This* movie script through an intrinsic approach in the form of characterization, plot, and setting, then linking it with an extrinsic approach using Sigmund Freud's theory of anxiety, life and death instinct and the theory of psychotic depression. This study is also supported by reviewing books, journals, and other research sources from the internet as secondary data references. The results obtained from this study are that it is known that the supernatural powers experienced by Syd are a manifestation of the anxiety she has suffered from the grief since the death of her father. This anxiety is also related to the appearance of hallucinations that lead to the death instinct in Syd's actions and behaviors.

**Keywords:** Anxiety, Depression, Death Instinct, Sigmund Freud

### **INTRODUCTION**

A movie script is a written text that provides the foundation for a movie production. A movie script typically includes not just the dialogue said by the characters, but also a description of the action that will take place. The movements, actions, facial expressions, and conversations of the characters are also described here (Collins, 2005). Movie scripts can be taken from novels or theatrical plays, or they can be created from scratch by screenwriters or their partners (Collins, 2005). Psychology is an issue that is frequently raised in a movie script, it is concerned with human behavior and its causes.

In psychology, there is one of the mental disorders called anxiety. Anxiety is an emotion characterized by worry and symptoms of somatic tension in which a person anticipates impending danger, doom, or misfortune. The physique often memorizes itself to deal with the threat, with muscle tension, quickened breathing, and a faster heartbeat. Anxiety is considered a future-oriented and long-lasting response that is broadly focused on a diffuse threat (VandenBos, 2015)

According to the explanation above, it is clear that psychology and literature are closely related because they both investigate humans from various angles, including life, feelings, thoughts, reactions, fears, losses, hatred, anxiety, desires, passions, conflicts, and so on. These observations are then shown through the expression of characters and plots, showing how people act, think, and interpret life and events to produce representative entertainment. Both fields of social sciences investigate human behavior and are interconnected. An author's literary work depicts the inner world of humanity in all of its facets (Ayesha Dar, 2022).

*I am Not Okay With This* is a seven-episode Netflix series directed by Jonathan Entwistle about the mental health of the main character Sydney Novak. She has suffered a mental disorder since her father died by suicide due to PTSD and depression. The trauma of her father's death still looms over her head; she still sees him around her, especially when she is at her lowest moments of sorrow. Sadly, her mother is unaware of Syd's deteriorating mental health, and she always tells her that her father killed himself because of what she is going through right now. Ever since her father's death, she soon found out that she had supernatural powers that she was completely unaware of. Syd did not fully understand what exactly these powers were or how best to use them, but she knew that she could cause physical damage to anyone else just by thinking about them. Whenever her emotions reached a certain level, they spilled out in a mess of telekinetic energy such as cracking walls, knocking down traffic signs, and could cause someone to suddenly have a nosebleed.

The reason why this study chose this topic is because the psychological issues raised in *I am Not Okay With This* (2020) series, which has become very related to the condition of mental disorders suffered by most people, especially teenagers. This research intend to raise important messages related to psychology and literary approaches with the focus of the theory is anxiety and depression which has an impact on death instinct. With the aim, this research can provide another perspective that mental health disorders are no longer something that is considered trivial and can give the worst effects if not immediately treated properly.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Character and Characterization**

Characters are the persons that are portrayed in a dramatic or narrative work and are inferred by readers to have certain moral, intellectual, and emotional traits based on their actions and unique dialogue delivery styles. Motivations include the moral characteristics that underpin the characters' statements and deeds, as well as their temperaments, desires, and moral characteristics (Abrams & Harpham, 2015).

According to (Pettrie & Boggs, 2018), characters need to seem plausible, relatable, and deserving of our attention in order to be engaging. Characters in stories are generally credible, much like the narrative itself. Thus, they either follow the rules of probability and necessity (by reflecting visible truths about human nature from the outside in), they follow interior truths (people as we wish them to be), or they are made to appear real by the actor's persuasive artistic ability.

### **Anxiety**

According to Sigmund Freud (as cited in Semiun, 2006), anxiety is a state of terrible affective sentiments along with physical sensations that warn those who are approaching danger. An intricate reaction to an actual or imagined threat is anxiety. It may cause behavioral, physical, and cognitive changes in the individual. Anxiety disorders have many different root causes. Numerous causes could exist simultaneously, some causes could result in other illnesses, and some causes do not result in anxiety disorders until another cause is also present.

NICE Guidelines (2022) states that the common symptoms of psychosis in depression include delusions of nihilism, feeling guilty, inadequacy, and illness, as well as negative auditory hallucinations. In comparison to individuals without psychosis, individuals with psychotic depression also exhibit more serious psychomotor disturbance and worse psychosocial impairment. Older patients have higher rates of psychotic symptoms than younger patients do, and those with psychotic depression had higher rates of inpatient treatment needs and mortality from suicide or other causes within the years after admission.

### **Death Instinct**

Death instinct is the opposite of life instinct. This instinct is the driving force behind violent and destructive behavior. According to Freud, humans frequently follow this death urge outward, manifesting through abuse toward others. However, people might channel this impulse inward, leading to self-harm or suicide (Cherry, 2023).

### **Previous Studies**

In supporting this research, there are several previous studies that have similarities and differences with this research. Hereby proves the existence of research that uses the same theory and approach with different object of literature. The first similar research by Firial (2022). She find that the main character has a death instinct related to her anxiety, which consequently brings out the death instinct through her actions. The second research comes from Cahyani et al. (2018) They find anxiety experienced by the character Icih Prihatini who experiences anxiety refers to feelings of anxiety, fear, and worry about the living conditions she is living. The anxiety is not only about her own situation but also includes the social situation of the community around her. While the film focuses on the issue of teenage romance, the novel stresses the concept of teenage mental health issues. The third research is done by Minderop & Hidayat (2022). Their analysis comes to the conclusion that Hawthorne depicts Dimmesdale and Hester through figurative language and characterization strategies like metaphor and simile. They endure life-or-death instincts and internal conflicts. The fourth research was conducted by (Kurniawan, 2022) concluded that based on Sigmund Freud's theory of anxiety and depression, Charlie Barber as the main character

experiences anxiety and depression due to friction in his close relationship with his wife. The last research is conducted by Hidayat et al. (2023). They use a comparative analysis of the novel and film, utilizing Freud's theory and adaptation theory. The results is Finch's character possesses a distinct life-and-death instinct in both the novel and the film. In order to convey the message of teenage psychological issues, the novel emphasizes the death instinct more than the film does, which emphasizes the love side. In summary, this adaptation analysis reveals that the novel and the movie *All the Bright Places* have different concepts or themes. Based on the previous related studies above, there are similarities and differences. The similarity is that these studies discuss of the anxiety theory by Sigmund Freud. Meanwhile, the differences between this research and those studies are found in different literary works. In addition, no one has conducted research in *I am Not Okay With This* movie script.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive analytical technique and qualitative approach to analyze the data for this study, which draws on psychological literature and, in particular, Sigmund Freud's concept of anxiety and instincts, and psychotic depression. The observation technique is a type of data gathering approach in which a person (typically trained) observes a phenomena and notes information about its properties. Observation is the investigation of a research issue or event through observation. The observation method of data collection is one of the oldest and is utilized by scientists and social scientists (Kumar & Sharma, 2023). This strategy is accomplished by thoroughly reading and understanding the anxiety and depression leads to death instinct that appears in the main character Sydney Novak in *I am Not Okay With This* movie script.

The instrument of this research is the researchers themselves to precisely pinpoint the psychological issues faced by Sydney Novak in *I am Not Okay With This* movie script through applying a literary psychology approach. The steps of this research are; 1) Watch the *I am Not Okay With This* series to have a sense of what issues I might encounter or get in the series; 2) Read the movie script of this series as research material to grasp the structure of the movie script frequently and thoroughly, and understanding sentence by sentence from the speech spoken and actions done by the characters in the movie script; 3) Observing and identifying the anxiety, psychotic depression, and life and death instinct that appears in the character of Sydney Novak through the character's behavior and the dialogues of the characters in the movie script; 4) Look for phrases in the script of *I am Not Okay With This* which describe Sydney Novak's character's anxiety and life and death instinct in accordance with Sigmund Freud's type of anxiety and instincts, as well as hallucinations as part of the symptoms of psychotic depression; 5) Make a conclusion based on the findings of the data analysis.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### a. Anxiety of Sydney

Realistic anxiety is a realistic reaction when a person sees danger in a dangerous setting in real life (this situation is similar as fear). This anxiety causes us to act in ways

that prepare us for danger. This reality-based fear is not uncommonly extreme. In this movie script, there are reflections of realistic anxiety in Sydney, the main character, as proved by the quote below.

[SYD]: We haven't talk about dad since he killed himself in the basement.

[SYD]: AC's broken.

[MAGGIE]: The unit's probably just... overheated.

[SYD]: It's hot as balls in this house.

[MAGGIE]: Open a window.

[SYD]: It's that heavy thing we're all too afraid to talk about.

[SYD]: I got called in... to the counselor's office.

[MAGGIE]: Why? Why did—what did you do?

[SYD]: Nothing. She just... she wants me to have, like... an outlet or something.

[MAGGIE]: An outlet for what?

[SYD]: Just sometimes it feels like... the people I love don't love me back.

[MAGGIE]: Well... [sighs]

[MAGGIE]: Maybe you're aiming too high, hon. (Entwistle & Hall, 2020)

The quote above uses the method of characterization through dialogue, a brief conversation between Syd and her mother when Syd tried to tell her about her problem with the counseling teacher. It shows the reflection of realistic anxiety. One night Syd could not sleep, so she decided to eat peanut butter while watching TV in the living room. Not long after, her mom came home from work and came over to sit next to Syd. Syd felt awkward, but she opened the conversation by telling her that the air conditioner in their house was broken.

Then with a feeling of doubt, Syd told her that she had been called to the counseling room because she had made trouble at school. Then her mother asked what the reason was for Syd to be called to the counseling room, Syd tried to express her anxiety about the response of people who did not love Syd back. Syd hopes she gets positive feedback. However, instead of getting it, her mother responded that Syd's expectations were too high.

While getting ready to go to the party, Dina was putting on Syd's makeup while they were talking. Dina asks Syd if she has anything to say to her. Syd nervously tries to tell her the truth about her telekinetic powers bothering her. While getting the words out, she also imagined all the strange things that had happened. But in the end, she decided against telling Dina. The realistic anxiety that shows up in this scene is because she is worried that Dina won't believe her, think she's silly, or even think Syd is crazy.

The realistic anxiety that arises is when she refuses to tell the real reason, she answers because Stanley will think she is crazy because what happened to her is beyond reason. So, Syd still chose to keep her mouth shut.

[SYD]: That's not cool. It's so not cool. It is massively screwed up. Can you stop doing that?

[STANLEY]: [sighs] Sorry.

[SYD]: [sighs] Jesus fucking Christ.

[STANLEY]: Uh, do you want to look at it again, or—

[SYD]: We've watched it, like, a million times.

[STANLEY]: I—I know it. I mean, he's in there. But what if he isn't?

[SYD]: [laughs] Then I'm just completely insane, huh?

[STANLEY]: Okay, Syd, if you honestly believe that someone was there, and they straight up fuckin' disappeared, then... I believe it, too. (Entwistle & Hall, 2020)

The quote above uses the method of characterization through dialogue. Syd and Stanley took the tape containing the library's CCTV footage to play it back. After watching it over and over again, Stanley doubts that anyone else was there with Syd when she ended up making a mess there too. However, in contrast to Syd, that what she believed if someone else was there and incited her to get emotional so that her kinetic power could destroy the entire library.

Seeing Syd's rage and denial, Stanley tried to calm her down by saying that he believed Syd that there were other people besides her there. However, Syd was still angry, and the realistic anxiety reflected in Syd's characteristics was when she eventually said that she was the one who was crazy and making things up which made Stanley not believe her.

Furthermore, The neurotic anxiety reflected in Syd's character is that, instead of thinking she will be getting punished, Syd is given a book by her counseling teacher as material to vent her emotions. Syd did not tell her teacher the real reason why she messed up. So, she felt that no one could understand her.

[SYD]: Dear Diary, what if I'm just going crazy? People don't just disappear into thin air, right? But, Diary, it felt... so real. So, if I am being followed, have they seen all my weird shit? I mean, it has to be because of my weird shit, right? And, Diary, who the fuck is it? I mean, it could be anyone. (Entwistle & Hall, 2020)

The quote above uses the method of characterization through internal action. From the monologue above, Syd poured out her worries that she wrote in her diary. She wrote down all her worries related to the incident the other day in the library, even though the people around her almost did not believe her at all, until at this point, Syd came to the conclusion that she was already insane.

The neurotic anxiety reflected in the monologue above is that Syd thinks of all the strange events she has experienced in the past, which makes Syd conclude that the strange things that exist in her are known to many people and she feels depressed about that, which can cause people to stay away from her. Although in fact, not everyone thinks so of her, and that's just Syd's concern.

The neurotic anxiety reflected in the scene above is when Syd, who was also still in shock, thought Stanley would stay away from her due to her out-of-control actions and may cause harm to her and her surrounding, but instead Stanley came over to calm her down. Syd also showed a look of regret as the power she could not control ended up causing chaos in the store.

In addition, moral anxiety is the outcome of a conflict between the id and the superego. This anxiety stems from dread and worry over sense of shame and sin when intending to do or commit acts that violate social norms.

[MAGGIE]: Hey, girls. Good breakfast?  
[DINA]: Yes. Thanks so much, Mrs. Miller.  
[MAGGIE]: Don't worry, hon. It's on me.  
[DINA]: Thank you.  
[SYD]: How come you always make me pay?  
[MAGGIE]: Because is Dina is nicer to me than you are, and I like her better than you.  
[DINA]: [laughing] Okay. I'll see you later.  
[MAGGIE]: [laughing] Bye! (Entwistle & Hall, 2020)

The quote above uses the method of characterization through dialogue. Syd and Dina were having breakfast at her mom's restaurant. After they finished, Syd's mom Maggie approached the both of them and told them that they did not have to pay for the breakfast because Syd would be the one treating them. Syd asks why she should always be the one who pays, her mom says that it's because she likes Dina's personality more than her own daughter, Syd.

The moral anxiety shown by Syd in the dialogue above is that her id is that Syd was offended by her mother's words, and wanted to express her anger at that moment. However, her superego is that Syd preferred not to express her feelings and keep her attitude because Dina was still there, also she did not want to make a mess in the restaurant where her mother worked.

[STANLEY]: Well, I—I'm just thinkin' it might help you a little... [sighs]  
[SYD]: Feel what?  
[STANLEY]: A little more... in control. Like if you maybe wanted to feel like you could defend yourself if some creepy guy really is following you?  
[SYD]: Oh! Just when I thought I couldn't be any more paranoid. Stanley Barber, ladies and gentlemen.  
[STANLEY]: [scoffs] What is with you today? I mean, I'm—I'm used to you being a dick, but this is like a whole new level.  
[SYD]: What is with me is I have bigger shit to worry about than hurting your fucking feelings! [rumbling] (Entwistle & Hall, 2020)

The quote above uses the method of characterization through dialogue. In the canteen, Stanley approached Syd who sat down to talk again to test her telekinetic powers. Syd already felt that the power test she had the other day was enough to prove to Stanley, and she was also tired with it. Stanley, who saw Syd's annoyed look and the words he said, thought that Syd's response was a bit different this time.

The moral anxiety reflected in this dialogue is that when Syd's id said there were more important thing that she was worried about than hurting Stanley's feelings angrily, the milk box on the table they were sitting on suddenly trembled. Then, because of her superego, Syd immediately stopped talking, because if she vented her frustration, then she would make a worse mess and would embarrass herself and Stanley, because at that time there were many other students who were in the canteen.

#### Moral Anxiety Based on Characterization Through External Action

In this movie script, there is a reflection of moral anxiety in Sydney, the main character, as proved by the quote below.

[SYD]: So, Dina ditched me to hang out with Bradley ‘Dick for Brains’ Lewis. Wore his stupid jacket... [clattering] like some gross couple from ‘50s. And I need to still find a way to buy some fucking groceries and get them fucking home.

[rumbling]

[gasps]

[rumbling fades]

[dog barking]

[train horn blares]

[SYD]: What the fuck? (Entwistle & Hall, 2020)

The quote above uses the method of characterization through external conflict from the monologue uttered by Syd, as she tries to express her disappointment. Previously, while still at school, Syd met Dina in the locker room and asked Dina to accompany her shopping. However, Dina declined the invitation because she was going to accompany her boyfriend, Brad, to a sports meeting. Instead, Dina invited Syd to come watch the sports match, but Syd refused.

The reflection of the moral anxiety is when the id that arises in her is that she felt disappointed in Dina because she chose Bradley over her. The superego is that even though she felt disappointed, Syd did not show it to Dina at that time, because she did not want to make her best friend feel bad. Instead, after school as she was walking down the street, Syd vented her frustration by throwing a rock. When she threw the rock for the third time, it hit the street sign and shattered.

In addition, it can be argued that moral anxiety is also found as proved by the quote below.

[JENNY]: Well, actually, I thought you should go next, Syd. Then I remembered that no one in their right mind would realistically have sex with you, so—

[STANLEY & DINA]: Hey!

[JENNY]: What? Is it not true? Does Syd Novak have some high fuckability score and I just don’t see it?

[STANLEY]: Syd, just don’t listen to her.

[scoffs]

[Jenny laughs]

[SYD]: I just wanted to rage on Jenny. I wanted to rage on Brad. I mean, who is he kidding with that truce? But I know if I rage, then bad things happen. I don’t even know what I’m capable of, which is just awesome because that means I don’t— (Entwistle & Hall, 2020)

The quote above uses the method of characterization through reactions of other characters. In the gymnasium where they are receiving detention, Jenny, who is speaking recklessly, insinuates Syd by saying words that Syd considers very offensive to herself. Stanley and Dina tried to stop Jenny. Stanley also managed to comfort Syd, whose face already looked angry and embarrassed. However, Syd was already offended, choosing to leave and go to the library to be alone.

The moral anxiety reflected in this scene is that Syd's id, who took offense to Jenny's words in the gymnasium, could have retaliated against Jenny right then and



there. However, since her superego stopped her, she has committed to not making a mess and causing others to get hurt due to her anger, so her decision at that moment is to leave because she did not want anything bad to happen out of her control.

**b. Hallucinations in Sydney**

Hallucinations are feelings of perception that occur when no external sensory inputs are present. In this movie script, there is reflection of hallucinations using technique of characterization through dialogue, as proved by the quote below.

EXT. WESTINGHOUSE HIGH SCHOOL, PHYSICAL EDUCATION – DAY  
[DINA]: Look, about the whole library situation...

[SYD]: I shouldn't have asked you to help me steal anything, Dina. It was stupid. The truth is, and I—I know this is gonna sound crazy but... [sighs] I sort of had this, like... hallucination. (Entwistle & Hall, 2020)

The quote above uses the method of characterization through dialogue. On the field during physical education class, Dina approached Syd. They sit together and Dina intends to discuss why she expressed her anger and to apologize for the other day when Syd was sitting on the park bench. Syd, who did not tell her the real reason at the time, finally clarified and told Dina that she was having hallucinations in the library.

Syd had entered the library alone, she felt like someone else was watching her inside the library. Syd was so scared that she lost control, which caused the books to fall off the shelves. After a while, she calls Stanley to show him what happened and she fully realizes that the chaos that just happened was not her own doing but someone was encouraging her to mess up. In reality, everything that happened in the library was just Syd's hallucination. She felt like there was someone other than her there but in reality, it was not like that.

. Syd came to the counseling room to consult with her counseling teacher, Miss Cappriotti. She expressed her concerns after a strange incident when Syd saw a man and felt he was following her in the library. Miss Cappriotti asked if the man was similar to Syd's father or not, then Syd replied that her father had passed away. Miss Cappriotti then shared that she had also experienced the similar thing after her late grandmother died, and she explained that in psychology this condition is called hallucinations due to deep sadness, and someone who experiences this condition actually needs clarity in the form of closure. Syd realized this, because when her father died, he did not leave her any message.

**c. Death Instinct in Sydney**

Death-wish is defined as when humans naturally think of reasons to commit suicide in our subconscious because something offends or upsets us. Although the subconscious of a civilized human would never commit such an act. In this movie script, there is a reflection of death-wish using technique of characterization through dialogue, as proved by the quote below.

[LIAM]: Come on, Syd. Mom says you have to work hard if you're gonna succeed.

[SYD]: Yeah, well, the plan's always been for me to sit back and watch you succeed, Goob.

[LIAM]: Oh, hey, who knows?

[SYD]: Maybe one day, if you really work hard enough, you get to be the one to pay for my funeral. (Entwistle & Hall, 2020)

The quote above uses the method of characterization through dialogue between Syd and her little brother, Liam. After their mom left for work, it was just Syd and her little brother at home. Syd went up to Liam and asked him about his homework, and they talked to each other. Liam told Syd that their mother said that if she wanted to succeed, then Syd had to work hard. Syd replies to the statement by returning it back to Liam. Actually, the conversation between the two siblings is not tense.

The death instinct that shows in the quote above is classified as death-wish until she said that if her Liam worked hard, maybe he would be able to pay for her funeral when Syd died later.

Suicide is one part of the death instinct. Suicide is as much a clinical aspect as the inability to tolerate the loss of satisfaction. The primary aspect of suicidal behavior is that the person loses a loved object (for example, due to someone's death or divorce).

After walking down the street in a messy state still with a bloodied dress, Syd's footsteps led her to the forest where she had once screamed and which Stanley had eventually found out about. In the forest, there was a tree house. She climbed the tree house and thought about what had just happened. In the monologue quoted, she did not intend to kill Bradley with telekinetic powers that she could not control. She simply wanted Bradley to stop making fun of her. After the chaos had ensued, Syd, unable to think rationally, thought of running away or hiding somewhere, until she ended up in the treehouse.

She felt like a total failure, and felt exactly what her father had experienced in the past, now felt by herself. In the midst of all the things she was thinking about, Syd suddenly felt someone whispering. Syd looked back, and saw a black shadowy figure with a feeling of fear. After hearing the whisper, she jumped from the tree house. Syd took her own life, due to the whisper which was also her hallucination. Her death is exactly the same as what happened to her late father, who also committed suicide.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study find that due to the severity of Syd's anxiety disorder, it develops into hallucinations which are symptoms of psychotic depression. These hallucinations also cause Syd to eventually commit suicide, which can be seen from the dialogue and actions Syd took in the previous chapter. In some parts, the life instinct is also constantly present in Syd's mind, but it does not really save her and instead her death instinct is much stronger and in the end it is what makes her take her own life.

After analyzing this movie script, it can be concluded that this proves that there is a relationship between anxiety, psychotic depression that leads to the death instinct that appears in the main character Sydney Novak which affects the behavior and actions she takes. In this study, it is also found that the biggest factor that causes her to experience this severe mental disorder was due to the trauma caused by the incident of her father's death who also committed suicide in the past.

As a result, this research has presented knowledge about the psychological approach to the concepts of anxiety, psychotic depression, and instincts in literary

works; it is hoped that this research can enrich knowledge or be used as a comparison to previous studies. Moreover, the movie script of *I am Not Okay With This*, which has been researched using the literary psychology approach, can be researched again for future research using other branches of literary study such as the literary sociology approach using the theory of social institutions.

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