

A Broken Connection: A Screenplay about Psychosocial Problem Effects on People Living with HIV/AIDS

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the impact of environmental behavior on individuals living with HIV/AIDS and its association with Psychosocial Problems. It focuses on the negative behavior which is exhibited by the environment towards individuals with HIV/AIDS, which can lead to adverse psychosocial outcomes. Psychosocial problems encompass the interaction between an individual's psychological well-being, social environment, and daily functioning, influenced by their environment and life events. The study acknowledges that external behavior plays a significant role in shaping internal behavior, and stressful events arising from negative external behavior can affect a person's internal well-being. The research centers on people who experience Psychosocial Problems as a result of rejection from family, friends, and society due to their HIV status. This work uses Social Cognitive theory to analyze the link of the effect of Psychosocial Problems with People Living with HIV/AIDS. As a result, this work highlights the profound impact of negative environmental behavior on individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Also, emphasize the need for supportive and accepting environments to mitigate psychosocial challenges in both psychological states in PLHIV.

Keywords: external behavior; internal behavior, PLHIV, Psychosocial Problems, Psychological States, Social Cognitive Theory.

INTRODUCTION

One of the roots of someone's psychosocial problems can be the family's role in his/her life. Families that have expressed negative emotions and/or usually called highly expressed emotion (EE) tend to cause aggressive behavior, highly anxiety and much more involvement in external behaviors or known as juvenile delinquency (Shackman et al, 2010 as cited in Buanasari & Kanine, 2020). Expressed emotion (EE) could be defined as an overly critical and emotional involvement which are expressed when talking about other family members (Butzlaff & Hooley, 1998 as cited in Buanasari & Kanine, 2020). Adolescents who experience psychosocial developmental deviations are more likely to experience Psychosocial Problems such as anxiety, depression to suicide and many other risky behaviors. Psychosocial problems in adolescents are highly concerning because it is the main cause of the disability that occurs in adolescents' life, which can interfere with all aspects including emotional well-being, social development of adolescents which then causes feelings of isolation, stigmatization, and inability to optimize social contributions in society. (Kutcher & Venn, 2008 as cited in Buanasari & Kanine, 2020).

One of many problems that an adolescent usually has troubles with is their sexual behaviors. According to the Centers for Disease Controls, adolescent sexual behaviors pose significant risks, with 42% of females and 44% of males aged 15-19 engaging in sex (2017). Unprotected sex increases the chances of unintended pregnancies, STDs, and HIV. According to UNICEF (2021), in 2020, 1.75 million adolescents (10-19 years) worldwide were living with

HIV (2021). Lack of awareness and knowledge about HIV among adolescents leads to discrimination against those with HIV and many may unknowingly become HIV-positive, missing out on life-saving treatment.

In recent years, with the advent of antiretroviral therapy (ART), life expectancy for individuals with HIV has significantly increased. Masyufah (2020) notes that while HIV and AIDS cannot be cured, they can be controlled through lifelong adherence to antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) as prescribed by HIV service doctors. Monitoring patient adherence is crucial, not only for maintaining physical health but also for addressing the broader concept of quality of life (QoL). QoL, defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), encompasses a person's perception of their position in society, affecting their overall wellbeing, happiness, and life satisfaction (Muhammad et al., 2017, as cited in Masyufah, 2020). Factors influencing QoL for people living with HIV (PLHIV) include physical health, access to ARVs, psychological and social support, survival strategies, and spirituality. However, social stigma and discrimination significantly impact the psychological state of PLHIV, making it challenging for them to accept their condition and find happiness despite undergoing necessary treatment (Masyufah, 2020).

This screenplay is focusing on psychological health, particularly psychosocial issues, as it has become a widely recognized and prevalent term, especially among individuals in their early to mid-20s. This phenomenon is crucial in early adulthood, particularly for people living with HIV (PLHIV), who often face societal stigma. Social support, highlighted by Arias-Colmenero et al. (2020), is vital for PLHIV, emphasizing the need for positive connections to overcome challenges. This creative work explores the dual challenges of late adolescence and advocates for spreading positivity through support for those dealing with HIV/AIDS.

Despite the annual increase in HIV cases, societies often lack a deep understanding of the illness, leading to discrimination and avoidance of people living with HIV (PLHIV). This societal response not only adds to the physical burden but also contributes to mental health challenges. Many individuals with HIV face a silent struggle, unable to see their bright futures. This screenplay aims to inspire young people, both with and without HIV, to embrace life's challenges and foster a supportive and knowledgeable community.

This work aims to give a voice to individuals facing HIV/AIDS, showcasing their desire for equality while battling the fear of stigma and discrimination. The uncertainty surrounding their lives often leads to confusion in setting goals or plans, ultimately fostering a sense of hopelessness. Through this creative work, there's an opportunity for young audiences to gain insights into the struggles of those living with HIV/AIDS, promoting understanding and empathy. The goal is to encourage positive treatment and change societal perceptions.

SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY

Vannieuwenborg et al. (2015) note the lack of a clear definition for Psychosocial Problems, which is addressed through an operational definition derived from caregiver interviews. Psychosocial Problems are defined as issues involving the interaction between an individual's psychological well-being and their social environment, impacting daily functioning and relationships (Vannieuwenborg et al., 2015). Bandura's SCT posits that human behavior, personal factors, and environmental factors interact in reciprocal causation or cause-and-effect relations (Bandura, 1986, as cited in Beauchamp et al., 2018). People engage in forethought,

self-regulation, self-reflection, vicarious learning, and innovation based on their exposure to social and environmental stimuli. The social origins of human thought and action, coupled with the influential role of cognitive processes, underscore the interplay between social and cognitive factors in shaping motivation, affect, and action (Bandura, 1986, as cited in Beauchamp et al., 2018).

Human motivation significantly influences problem-solving. In this context, motivation, defined as the processes initiating and sustaining goal-directed activities, occurs internally or overtly in goal-directed actions (Schunk et al., 2014, as cited in Schunk & Usher, 2019). According to Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, motivated actions rely on expected positive consequences for modeled actions. Cognitive beliefs, known as outcome expectancies, develop through social interactions between models and observers. At the core of Bandura's theory is the sense of agency, reflecting personal beliefs in exerting influence over life events. Self-efficacy, individuals' perceived capabilities to learn and perform actions, is crucial to the motivational process, driven by self-reflection in social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997, as cited in Schunk & Usher, 2019).

Social Cognitive Theory on People with HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is a contagious disease that poses a significant healthcare challenge. According to Arias-Colmenero et al. (2020), individuals go through two psychological stages upon receiving an HIV/AIDS diagnosis: the initial shock of diagnosis and the subsequent stage of acceptance or denial, depending on the individual's psychology. Historically, HIV has been wrongly labeled as the "gay-syndrome," leading to substantial societal discrimination. This stigma not only hinders the person's adaptation to the disease but also complicates disease management and treatment, creating barriers in relationships, both within the general population and with healthcare professionals. The diagnosis process itself is a daunting experience, evoking intense emotions such as disappointment, sadness, fear, despair, lack of awareness, and pain (Arias-Colmenero et al., 2020). These emotions can contribute to or exacerbate depression, with feelings of frustration arising from unmet life targets. The stigma associated with HIV further amplifies the challenges faced by individuals dealing with the disease.

Individuals' thoughts, actions, and environments are interconnected: thoughts influence actions and environments, actions can alter thoughts and environments, and environments can shape thoughts and actions (Schunk & Usher, 2019). Positive outcomes often stem from intrinsic motivation, particularly in the case of individuals living with HIV (PLHIV), who may initially experience shock. For PLHIV, accepting their condition in the second stage and finding motivation to lead a normal life requires external behaviors that stimulate self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, a key factor, influences whether individuals continue their survival journey by adhering to ARV treatment. Positive actions and support from the environment play a crucial role in maintaining or deconstructing self-efficacy. A lack of positive actions may lead to a decline in motivation, potentially affecting individuals' decisions regarding their lives.

CONCEPT OF THE CREATIVE WORK

This creative work delves into the drama genre with a focus on the tragedy sub-genre, specifically modern tragedy. In modern tragedy, the narrative centers on a main character's downfall due to personal flaws (Selbo, 2014). Carney (2013, as cited in McEvoy, 2021) emphasizes that modern tragedy represents human suffering, particularly within relationships, where the tragic action unfolds. The genre explores the psychological aspects of characters,

often depicting a disturbed mental state resulting from significant past events. A key element of modern tragedy is that tragic characters contribute to their own demise (Selbo, 2014). Carney (2013, as cited in McEvoy, 2021) reinforces this, highlighting the direct connection between human will and unavoidable loss. In this creative work, the main character grapples with an unstable mental state due to their illness, dwelling on past experiences and uncertainties about the future. The narrative depicts the internal struggles, such as overthinking, emotional turmoil, and fear of societal stigma, as the character faces discrimination due to HIV/AIDS.

In the screenplay, the use of literary devices such as foreshadowing, flashbacks, and red herring contributes to heightened suspense and the portrayal of characters' emotions. Foreshadowing, defined by Andrews (2020), involves providing hints in advance that will unfold later in the story, either subtly or overtly. Foreshadowed elements play a crucial role in creating anticipation and, upon reflection, lead to a sense of hindsight bias among the audience (Tobin, 2009, as cited in Andrews & Emma, 2020). Foreshadowing will be employed early in the narrative when the main character, in a doctor's room, hints at an underlying issue, prompting speculation from the audience. In the middle section of the story, the revelation of the character's HIV diagnosis will unfold through a flashback, where he confides in his best friend. Given the modern tragedy genre, subtle hints at the progression of the main character's illness into AIDS will be woven into the narrative, including a scene depicting the doctor's diagnosis of complications.

Next literary device, the flashback technique will be employed to visually depict past events, utilizing the cinematic device of "going back" in the narrative. As defined by Chatman (1980, as cited in Sari & Heriyati, 2021, p. 130), a flashback is a cinematic element portraying spontaneous events from the past. This technique is commonly used to illustrate a character's figurative memory, highlighting events that serve as emotional triggers in the present. Flashbacks, as described by Sari & Heriyati (2021, p. 130), represent trauma memory presented in random sequences. In this screenplay, flashbacks will be utilized to unveil the trauma the main character faces, providing a means to portray internal conflicts and evoke the intense emotions experienced by the character. The story begins with the main character already grappling with the HIV/AIDS illness, and later, through flashbacks, the audience will witness his traumatic experiences stemming from a broken home and misguided search for love when confiding in his best friend. This literary device aims to immerse the audience in the main character's emotional journey and internal struggles.

The last literary device in this creative work will be red herring or misleading. As explained by Hansen (2022), a red herring is a narrative element introduced early in the story but explained later as part of the plot twist. This technique helps pace the story, allowing the audience to follow the plot without prematurely reaching conclusions. The ultimate reveal is reserved for the end of the story, adding to the narrative's suspense. Hansen suggests that the effectiveness of this technique lies in the right balance of distraction and transparency. The application of red herring in this story aims to intensify the main character's illness by diverting attention to his emotional struggles. The narrative misleads the audience through the discrimination portrayed by the main character's mother and best friend. Towards the end, it becomes evident that their initial actions were attempts to support the main character, though their understanding was limited. This literary device serves the dual purpose of creating narrative intensity and raising awareness about the importance of social support for individuals living with HIV (PLHIV). It offers the audience insights into the complex challenges faced by PLHIV beyond medical treatment, emphasizing the need for understanding and empathy.

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The modern tragedy genre in my creative work draws inspiration from influential films such as "The Goldfinch" (Crowley, 2019), "The Starling" (Melfi, 2021), and "Philadelphia" (Demme, 1993). In "The Goldfinch," the character Theodore Decker exhibits signs of depression and emotional turmoil following the death of his mother in an explosion at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The film focuses on portraying Theodore's uncontrollable emotions and his struggle to accept his mother's death. "The Starling" centers on a couple, with a primary focus on Lily, who experiences psychological suffering after the death of their baby due to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Lily's unstable emotions lead to an obsession with a starling bird, symbolizing her internal conflict and grief. "Philadelphia" follows the story of Andrew Beckett, a successful lawyer diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, who faces stigma and discrimination after being fired from his law firm. The film highlights Andrew's struggle with anger in society due to societal prejudices and discrimination. All these films showcase characters with unstable emotions, grappling with internal conflicts influenced by external factors or societal expectations. This shared theme of emotional turmoil aligns with the modern tragedy genre, emphasizing the impact of external influences on the characters' internal struggles.

"The Goldfinch" (Crowley, 2019), "The Starling" (Melfi, 2021), and "Philadelphia" (Demme, 1993), alongside my creative work, share a common theme of protagonists undergoing severe psychological distress due to loss and unexpected challenges. The closest individuals in their lives contribute to their struggles, with betrayals, violence, and broken relationships shaping their narratives. While the mentioned movies fall under the drama genre with resolutions emphasizing art, therapy, and fighting stigma, my creative work adopts a tragic genre, portraying the main character's unresolved struggles. A notable difference is the setting, with the movies situated in America's open-minded culture and my creative work unfolding in Indonesia, where discrimination takes on a different form, impacting the protagonist's mental and societal struggles in a unique way.

Premise and Creative Principle

In his 8th semester, a college student named Brad, has to deal with the consequences of his past actions. Not only does he have to suffer for having HIV but also from the discrimination that he gets from his friends and family, and the overthinking that he has to bear in his every day's life about his future. Because of not capable of bearing the large burden, he finally makes a bad decision of not consuming the prescription drugs that he has to consume every day to stay healthy. Until finally, his bad decision leads him to suffer the higher stage of HIV, which is AIDS, and die vainly. Here I want to show the negative effect that a person could bring to another person by showing an act of discrimination and how the inner thoughts actually give a big impact on the person's decision.

Synopsis

Brad is shocked after finding out his serious disease while consulting with the doctor. Since then, He never seems to care about everything that happens around him and always portrays a flat expression wherever he goes. His best friend tries to cheer him up since he does not know what happens to Brad. After several trials of comforting Brad, finally Brad opens up himself to tell his best friend what is going on with him. Unexpectedly, his best friend slowly gets away due to his illness and tells other friends in college, brad's illness. Arriving at home, he decides not to consume the drugs anymore. Could not bear with the pressures, in anger, Brad tells his family about his secret, but his family treats him differently. He locks himself in his

room while remembering the trauma that he had in his childhood, when his parents were divorced. For quite some time, he does not feel any different and tries to live his life as usual, but little did he know, everyone already knows his secret. He gets rejected by his society and even has to resign from his university. His condition is getting worse until one time. he passes out and his family brings him to the doctor. The result is that HIV turns to AIDS. Eventually, he has to accept his fate, and dies due to the illness not long after that.

Characters

Bradford Connor (Brad)

Age: 22 years old (the whole story), 11 and 19 years old (when flashback)

Brad is a final-year student in communication at one of top-rated universities in Indonesia. He is a kind person and smiles a lot, but started to lose his smiles and tends to easily lose focus after having HIV. Brad used to be an extroverted person before he had HIV, but became an introverted person after that. Not only that, Brad becomes defensive and easily to lose temper. He is a talkative person but not like before, because he has a secret that he hides from most people. At that moment, he only has one best friend called Rex. Both of them have been friends for a long time and went to the same university.

Rex (Brad's best friend)

Age: 22 years old.

Same with Brad, Rex is also a final-year student in communication major. He is the type of student who is an all-out person. Different from Brad in terms of personality, Rex is an extroverted guy, he has so many friends. He is a smart but shifty person. He loves to gossip about other people. He gets close to Brad, because Brad is the only person that accepts him for who he is. When Brad's personality suddenly changes due to his illness, Rex tries his best to help Brad. But, after knowing that Brad has HIV, he is shocked and feels disgusted, so he tells his friends secretly that Brad is having HIV.

Bridgitte Connor (Brad's Mom)

Age: 52 years old.

Bridgitte is a single parent. She was actually a kind person, until the marriage didn't end well. She divorced her husband when Brad was 11 years old. Having two children with different types of personality, doing some work to meet all of her family daily needs, makes her easily depressed and the impact is on her changing personality. After knowing that Brad is suffering from HIV, she tries to help Brad but does not know the right way to comfort.

Sulley Connor (Brad's youngest brother)

Age: 13 years old (the whole story), 2 years old (when flashback)

Being the youngest child of Connor's family, Sulley has been favored by his mom ever since he was born. The personality that is shaped in him, is arrogant and selfish. Without father's love, in his early years, he became more like an attention seeker. He always wants all the extra attention just for him.

Reyner (Brad's doctor)

Age: 28 years old

Reyner is a kind doctor. When Brad is in an unstable mental state, he tries to cheer him up. He is the only person that did not judge Brad until a point where Brad opens up everything at him. He is close with Brad and tries his best to make Brad want to live longer.

Conflict

There will be two conflicts that happen in my screenplay. The first one is man vs man which is an external conflict. In this conflict, the main character's goal is obstructed by another character or multiple characters. This conflict can result in either an argument or a physical confrontation. (Herrity, 2022). In this creative work, Brad, as the main character, will have to bear the discrimination act that he gets from his surroundings after knowing his illness. The second one is man vs self which is the internal conflict. It is a struggle between right and wrong or a struggle between opposing wants, needs or expectations. This conflict happens between the main character with their own feelings or have two opposing goals (Herrity, 2022). In this creative work, Brad will also have to struggle within himself, thinking of what he did was wrong and the uncertain future that he will have to face due to his illness. Both conflicts are attached to one another which is why these types of conflicts are suitable for my creative work.

CONCLUSION

This creative work sheds light on the adverse impact of environmental behavior on individuals living with HIV/AIDS, particularly the negative influence leading to psychosocial problems. Psychosocial problems, stemming from external stressors, manifest as negative internal behaviors, such as diminished will to live and self-efficacy, as exemplified by the main character, Brad. Facing rejection from family, friends, and society due to his HIV status, Brad experiences trauma that erodes his self-efficacy and desire to live.

The narrative also emphasizes how psychosocial problems affect the two psychological states of individuals living with HIV/AIDS. In the diagnosis stage, individuals often conceal their illness due to fear of stigma and discrimination. Moving to the acceptance and/or denial stage depends heavily on the supportive behavior from the environment. Brad's journey, from keeping his diagnosis a secret to facing discrimination after revealing it to close contacts, illustrates the critical role of external support in fostering acceptance and mitigating psychosocial challenges for those living with HIV/AIDS.

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