

The Md of Adriel's M(In)D

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ABSTRACT

This creative project is a novel that tells a story about a teenage boy, Adriel, who tries to live of his life on a number of depressing accounts that is happening throughout his life. His father, Julius, has changed Adriel for the worse due to his subconscious abusive actions because he contracts depression himself. Adriel's depression is going to accumulate based on the inferiority complex, excessive guilt, and other instances he experience along the way. Adriel then meets a girl named Olivia. Olivia is a cheerful, seemingly smart girl on the outside, but Adriel realizes that she is just the same as he is. My purpose of writing this novel are to raise the ever-growing prevalent issue on suicidal depression in our society; to understand why and how someone might feel depressed; and, for people to know the underlying symptoms, so they are not letting it go unnoticed.

Key words: Depression, psychological drama, romance, guilt, suicide

INTRODUCTION

There are a number of forms of creative writing besides a novel, poetry, screenplay and short story are just several of many. However, writing a novel contains a much greater opportunity for self-expression than the other works. The privilege and full control of creating and describing everything that appears in the novel, from the most general to the most specific things, are all in the palms of the novel writers' hands and mind. This does not only generate a spike of creativity for the writer, but for the readers who can imagine the characters and the world contained within as well. Thus, when I see a more advantageous opportunity to express myself more through the story, play with words and see how impactful it is to people, as an avid reader of novels myself, I chose to write a novel for my final project.

In life, we, as humans, can never be free from having to think and be worried. To which, sometimes, these prolonged thoughts and anxieties might lead us to overthink things and, thus, led us to have insecurities and anxieties for ourselves. Having to suffer loss, grief, anger, and confusion are a normal response when anxiety is endured for too long. For all of us, that anxiety can manifest into a temporary depression that could go away. While, for some, it can be an episodic depression that sticks to our minds. Depression is not about the person necessarily, it can also be about the circumstances. Sometimes, it is the circumstances plus the perception of people which brings depression into play. Not everyone undergoes the same circumstances causing depression, and not everyone's perceptions about the world is extreme in a way that can lead to depression. Not speaking of these subjects allows your doubts and insecurities to remain untested; to remain insecurities and doubts that add to the stress of life. Like many small waves join up to make a storm surge, the symptoms of depression join up to create a life crisis that we commonly known for as depression.

While being depressed is not a new topic that we know of, not many people know the harsh truth of having to get over depression itself. For a start, the total number of people living with depression in the world is 322 million; 4,4% of the world's population to be exact. Out of those numbers, 800.000 people died each year because of depression (WHO, 2017). Other studies show that half of the people who suffers mental illness start from the young age of 14 (WHO, 2014). Teenagers who undergoes episodic or major depression will hinder until old age if not treated right. The symptoms of major depression can affect a person's ability to work, sleep, learn, eat and enjoy

fun activities overall (National Institute Mental Health, 2011). The effects of depression are so infective, it starts to be seen as a serious threat for productivity. A survey done in America found that the loss that the human resources domain must accounted for reaches \$36 million each year because of the major depressive disorder that the workers suffer (Ridlo, 2017).

Unfortunately, until now, mental illness is still being viewed and categorized as a low priority issue in most developed countries. The benefits of awareness campaigns and public education about mental health are widely accepted; however, implementation has been neglected in several countries, including Indonesia who has around 230 million people and known as the fourth most populated country in the world. Ministry of Health once had opened a consulting service over the phone regarding depression in 2010 named *Jangan Bunuh Diri!* (Don't Commit Suicide!). However, the service has no longer put into action. One of the main reasons why the service does not function anymore is on the lack of callers who actually call as well as the lack of human resources working on the behalf of providing the service. The other reason is that there is a lack of socializing in-between the participant and the people who struggled; because they have the trouble to open up to talk about it as well (Vice, 2017).

Moreover, the policy of mental illness Indonesia is in are neither preventive, promotive nor rehabilitative, but more so relying on the quantitative aspect. In 2016, the government only gave an allocation of 5% from the state budget for health development in Indonesia. Yet, specifically, the budget for mental illness is 1% of its annual budget on health provided (Ridlo, 2017). The harsh reality and stigma of mental illness and mental health illiteracy in general are still an underrated topic in today's society. The negative perception and lack of understanding of clinical depression prevents millions of people from seeking appropriate and on-time medical help, leading to distress and increased burden, as well as increased morbidity and mortality for affected people and their families (Alamanzar et al., 2014).

A question then appear in my mind: why did the stigma around mental illness appear in the first place? According to a study conducted by Patrick Corrigan and Amy Watson, psychiatrists of University of Chicago Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation and Chicago Consortium for Stigma Research, there are 2 different point of views that affects the perception on mental illness; public and self. Public stigma is the reaction that the general population has to people with mental illness. Self-stigma is the prejudice which people with mental illness turn against themselves. Both public and self-stigma may be understood in terms of three components: stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. In contrast to stereotypes, which are beliefs, prejudicial attitudes involve an evaluative (generally negative) component. Prejudice also yields emotional responses (e.g., anger or fear) to stigmatized groups. Prejudice, which is fundamentally a cognitive and affective response, then leads to discrimination, the behavioral reaction (Corrigan & Watson, 2002). This shows that no matter how terrible the people who suffers mental illness is, they can never get away from the stigma that constantly appear; either from the others or self. It is only a matter of time for us to open ourselves for others in need, make interpersonal contact, and diminish the belief of negative views surrounding mental illness.

However, in the midst of having to understand depression, I want to spark a love interest between the person who suffers depression and the person who suffers anxiety in my story. It is a starting point of a romance inside the novel, which hopefully could increase the reader's interest and soften the flow of the story that is heavily-induced on depression.

In this creative work, I would like to explore the problems of how depression can affect the cognitive behaviors, thoughts, and actions of a person, why suicidal thoughts appear and how impactful love has in coping depression.

The purpose of this creative work is to raise the issue regarding depression that could make the people or someone dearest to us suffer mentally and physically. However, the more specific purposes I want to show through this novel are the problems caused by the naïve-minded personality and superficial mindset about the outside world, the amount of pressure and stress that is built up within the mind, and the way love helped him gain positive mental attitude to be able to cope with depression.

To develop the characteristics of the characters, I used four theories that will explain the behavior of the characters in my creative work, which are the psychodynamic approach by Sigmund Freud to build the main characters personalities; Negative self-schema by Beck to internalize the

feeling of helplessness of the main character; Suicidal behavior to explain why and how the main characters decided to commit suicide in the first place; and, finally, Attachment theory of love by Bowlby to exhibit the significance of love as well as care-giving on psychological well-being.

Firstly, the psychodynamic approach includes all the theories in psychology that see human functioning based upon the interaction of drives and forces within the person, particularly unconscious, and between the different structures of the personality. Freud modified his theory stating that the tendency to internalize loss objects is normal, and that depression is simply due to an excessively severe super-ego. Freud distinguished between actual losses (e.g. death of a loved one) and symbolic losses (e.g. loss of a job). Both kinds of losses can produce depression by causing the individual to re-experience childhood episodes when they experienced loss of affection from some significant person (e.g. a parent).

This states that events in our childhood have a great influence on our adult lives, shaping our personality—whether it is good or bad. Events that occur in childhood can remain in the unconscious, and cause problems later in life. Thus, the depressive phase occurs when the individual's super-ego or conscience is dominant. The superego consists of two systems: The conscience and the ideal self. The conscience can punish the ego through causing feelings of guilt. For example, if the ego gives in to the id's demands, the superego may make the person feel bad through guilt. The ideal self is an imaginary picture of how you ought to be, and represents career aspirations, how to treat other people, and how to behave as a member of society (McLeod, 2016).

The second theory is negative self-schema. Various symptoms from low self-esteem, low mood, guilt-ridden, no motivation in things, and even reoccurring thoughts of suicide are just several of the psychological and behavioral symptoms listed (NHS, 2016). Some kind of stressful life event is required to activate this negative schema later in life. Once the negative schema is activated a number of illogical thoughts or cognitive biases seem to dominate thinking. People with negative self-schemas become prone to making logical errors in their thinking and they tend to focus selectively on certain aspects of a situation while ignoring equally relevant information (McLeod, 2005).

Beck identified a number of systematic negative bias in information processing known as logical errors or faulty thinking. These illogical thought patterns are self-defeating, and can cause great anxiety or depression for the individual. For example, the thoughts of self-schematic includes, arbitrary inference, selective abstraction, magnification, personalization, and dichotomous thinking. Beck believed these thoughts or this way of thinking become automatic. When a person's stream of automatic thoughts is very negative, it is expected for the person to be depressed. They interfere with normal cognitive processing, leading to impairments in perception, memory and problem solving as the person becomes obsessed with negative thoughts.

Thirdly, is suicidal behavior; anybody who expresses suicidal thoughts or intentions should be taken very seriously. Suicide is a potentially preventable public health problem. Over 90% of people who die by suicide have clinical depression or another diagnosable mental disorder (WebMD, n.d.). Carl Jung, a famous psychiatrist, have said that depression literally means "being forced downwards" (Smith, 2014). People feeling suicidal are overwhelmed by painful emotions and see death as the only way out, losing sight of the fact that suicide is a permanent "solution" to a temporary state—most people who try to kill themselves but live later say they are glad they didn't die. Suicidal thoughts may be fleeting or more frequent, passive (e.g., "What if I were dead?") or active (e.g., thinking of ways to kill oneself, making a plan).

The relation between self-injury and suicide sometimes appear out of nowhere for overly depressed people. Dealing with emotional pain by cutting, burning, sticking objects in your skin, or intentionally preventing wounds from healing increases your capacity to kill yourself (Kashdan, 2014). To distract, punish, feel, express, and experience pain are the main reasons why people are motivated to self-injure themselves (Dombeck, 2008).

The fourth and final theory is attachment theory of love by John Bowlby. According to the theory, people become attached to certain trusted individuals, usually parents, and tend to seek proximity with them. The quality of attachment has a critical effect on development of a person as a human being, and has been linked to various aspects of positive functioning, such as psychological well-being (Cherry, 2018). From there, another research regarding attachment styles and how they are related to depression have shown to have lead into higher depression levels (Hill & Flanagan,

2015). To explain further, a person with an anxious attachment style longs for physical and emotional intimacy in order to avoid having to think about their own problems. Although the word ‘anxious’ might be linked to a bad connotation, it does not always is in this context. For the people who has this type of attachment, it is central to a positive connection, and they likely give up their needs to accommodate their partner’s in order to achieve intimacy. Insecure attachment is enlivening and familiar, and it completely fits the romantic script in place. Avoidant individuals, by contrast, often do not have the capacity for caregiving. Nor do they show any interest in caregiving. Anxiously attached individuals score much higher on the caregiving components. They are either compulsive care-seekers or compulsive caregivers or both (Ruth, n.d.).

Nevertheless, it provides more reason for anxiously attached people to care and long for each other’s presence and comfort. While, attachment itself is typically viewed as distinct from love, it has been argued that love is best understood in terms of feelings of attachment or dispositions to have those feelings (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Attachment, of course, cannot by itself constitute passionate love. Love understood partially in terms of feelings of attachment has an advantage over numerous other approaches to love. The attachment-theoretical framework forms a unified ‘framework for understanding love, loneliness, and grief at different points in the life cycle’ (ibid).

In developing my creative work, I have done some researches which result in primary and secondary data. I obtained the primary data through location scouting and an informal interview with a psychologist on how people, especially teenagers, deal with depression. For my secondary data, I have watched movies, as well as their novel counterparts, which discusses the different kinds and causes of depression—that also belongs to both psychological and romance genre. I also read psychological journals and online articles to enrich my research.

CONCEPT OF CREATIVE WORK

The genre of my creative work would be the combination of psychological drama and romance. The reason I chose both of those genres is because I want to include a love story to soften the flow of thought-provoking plot, so not only is it about boy meets girl cliché romance, but there are darker story with elements of suspense within.

Firstly, psychological drama is a sub-genre of psychological thriller in which the main characters are dealing with mentally challenging issues as opposed to something physical. The protagonist may have experienced his own struggles with his surroundings, and these struggles are what drives the main character out of comfort; to feel anxious or depressed. The elements of psychological drama include believable characters, the world as we know it, internal conflicts, highly character-driven story, and solution comes from the protagonist (Leblanc, 2012).

Secondly, the genre of romance makes a way, revelation, for the main character’s psychotic and depressing condition. Romance novels should have a central love story where it explores the story of individuals who fall in love and their struggles to make the relationship work. It also should have an emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending, where their struggles and the risks that they take are rewarded with emotional justice and unconditional love (rwa.org). Even though these two genres do not complement one another, they could connect with each other by the means of both impacting the world that revolves within the story and the characteristics of the characters themselves on their actions, thoughts and reactions as the story goes.

This novel is intended for teenagers and young adult readers alike due to how deep the concept of depression the characters are experiencing. As well as the fact that the novel consists with day-to-day basis of a high schooler who needs a moment to understand how the world works and himself as a part of it. This novel is also for, but not limited to, people whose second language is English, and for those who like to read romance with a twist.

Regarding the narration, I was inspired by the main character of *A Silent Voice* (Japanese: *Koe no Katachi*) named Shouya Ishida (Oima, 2016). Although by the end of it he was able to achieve breakthrough, before that, it was revealed that he has suicidal thoughts; which it is an issue of mental illness (*Odyssey*, 2017). In the middle part, he actually experienced the causality of depression which are stated by Paul Hauck. First, he initiates self-blame which makes him lacks of confidence, then, pity on his friends came to further deepen his personality and characterization on having depression. It then shaped his view and personality into having inferiority complex. This character actually inspires me to make a story in a similar fashion.

Adding the point of other external conflicts would make the main character's problems vary, from dealing with anxiety within high school, his surroundings and especially, dealing with his father. In my creative work, the events in which the main character will experience of will be the combination of the personal events and the inner conflict of the mind. At first, the personal events will develop the baseline of the main character's conflict of depression; which then builds up due to the inner conflict of what the boy constantly experiences. The problem does not stop there, the boy will experience a psychologically-inducing drama where not only personal events shape him the way he is, but also from the environmental effects as well.

The style of writing that I would use are, primarily, first point of view inter-connecting with multiple third point of view. This style of writing is often called as POV mixing, in which the creative work contains different point of view of the characters to make the story feel complete and understood by the readers (Plot to Punctuation, 2017). I want my readers to understand depression on a personal and intimate level, as well as the behavior, from the perspective of the characters used in the novel will be understood more by the readers of the same age and older even. Thus, it is easier to gain empathy since the audience spends their time within the different and variable characters' positions plays out in the story.

The theme that I bring up in this creative work is 'depression is a battlefield'; which means that depression is a battle someone has to fight with both internally and externally. Because my main characters grow up with depression, they start to appear to figure out the true impact and meaning that happens in their mind and thoughts. Whereas, they quickly view and draw a conclusion for themselves as the ones at fault, whereas, in fact, it is not. The same 'battle' can be seen with the other supporting characters' view on depression. They either do not recognize or simply do not pay attention enough; flat out denying the stigmatized idea that is of a mental illness. As a result, one of the main characters succumbs to the defeat of depression and of himself. However, the other characters will learn to get through all that, and the readers can clearly see their hardships and efforts in overcoming it.

SYNOPSIS

The story begins when Adriel, a child of Julius who was born within a rich society, takes a turn for the worst when his family got tested to overcome their financial crisis. Even when both of his parents were absent for most of the time, Adriel loves and admires them from afar; despite not knowing much of their personality. Long story short, Adriel and his parents are forced to make a move and live to a rural town after what happened. Because of that, Adriel's mother dislike the current situation and decided to left the family; rendering Julius to be emotionally unstable and therefore abuses Adriel. Upon moving and entering highschool, Adriel becomes depressed with how things are going out for him—and that is when he accidentally meets Bryan when he is being bullied. Adriel soon realizes that having a new friend like Bryan be proven difficult when a striking classroom situation involving money would make their relationship difficult to restore. Whilst Adriel tries to make things right, to no avail, Bryan refuses to. In the coming year, Adriel then meets a girl by the name of Olivia—who knew what happened inbetween him and Bryan. Adriel also found out later that Olivia has her own struggles with Jonathan, a bully and Olivia's 'boyfriend'. Olivia and Bryan begin to secretly get along as they start to help and learn each other about their own problems. As everything seemed to have been going perfectly for Adriel, it is not for Julius. One day Julius commits suicide out of nowhere leaving Adriel's to be affected by his death the most. Adriel could not take it anymore and made guilt & remorse to have consumed his mind—and eventually decide to end his own life.

CONCLUSION

There are a lot of things that I've learned throughout the process of planning and developing of the writing process of this novel. The first part, that I think is crucial to all writers, is about the theme and plot. The second is regarding characters and characteristics portrayed in the novel. I have difficulties in adding and subtracting the amount of characters needed as I write the first few chapters. The third is about the length of the story. When I first come up with the idea, I figure out that it would be easier for me to write 30 chapters with 5 pages each. But, that notion is proven to be difficult to do; because it hinders with the flow and continuation of the story. I had difficulty in adding the details

of the characteristic, the precise actions, expressions and movements; which are severely lacking. The fourth aspect is about timing. I think that this is the biggest issue I have yet to conquer. The fifth and final lesson I have learned is perseverance. There are some moments where I want to give up or think negatively about the outcome or the result. By the end, fortunately, I was able to finish the project.

If it is possible, I would like for this creative project to be novelized somewhere in the near future. It is one of my dream to have my own work to be published and to have an impact for the society of readers or to someone simply eager trying to understand depression. As for myself, I would want to write literature, possibly other than the types of novel. I have written screenplays, script plays, visual novels, and now, a novel. Writing a novel is one of the bucket list of things that I have, which I have done for as of now. I do however, would like to work as a freelancer and specializing as a writer, if I am to have the possibility, the opportunity and the time in the forthcoming future.

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