

The Shift of Quinn's Character in Exploring Self-Identity in Goffney's *Excuse Me While I Ugly Cry*

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Abstract:

This research aims to reveal what kind of character development that happened to Quinn during exploration for identity in the novel *Excuse Me While I Ugly Cry* using Character Development Theory by Erikson (1993). The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative where data collection is carried out by reading and analyzing the conversations that show Quinn's development in the novel. The issue raised is about Quinn's character who has no self-confidence, but indirectly she begins to find her identity after going through struggles. From this research, the researcher found that Quinn's experiences significant character development, especially in her self-confidence. Which has a big influence from her closest friend's support. From this journey, Quinn can find her identity that is able to face her emotions and all her desires. Researcher provide clear knowledge, especially to readers who want to conduct the same topic related to character development or self-identity.

Keywords: Character Development; Identity; Confidence

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap seperti apa perkembangan karakter yang terjadi pada Quinn selama perjalanan mencari identitas diri dalam novel *Excuse Me While I Ugly Cry* menggunakan Teori Character Development oleh Erikson (1993). Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif, dimana pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan cara membaca dan menganalisis percakapan yang menunjukkan perkembangan Quinn dalam novel. Permasalahan yang diangkat, yaitu tentang karakter Quinn yang tidak memiliki rasa percaya diri, namun secara tidak langsung dia mulai menemukan identitasnya setelah melewati semua perjuangan. Dari penelitian ini, peneliti menemukan bahwa Quinn mengalami perkembangan karakter yang signifikan, terutama dalam kepercayaan dirinya. Yang mana hal tersebut mendapat pengaruh besar dari dukungan teman-teman terdekatnya. Dari perjalanan tersebut, Quinn dapat menemukan identitasnya, yaitu mampu menghadapi emosi dan segala keinginannya. Peneliti memberikan pengetahuan yang jelas, terutama kepada para pembaca yang ingin melakukan penelitian dengan topik yang sama, yakni tentang perkembangan karakter atau identitas diri.

Kata kunci: Perkembangan Karakter; Identitas; Percaya diri

INTRODUCTION

In Joya Goffney's novel *Excuse Me While I Ugly Cry*, Quinn's character development as the main character shows a complex journey in exploring identity and self-confidence. Quinn, a teenager who grew up in a predominantly white school environment, faces various challenges that affect her identity. Her position as a minority and the lack of self-confidence she experiences make her feel alienated and doubt her own worth. This situation drives Quinn to search for her identity and build self-confidence as part of her growth as an individual.

Quinn's journey in exploring her identity is closely related to Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, particularly the "Identity vs. Role Confusion" stage, which describes an important phase in adolescent character development. At this stage, adolescents experience a phase of searching for identity through various social interactions and self-exploration to understand who they really are. Through interactions with close friends, Quinn gets the emotional support and self-reflection she desperately needs to overcome her feelings of inferiority and find her true worth.

Quinn's character development process not only illustrates the achievement of self-confidence, but also shows the importance of social support in forming a solid identity. Every interaction, emotional conflict, and self-reflection that Quinn experiences gradually forms a more resilient and confident character. Thus, this exploration not only strengthens Quinn's personal identity, but also provides an in-depth look at how the process of finding identity can be influenced by social environment and inner conflict.

A study conducted by Zimmer-Gembeck and Collins (2019) showed that social support from peers plays a significant role in building adolescent identity and self-confidence. Close friends are a source of emotional support that helps adolescents deal with social pressures and overcome self-doubt, which ultimately accelerates the development of a healthy identity.

Umaña-Taylor et al. (2020) highlighted how cultural and ethnic identities influence the development of identity in minority adolescents. They found that adolescents who struggle to balance their cultural identity with the broader social context, such as Quinn's character in a white school environment, experiencing challenges but also growing through the support of their community and friends.

In a study conducted by Schwartz, Zamboanga, and Weisskirch (2021), researchers examined the relationship between identity exploration and self-confidence levels. They found that adolescents who actively explored their interests, values, and social identities showed increased self-confidence and emotional stability. The support of friends and a safe social environment made it easier for them to dare to express their identity.

Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development also highlights the influence of the social environment in shaping an individual's character and moral values. Research by Gasser and Keller (2018) strengthens this concept, showing that adolescents tend to build moral values and personality based on their social interactions. For Quinn, interactions with her friends not only enriched her emotional experiences but also honed her understanding of the values and identities she held, helping to shape her character and self-confidence in facing challenges.

Through various expert perspectives, this study aims to understand more deeply how social support and emotional conflict accelerate the process of finding identity and increase the self-confidence of the main character, namely Quinn.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of individual character, especially in adolescence, has become a major focus in the study of developmental psychology because this period is considered a critical stage in the formation of identity and self-identity. Erik Erikson, a leading figure in the theory of psychosocial development, stated that the search for identity is the core of the adolescent phase which he called the Identity vs. Role Confusion stage. At this stage, individuals begin to explore their values, social roles, and life goals to find a solid and stable identity (Erikson, 1968). Support for this theory is further strengthened by research by Kroger et al. (2018) which found that support from the social environment, especially peers, is very important in supporting the search for a healthy and stable identity in adolescents. In this case, Vygotsky's socio-cultural perspective emphasizes the importance of social interaction in accelerating individual development through peer support as the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which allows individuals to overcome various identity challenges through collaboration (Vygotsky, 1978). In line with that, research by Fernández et al. (2020) showed that adolescents who have good social support from their friends tend to be more emotionally stable and more confident.

Support from the social environment also plays an important role in shaping an individual's moral values, as stated by Lawrence Kohlberg in his theory of moral development. Kohlberg (1981) argued that the social environment influences the development of adolescents' moral values and character, where positive social interactions can strengthen an individual's moral values and identity. This view is supported by research by Gasser and Keller (2018) which found that peer support helps strengthen adolescents' values and self-confidence in shaping their identity. In addition, emotional conflict in the search for identity is a common process faced by adolescents. Arnett (2020) stated that this emotional conflict, if accompanied by appropriate social support, can accelerate character development and strengthen identity. Finally, in a cultural context, research by Umaña-Taylor et al. (2020) found that minority adolescents who face cultural identity challenges often need social support to form a strong identity in a multicultural environment. Therefore, these various perspectives show that the process of searching for identity in adolescents is very complex and is influenced by social interactions, peer support, and the individual's ability to overcome emotional conflict.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method to explore and understand the character development of Quinn as the main character in Joya Goffney's novel *Excuse Me While I Ugly Cry*. This method was chosen because it can provide in-depth insight into Quinn's process of self-discovery and self-confidence development, as well as the influence of social support from her friends. The main data source in this study is the novel, which will be analyzed through close reading to identify and highlight important aspects of Quinn's character development. In addition, secondary data will be collected from books, articles, and journals that are relevant to the research theme, including theories of developmental psychology and literature on identity exploration and social support in adolescent character development.

Data analysis is carried out through several steps. First, the researcher will conduct a close reading to explore the novel text and identify quotes that reflect emotional conflict, identity search, and social interactions with friends. Next, a thematic analysis will be conducted to find patterns and themes that emerge related to character development, including how social support affects Quinn's self-confidence and how she overcomes identity conflict. The researcher will also conduct an intertextual analysis by linking

findings from the novel to relevant psychological theories, to provide a deeper understanding of Quinn's character development process.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, data triangulation will be conducted by comparing findings from the novel with secondary sources. Discussions with colleagues will also be conducted to obtain different inputs and perspectives, so that the resulting analysis is more comprehensive and objective. This research will pay attention to ethical aspects, including respecting the copyright of the literary works analyzed by clearly listing all quotes from the novel and secondary sources in the references. With this approach, it is hoped that this research can provide in-depth insight into Quinn's character development and the factors that influence her journey of self-discovery.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Quinn's Personality When She Lost Her Journal

The sense of loss that Quinn experiences when her personal journal is lost creates a strong and varied emotional response. This shows another side of her personality that experiences various complex emotions in dealing with unexpected situations. Here are some of the emotions that Quinn feels based on quotes in the novel and their explanations:

Depressed

"I felt like a piece of me was missing, and the thought of someone reading my most private thoughts was unbearable."

This quote shows that Quinn feels very lost and sad because her journal contains secrets and personal things that she doesn't want others to know. The journal is a medium of self-expression that means a lot to her, so losing it makes her feel devastated.

Panic

"My hands were shaking as I imagined Gia and Livy reading everything in that journal. Every thought, every secret—out in the open."

Quinn's panic is evident when she imagines other people knowing her secrets. Physical reactions such as shaking hands show that Quinn feels very scared and helpless in the face of this situation.

Worry

"I couldn't breathe knowing that my deepest secrets were in the hands of people who might not understand or respect them. "

Quinn feels threatened by the idea that her personal secrets could be used against her or destroy her reputation. This feeling shows how important her privacy is to Quinn and how losing the journal makes her vulnerable.

The Cause of Quinn's Loss of Self-Confidence

Quinn experienced a loss of self-confidence caused by various factors related to her social situations and life experiences. Some of the main causes of this loss of self-confidence are as follows:

Racial Differences in School Environment

"Being the only Black girl in a sea of white faces always made me feel like I didn't belong."

Quinn often felt different because of her racial identity as a minority. When she felt physically and culturally different, she felt social pressure that increasingly increases her lack of self-confidence.

Feelings of Isolation and Lack of Social Support

"I kept everything to myself, pouring my heart out only into my journal. No one knew the real me."

Quinn chose to write about her feelings in a journal because she felt she had no one else to talk to. This isolating habit limited Quinn's opportunities for social support that could help build her self-confidence.

Threats from Her Friends

"Gia and Livy threatened to expose everything, and I couldn't imagine the shame I would feel if my secrets were out."

The threats Quinn receives from her friends after they find her journal worsen her insecurities and self-confidence. She worries about being embarrassed in front of her other friends, which makes her feelings even more chaotic.

This analysis shows that emotional experiences and social conflicts influence Quinn's character development. The emotions that arise when she loses her journal, as well as her fear of racial discrimination and threats from friends, all shape her personality and reflect the challenges in the process of finding self-identity.

The Cause of her Shift Characterization

Feelings of sadness, disappointment, and worry can be overcome by Quinn after getting support from those closest to her. Her friendship with Carter can make her more

confident and slowly accept the situation. Support from Carter who is a good listener and a friend who can understand Quinn's feelings is very valuable to Quinn. So that we can see the change in Quinn's character that is formed from the support that can understand her feelings.

“He sits up in his seat. “We need suspects, we need motives . . .”
HOW TO SOLVE THE CASE OF THE MISSING JOURNAL
(ACCORDING TO CARTER)”

From the quotation it shows that Carter is one of the friends who is willing to help Quinn in finding her lost journal. He listens to everything Quinn says and gives empathy for the loss of her journal. Carter has conveyed a structured plan to find Quinn's journal. He made it in detail so that Quinn's problem can be solved quickly.

Throughout this analysis, it is clear that Quinn's character development is the result of a complex interplay of social support, challenges faced, and emotional struggles. Quinn's journey illustrates the importance of self-confidence in forming a coherent identity and shows that, despite overwhelming challenges, individuals can experience significant transformation with the help of a supportive social environment. This study highlights the relevance of the minority theme in adolescent identity development and provides insight into ways in which individuals can learn to overcome discrimination and build stronger self-confidence.

CONCLUSION

The study of Quinn's character development in Joya Goffney's novel *Excuse Me While I Ugly Cry* shows how the adolescent's journey of identity discovery is influenced by a variety of factors, including social support from close friends and emotional struggles. In the context of Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, Quinn's journey reflects the Identity vs. Role Confusion phase, where she struggles with self-doubt and social pressures. Through interactions with her friends, Quinn receives support that helps her resolve identity conflicts and build stronger self-esteem.

Quinn's development of self-confidence is key to the process of forming a coherent identity. Moments of introspection and social support facilitate her growth, illustrating the importance of interpersonal relationships in the adolescent journey of self-discovery. This study not only enriches the understanding of Quinn's character, but also provides greater

insight into the dynamics of adolescent development, as well as the need for a supportive environment for individuals to overcome identity challenges.

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