

Anxiety Disorder: Inconsistency and Agitation in Yrsa Sigurdardottir's Novel "Why Did You Lie?"

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Abstract

This study entitled "Anxiety Disorder : Inconsistency and Agitation in Yrsa Sigurdardottir's Why Did You Lie? (2016)" was conducted to study further based on the perspective of the main character in Why Did You Lie? in fighting Anxiety disorder that he experienced throughout his daily life. The aim of this study is to analyze the issue of anxiety disorder on the object of the study Yrsa Sigurdardottir's Why Did You Lie? (2016). This study focuses on explaining the portrayals of anxiety disorder in the main character. This study applies the theory of anxiety disorder by Sigmund Freud from his book entitled: Introduction to Psychoanalysis (1917). This study was conducted using the qualitative method by Creswell (1994). The result display that anxiety disorder in forms of thought and action and how the main character deals with the anxiety. This is a part of the analysis that appear in this study. The results of this study show how the main character depicted Anxiety Disorder through actions and thought.

Keywords: *anxiety disorder, inconsistency, agitation, psychoanalysis*

A. Introduction

This day, people of all ages have a better awareness of psychology issues, commonly referred to as mental health concerns. In Indonesia, data shows that more than two million four hundred and fifty thousand individuals have mental illnesses, including anxiety disorders (Wahdi, 2022).

Anxiety, or an anxiety disorder, is a feeling of fear that something bad will happen, often disrupting daily life and emotional well-being. It manifests in disturbances of mood, thinking patterns, behavior, and psychological activity. Anxiety disorders encompass various conditions such as generalized anxiety disorder, specific phobias, social phobia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, acute stress disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Clark & Beck, 2010, p. 6-7).

Pennix et al. (2021, p. 914) define anxiety disorders as the most common group of mental disorders, typically beginning before or in early adulthood. Core features include excessive fear, anxiety, or avoidance of perceived threats that persist and impair functioning. Anxiety disorders involve dysfunction in brain circuits that respond to danger and are influenced by genetic, environmental, and epigenetic factors, often co-occurring with other mental and somatic disorders.

Clark & Beck (2010, p. 6-7) outline five criteria to distinguish abnormal states of fear and anxiety from normal anxiety states, including dysfunctional cognition, impaired functioning, persistence, false alarms, and stimulus hypersensitivity.

In another study, Lang & McTeague (2009, p. 5) highlight fear potentiation in specific or social phobia individuals, further exaggerated when viewing or imagining phobic objects. However, fear imagery studies with more severe anxiety disorder patients show a blunted fear response, suggesting compromised defensive reactivity due to long-term stress.

Building on the definition of anxiety disorder, this study analyzes Yrsa Sigurdardottir's *Why Did You Lie?*, a novel with rich psychological conflicts among its characters, particularly the main character. Published in 2013, *Why Did You Lie?* reflects various psychological issues encountered in real life, making it a fitting subject for analysis in this article.

B. Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method to analyze anxiety disorders in the novel *Why Did You Lie?* According to Richards (2015, p. 28), qualitative methods seek to understand individuals or a small number of cases through direct observation and approach, aiming to produce new understanding rather than testing existing theories. Kothari (2004, p. 3) further asserts the significance of qualitative research in behavioral science, aiming to uncover the motives behind human behavior and analyze factors influencing specific behaviors or preferences. The data for this study were sourced from Yrsa Sigurdardottir's *Why Did You Lie?*, translated into English in 2016 and published by Hachette UK in Great Britain. The novel, spanning 394 pages divided into 34 chapters, received the Petrona Award in 2015. Data collection involved several steps: selecting the novel as the object of analysis, reading it repeatedly, identifying and marking quotations related to the issue, and classifying the data based on the identified issue. In analyzing anxiety disorders in *Why Did You Lie?*, the data were described using a qualitative descriptive method. They were then analyzed by segmenting them and relating them to Sigmund Freud's (1917) theory, followed by an explanation of anxiety disorders and their impacts in essay form.

C. Findings and Discussion

This chapter explores the manifestation of anxiety in *Why Did You Lie?* by Yrsa Sigurdardottir. The first section delineates how anxiety arises in thoughts and actions, while the subsequent section delves into the main character's coping mechanisms for anxiety disorder in both cognition and behavior. For this study, the author relies on the novel and quotations extracted from its text.

1. Anxiety Depicted in the Main Character of *Why Did You Lie?*

Anxiety, first and foremost, entails an unconscious fear of impending events or circumstances, as distinguished by Sigmund Freud (1917) from objective fears directed toward specific objects.

1.1 Anxiety in Forms of Thought

Anxiety disorders are depicted in the main character through their internal monologues, dialogues, and narrative expressions. The following segment elucidates anxiety as manifested in thought processes, supported by textual evidence.

In one instance, the protagonist, Helgi, exhibits anxiety while stranded in a lighthouse, anticipating rescue at daybreak. This uncertainty is captured in the line, "they're going to be rescued at daybreak - if that ever comes" (Sigurdardottir, 2013, p. 277). Here, Helgi's pessimism reflects his apprehension about their situation, indicative of overthinking future outcomes.

Similarly, Helgi displays anxiety while stargazing with another character, expressing a desire to escape their predicament, fearing the development of claustrophobia. He articulates, "I just hope I don't develop claustrophobia as a result of this miserable experience" (Sigurdardottir, 2013, p. 279), underscoring his unease regarding potential psychological ramifications.

1.2 Anxiety in Forms of Action

Anxiety disorder also manifests through Helgi's actions, often stemming from his cognitive processes. Notably, his behavior reflects attempts to mitigate perceived threats or uncertainties.

When Helgi and companions panic over a missing member, he urges calmness while concealing his own trepidation. The text notes, "We must stay calm.' Helgi tries to mask his own fear" (Sigurdardottir, 2013, p. 143), revealing his internal struggle to maintain composure amidst turmoil.

Furthermore, Helgi's anxiety influences his dietary habits, as he deliberately consumes less food to avoid scrutiny. He ruminates, "He was careful to eat less than the others, conscious that if they run short of food, they're bound to look at him, the fat man, and wonder if he took more than his share" (Sigurdardottir, 2013, p. 57), illustrating his concern over social judgment and preserving a favorable image.

2. Main Character Dealing with Anxiety

Helgi's coping mechanisms for anxiety encompass both cognitive strategies and behavioral responses, indicative of his efforts to navigate internal turmoil and external stressors.

2.1 Dealing with Thoughts

Helgi confronts his anxious thoughts by engaging in purposeful activities, such as photography, to distract himself from impending dangers. Through the lens, he

gains a sense of control over his surroundings, as depicted in the passage, "Now he can see only what he chooses to frame. His anxiety forgotten, Helgi deftly focuses" (Sigurdardottir, 2013, p. 7-8), underscoring his deliberate shift in focus to regain a sense of agency.

Additionally, Helgi abstains from probing uncomfortable questions, recognizing their potential to exacerbate anxiety. He refrains from inquiring further, recognizing, "He doesn't want to hear the answer" (Sigurdardottir, 2013, p. 138), thereby minimizing emotional distress and preserving psychological well-being.

2.2 Dealing with Actions

In addressing his anxiety through actions, Helgi employs adaptive behaviors to manage perceived threats or vulnerabilities. For instance, he encourages collective calmness during crises, masking his own apprehension to reassure others and instill a sense of control.

Furthermore, Helgi regulates his food intake to alleviate fears of social judgment, opting for moderation to avert potential scrutiny. By consciously moderating his consumption, he mitigates anxiety-inducing scenarios and maintains a semblance of control over his environment.

In summary, Helgi's portrayal in *Why Did You Lie?* elucidates the multifaceted nature of anxiety, highlighting its interplay with cognition, behavior, and coping mechanisms amidst challenging circumstances.

D. Conclusion

After conducting the previous analysis, it can be concluded that "Why Did You Lie?" portrays anxiety disorder in its characters, including Nina, Thorbjorg, Heigi, and Helgi. The novel illustrates how these characters manifest anxiety through their actions, words, and decisions. The data findings and analysis reveal that characters exhibit anxiety disorder through internalized thoughts, expressions, and actions aimed at alleviating their anxiety. Additionally, the antagonist also displays symptoms of anxiety disorder through his behavior, thoughts, words, and expressions. This study's analysis concludes that anxiety disorder is prevalent throughout the novel. Furthermore, the study focuses on describing the characteristics of anxiety disorder and explores how cultural and social factors influence its manifestation. Characters such as Thorbjorg, Nina, Heida, and Helgi exemplify how anxiety impacts their traits within the narrative. Moreover, the social environment plays a significant role in exacerbating and perpetuating their anxiety.

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