



PSYCHOLOGICAL CONFLICTS OF THE MAIN CHARACTER

IN *THE WHALE*

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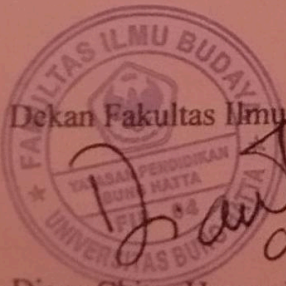
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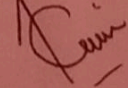

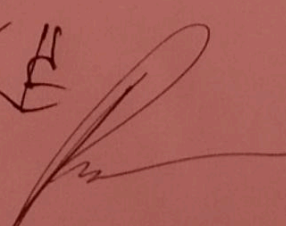
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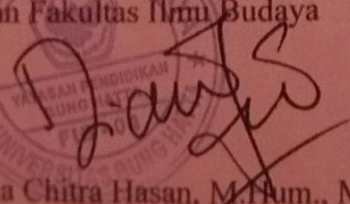
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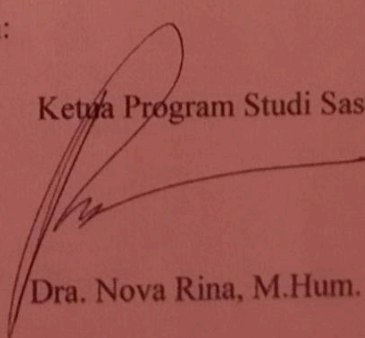
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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This is to certify the originality of this thesis which I now submit to fulfill a requirement for an S1 in The English Department Faculty of Humanities Universitas Bung Hatta. The content of this thesis is entirely my work. All assistance received in writing this thesis and the sources cited have been acknowledged within the text of my work.

Padang, 25 Februari 2025



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PSYCHOLOGICAL CONFLICTS OF THE MAIN CHARACTER

IN *THE WHALE*

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the psychological conflicts of the main character, Charlie, in the movie *The Whale* and how he resolves the conflicts. The writer employs Kurt Lewin's theory of Conflicts, which divides conflict into three categories: approach-approach conflict, approach-avoidance conflict, and avoidance-avoidance conflict. Furthermore, Kurt Lewin defines valence as decision making or the resolution of psychological conflicts, which is divided into 3 types, there are positive valence, negative valence, and neutral valence. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. According to the findings, Charlie's most common experience is approach-avoidance conflict, which occurred in 10 times. This form of conflict arises when Charlie is torn between desire and the consequences. The writer also discovered two cases of approach-approach conflict, in which Charlie must pick between two positive results, as well as three instances of avoidance-avoidance conflict, in which he is forced to select between two undesirable possibilities. Meanwhile, for resolutions, the findings show that Charlie dominantly resolves his conflicts with negative valence, mostly when he faces approach avoidance conflict. He also resolves conflicts with positive valence, with 4 data found in this study. However, the writer found Neutral valence appears 2 times in the movie. This pattern shows that Charlie often lets his emotions control his choices, especially when it comes to Ellie. He believes that taking care of her, even from a distance, is more important than taking care of himself. This explains why he often resolves approach-avoidance conflicts with negative valence, when he wants something but knows it has bad consequences, he follows his emotions instead of logic.

Keywords: *The Whale, Charlie, psychological conflict, valence*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

There are two types of conflict in human life: internal conflict and external conflict. External conflict occurs when a person is pitted against an outside force they cannot control, such as other person, society, or the natural world. These external forces interfere with the human's motivations, causing conflict as they try to achieve their goals. On the other hand, internal conflict arises within a person's mind when they are torn between two or more goals or beliefs (Schirova 11).

In literature, internal conflict is closely related to psychology. Deutsch described internal conflict as often being viewed negatively because it is associated with behavioral problems, disruption, violence, and chaos. However, when managed properly, this conflict can be beneficial to both individuals and society. Psychological conflict occurs when two opposing forces attack each other within an individual. In daily lives, a person frequently faces complex and critical decisions that may contradict his/her principles, leading to psychological conflict (1-3).

According to Freud (in Christian et al), psychological conflict and inner conflict are synonymous. It describes the mental or emotional conflict that people face within themselves. in psychoanalytic theory, inner conflict between the id, ego, and superego is viewed as an unavoidable aspect of the human condition, rather than a result of external circumstances (4-5).

Sometimes a conflict will appear on the surface, that is, be consciously

perceived as such. People may experience conscious conflict when faced with a major decision, even if they use evasive techniques. In some cases, psychological conflict may appear as a contradiction between the individual and their surroundings. When unfounded fears and limits challenge with one's desires, it may be a sign of deeper psychological conflicts (Horney 42).

Human existence is inextricably linked to psychological conflict. Psychological conflict is defined as a psychological struggle a person has with himself (Bruno 114). Deutsch stressed that people experience this conflict when they are torn between competing ideas or goals. This type of conflict is based on our ability to think through and select the best solution when solving a problem. Psychological conflict refers to a person's internal conflict over what to do or think. This is the individual's primary conflict, and he or she must find a solution on their own (31-33).

Psychological conflicts are an integral part of our daily lives. For instance, one may want to pursue one's career while also prioritizing one's family. One may want to stay in a job he enjoys while also exploring new opportunities. Conflicting motivations can vary between individuals and over time. The feeling that 'we can't have it all' is common among most people. Understanding these conflicts is crucial in psychology as they reveal the underlying motivations and complexities of human nature, providing deeper insights into the psyche (Sverdlik 30-31).

By examining these conflicts through various lenses, such as psychological theories and literary analysis, one can gain a comprehensive understanding of how people navigate and resolve psychological conflicts, ultimately contributing to the

larger field of human behaviour or psychological research.

According to Von Franz, psychology and literature have an unbreakable connection because they both originate from the human psyche. Literature often serves as a medium to explore and portray complex psychological themes, allowing readers to engage with and understand the intricacies of the human mind. There is a functional relationship between psychology and literature, which can be used to investigate other people's mental states. The variations and human psychological symptoms depicted by literary characters offer insights into the multifaceted nature of human psychology (119-120).

This study examines Charlie's psychological conflicts in the film *The Whale*. The film follows the story of Charlie, an English teacher living in isolation in his apartment. Charlie suffers from extreme obesity, making it difficult for him to move and carry out daily activities. The story begins as Charlie attempts to mend his long-broken relationship with his teenage daughter, Ellie. Charlie was estranged from Ellie and his ex-wife, Mary, after choosing to live with his male lover, who later passed away. This loss deepened Charlie's feelings of guilt and regret, exacerbating his health condition.

Charlie was an English teacher, passionate about literature and education. His love for teaching and the written word provided him with a sense of purpose and fulfillment. He was dedicated to his students, inspiring them to appreciate the nuances of language and storytelling. His career as a teacher was not just a job but a calling that brought him joy and a sense of accomplishment. Charlie was married to Mary, and together they had a daughter, Ellie. During this time, Charlie

experienced the joys and challenges of family life. He shared a bond with his daughter, engaging in typical father-daughter activities and cherishing their time together. His relationship with Mary, while initially strong, began to strain as Charlie grappled with his own identity and desires.

A significant turning point in Charlie's life was his realization and acceptance of his sexuality. He fell in love with a male student named Alan, which led to profound changes in his personal life. This relationship was intense and transformative, but it also came with societal and personal challenges. The decision to pursue this relationship ultimately led to the dissolution of his marriage with Mary and his separation from Ellie. Charlie's journey to accepting his true self was fraught with emotional and psychological struggles. He faced guilt and shame for leaving his family and the impact of societal judgment on his relationship with Alan. These feelings were compounded by the tragic death of Alan, which profoundly affected Charlie and marked the beginning of his descent into deep depression and self-destructive behaviors.

After Alan's death, Charlie's life took a drastic turn. Consumed by grief, guilt, and depression, he began to isolate himself and turn to food as a coping mechanism. This marked the onset of his obesity, as he used to eat to numb his emotional pain and fill the void left by his lost love and broken relationships. The combination of emotional turmoil and a sedentary lifestyle led to rapid weight gain, which eventually became uncontrollable.

Charlie's struggle to reconnect with Ellie amidst his profound guilt and fear of rejection is a significant condition that highlights the psychological conflict

central to his character. This scene and the underlying conflict demonstrate the relevance and depth of using Kurt Lewin's theory to analyze Charlie's experiences in *The Whale*. The film's exploration of these complex emotional and psychological dynamics makes it an excellent subject for this thesis on psychological conflict.

The Whale offers a profound exploration of psychological conflict, making it a compelling subject for academic analysis. The film's critical acclaim and the depth of its narrative provide a rich context for studying the psychological dimensions of its characters. The character of Charlie provides complex emotional and psychological struggles, presenting an excellent case for applying psychological approach.

Furthermore, the film's reception, including awards and nominations, underscores its impact and the effectiveness of its storytelling. Brendan Fraser's portrayal of Charlie, which earned him the Academy Award for Best Actor, highlights the nuanced and powerful depiction of a man grappling with his psychological conflict. These awards reflect the film's ability to resonate with audiences and critics alike, reinforcing its suitability for scholarly examination.

The writer believes that everyone experiences psychological conflict in daily life. Thus, the study aims to delve into Charlie's psychological conflict as the main character in *The Whale* demonstrating the importance of psychological conflict in human experiences. The writer will reveal the various psychological conflicts Charlie encounters and examine his resolutions, contributing to a deeper understanding of psychological conflicts in film.

1.2 Research Questions

According to the background of the study above, this study tries to answer the following questions:

1. How are the psychological conflicts of the main character depicted in *The Whale*?
2. How are the resolution of psychological conflicts of the main character depicted in *The Whale*?

1.3 Objective of the Study

The aims of the study are

1. To describe the psychological conflicts experienced by the main character
2. To describe how the main character resolved the psychological conflicts

1.4 Scope of the Study

This film can be studied in a variety of fields of study. The writer is interested in discussing this film within the context of psychology. Among many existing psychological studies, the writer will discuss the psychological conflict of the character. In this study, the writer will only discuss the psychological conflict of the main character of the film namely Charlie in the film *The Whale* using psychological conflict using Lewin's theory of conflicts.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The writer is expected to provide the readers with theoretical and practical benefits from this study. This study is expected to be useful for those interested in researching a related topic. Especially when studying psychological conflicts or wanting to explore knowledge in a new way while applying the same psychological approach. In practice, the researcher expected to be used as a reference for students

who wanted to conduct additional research, teachers who wanted to provide information, and as another reference that could help them understand psychological conflicts. Readers, especially those who enjoy literature, may get benefit from this study's insights into the causes of psychological conflicts.