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**ASSISTED SUICIDE IN JOJO MOYES' *ME BEFORE YOU***

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**ABSTRACT**

This research aims to analyze Assisted Suicide that is portrayed in a novel entitled *Me Before You* by Jojo Moyes. It tells about the male main character, Traynor, who chooses to end his life through assisted suicide because he is paralyzed as a result of a motorcycle accident. There are two questions to discuss in this research; the causes of assisted suicide and the causes of objectification. This research uses existentialism theory by Jean-Paul Sartre. There are some concepts of theory i.e Freedom, The look, and The body that help this research to describe the causes of assisted suicide and the causes of objectification. The research method used by the writer was the qualitative research method. The result of this research showed that the cause of assisted suicide is the excessive freedom to choose to be free from physical pain and emotional pain. Then, the cause of objectification is the existence of the Other, such as The Look and The body that affect Traynor's existence when people around him try to change his mind not to commit suicide.

Keywords: Assisted Suicide, Existentialism, Freedom, The Look, The Body

**I. Introduction**

In this life, many people are suffering physically and mentally because of disease or accident. When there is no improvement for their health, some of these people wish to die peacefully and painlessly with the help of a doctor. In other words, they commit assisted suicide. Assisted Suicide is the practice of

intentionally ending a life to relieve pain and suffering. It is also a type of euthanasia, that is voluntary active euthanasia. According to Nordqvist (2018), assisted suicide means intentionally helping a person commit suicide by providing drugs for self-administration, at that person's voluntary and competent request to relieve

intractable (persistent, unstoppable) suffering. As described, the patient himself wishes to end his own life.

According to Oshman (2018), there are many causes of assisted suicide. The causes, which are physical and emotional pain, is too much to bear. The sufferer thinks he or she is a burden, feels useless, and afraid of a very painful death.

The situation of assisted suicide also happens in the novel *Me Before You* which was written by Jojo Moyes in 2012. It tells about a man who suffers because of a motorcycle accident and a girl who wants to show him the meaning of life. Will Traynor feels like his life is meaningless and hates his life. He feels like this condition is not the life that he must be living, that is why he decides to end his life through Dignitas - an assisted suicide organization in Switzerland.

This novel becomes a material object because it shows a social phenomenon happening in this world, assisted suicide. It becomes a very sensitive issue to discuss nowadays. The novel *Me Before You* was analyzed by using Existentialism theory by Jean-Paul Sartre with freedom and the look, the body, and bad faith concepts. By using the concepts, this study is entitled *Assisted Suicide in Jojo Moyes' Me Before You*.

## **II. Review of Related Literature**

### **2.1 Existentialism Theory by Jean-Paul Sartre.**

Existentialism is a philosophy that emphasizes human existence. It focuses on the view that every human can control their own life and give the meaning of their life too. Thus, existence is a term that can be used to reveal that every human being has the right to determine their way of life and make their own decisions for life. Sartre (2002) in *Existentialism and Humanism*, defined that existentialism is a study and a paradigm that believes that 'existence precedes the essence'. It means that man exists first and then determines his nature through his choices. There are many concepts in Existentialism theory by Sartre

#### **2.1.1 Freedom**

Every human has freedom. Sartre (2002) affirms that man is non-existent, initially, or nonstandard, not open, just being 'something' through a process of free choice; self-definition as self-transcending, self-conscious, temporal project and process. He also stated that existence precedes essence, man defines his existence by himself, but the essence of him is given by the others. It means that man responsible for his life, whether his existence and what meaning he gives for his existence. Sartre (2002) said that there is no determinism-man is free, man is

freedom. Every man carries the weight of the world on his shoulder, and he is responsible for his world and himself. It can be defined that freedom is an absolute thing. Moreover, he explained that man cannot ask God for responsibility because God does not involved with human decisions.

### **2.1.2 The Other and The Look**

The experience of the Other ( written with a capital “O”) is the experience of another free subject who inhabits the same world as a person does. In its most basic form, it is this experience of the Other that constitutes intersubjectivity and objectivity. To clarify, when one experiences someone else, and this Other person experiences the world (the same world that a person experiences)—only from "over there"—the world itself is constituted as the objective in that it is something that is "there" as identical for both of the subjects; a person experiences the other person as experiencing the same things. As such, when one experiences oneself in the Look, one does not experience oneself as anything (nothing), but as something. The other which previously as the object then becomes subject and turns a man into the object, it can be defined as objectivity.

## **III. Research Method**

The type of this research was qualitative research. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research uses text and image data, certain steps in data analysis, and draws on diverse strategies of inquiry. For the primary data, the writer used the novel by Jojo Moyes entitle *Me Before You*. The secondary data sources are from several books, journals, and articles on the internet. The writer also used a philosophical approach in formulating the problems because it studies logical thinking. This approach tries to find the truth by understanding the relationship between awareness of the world and the world as material awareness. It tends to observe the existence of a human being. In this research, the writer applied Existentialism theory to answer the research questions and to analyze quotations based on the concepts of it.

## **IV. Findings**

This chapter aims to answer the research questions regarding the causes of assisted suicide and the causes of objectivity. The answers are developed into two sub-chapters supported by relevant quotations taken from the novel *Me Before You* by Jojo Moyes. The first sub-chapter discusses the causes of assisted suicide shown in the novel *Me Before You*. The reasons are to be free

from physical pain and emotional pain. The second sub-chapter will discuss the causes of objectivity. The causes are the Look and the Body

#### **4.1 The Causes of Assisted Suicide**

In some cases, assisted suicide becomes the last choice to solve the problem if someone cannot handle their suffering because of illness.

In this novel, the character Taynor commits assisted suicide because he has the freedom to determine what the best in his life. He commits suicide because he wants to be free from all the pain he suffers as a result of the accident.

##### **4.1.1 Excessive Freedom to be Free from Physical Pain**

Physical pain is what most people refer to when they feel something hurts their body and is associated with damage to tissues of their body. Physical pain can be caused by many things and can be described as throbbing, aching, or burning. In this research, Taynor has physical pain because of the accident that happened to him and it makes him want to be free from it. Sartre (in Macomber, 2007) said that man is free; man is freedom because man is left alone and without excuse. Man is free doing whatever they want to do with the responsibility to accept the consequence for everything they do. In this novel, he uses his freedom to make a choice. He chooses to end his life through

assisted suicide as a way to free himself from the physical pain he can not bear. It can be seen through the quotation below:

“ – I need to end here, no more chair. No more pneumonia. No more burning limbs. No more pain and tiredness and waking up every morning already wishing it was over.”  
(Moyes, 2012, p.228)

The quotation above shows that he choose to end his life. The sentence *I need to end here* proves that he wants to end his life because he cannot handle the pain that hurt him. It is also happening in most people in this life when they cannot bear the physical pain. They are frustrated because of the pain and choose to end it in their way that they think is the best. Also, the phrase *No more pain and tiredness and waking up every morning already wishing it was over* proves that the pain that is killing him makes him tired and wants to give up and he does not want to be in pain and this case, Traynor’s way to end the pain is to end his life.

##### **4.1.2 Excessive Freedom to be Free from Emotional Pain**

The second reason why people do assist suicide is the desire to be free from emotional pain. Emotional pain can be seen through feelings like sadness, guilt, shame, or fear. In this research, the emotional pain that Taynor feels makes him commit suicide. He chooses assisted

suicide because he has the freedom to do that. It is also stated by Sartre (in Macomber, 2007: 22) that “man is condemned to be free”. He said freedom is an act of choice and humans are free to make a choice. Human determine decisions indicate that they have freedom. Freedom would have meaning if the human has capable to choose the best choice for them in finding the meaning of life.

In this novel, Traynor also wants to be free from the emotional pain that he feels and chooses to isolate himself. It is because he has emotional pain that is sadness. He does not want to go outside to enjoy a better situation for him. He thinks that there are no such things that can change his life better. He also feels sad that he can not be like other normal people. That is why he isolates himself at home and does not want to go outside. It is seen from the quotation below:

“Are you telling me I should go out?” “I just thought –”  
“You thought a little drive would be good for me? A breath of fresh air?” “I’m just trying to –” “Miss Clark, my life is not going to be significantly improved by a drive around Stortfold’s country lanes.” He turned away. (Moyes, 2012, p.33)

The quotation above shows that he isolates himself at home. The sentence “*You thought a little drive would be good*

*for me? A breath of fresh air?”* proves that he keeps thinking that going outside will not makes any improvement for his condition, instead, it just makes him worse because he will see so many normal people walking with their busy things, something that he ever did in the past, something that he will not get it back. Also the sentence *my life is not going to be significantly improved by a drive around Stortfold’s country lanes* Proves that his sadness that he believes there is nothing better he can do in life to improve his life. Normal people are always looking for fun activities when they get problems, but not to him. He does not want to go outside since the accident. He chooses to stay in his room, rather than healing his feeling by going somewhere that probably can make him run away a little bit from his sadness.

#### **4.2 The Causes of Objectification**

Objectification is a condition when a person becomes objectified by the existence of others. It is the relationship between one and others as a conflict where one tries to precede the others. The connection between one and another is a relation between subject to object. In this novel, Traynor is objectified by the others when they try to change his mind not to commit suicide. Therefore, the factors that make his subjectivity disappear are The look and The Body.

### 4.2.1 The Look

The look is one of the characteristics of the existence of a human being. The look is essentially one seeing himself as he thinks the other sees him, through his eyes. Sartre (1943) stated that to be looked at is to apprehend by oneself as the unknown object of unknowable appraisals—in particular, of value judgments. The look creates perspective and assumptions that develop the point of view toward someone as an object. If the object is aware that he is being observed, he will be contaminated and lost his subjectivity. In this novel, Clark tries to show him that he must survive his life. She helps him to do activities such as walking around the house. However, Traynor denies it because he has negative thinking to other people. He thinks that people look at him as something that does not deserve in this world. It is seen through the quotation below:

‘Go on. Open your mind.’  
‘No.’ ‘Why?’ ‘Because I’d be uncomfortable. I feel like ... I feel like they’d know.’  
‘Who? Know what?’  
‘Everyone else would know, that I didn’t belong.’ ‘How do you think I feel?’ We looked at each other. ‘Clark, every single place I go to now people look at me like I don’t belong. (Moyes, 2012, p.115)

From the quotation above it can be seen that he assumed that people negatively. He thinks that people who see himself underrate him. The sentence *every single place I go to now people look at me like I don’t belong* proves that the assumptions of people through him. He feels that people around him see him as inferior, but it is only his feeling, not what happened in real. It shows that he is contaminated, and objectified by others. The sentence ‘*How do you think I feel?*’ prove that Clark does not feel like Traynor said, it is only Traynor sees himself as inferior and thinks people also see himself like that. It becomes the reason he does not want to go outside to make him feel better.

### 4.2.2 The Body

Another human existence that is affected by the existence of the other is the body. The body means a person who acts as a subject to control someone's body or life and places them as an object. As Sartre (1943) stated that he tried to unite his consciousness not with his body but with the body of Others. The body which he has just described is not his body. It indicates that the body is controlled by the Other and makes it an instrumental thing. The original relations with the Other make my being an object of the Other and it becomes subjectivity. In this novel, Traynor lost his subjectivity because everyone decided to control him.

They decided everything for his life and his body without asking first his opinion. It makes him become objectified by the presence of the others. It is seen through the quotation below:

If you'd bothered to ask me, Clark. If you'd bothered to consult me just once about this so-called fun outing of ours, I could have told you. I hate horses, and horse racing. Always have. But you didn't bother to ask me. You decided what you thought you'd like me to do, and you went ahead and did it. You did what everyone else did. You decided to me.'(Moyes, 2012, p.112)

From the quotation above it can be seen that everyone decided to control him. The sentence *You decided what you thought you'd like me to do, and you went ahead and did it* proves that people around him did not ask what Traynor was supposed to do and directly do it. Also the sentence *You did what everyone else did* proves that Clark controls him, she wants to change Traynor's mind but she has a wrong way to help him. However, Traynor does not like the way they choose his life. It makes him have no control over his own life and does not want to cancel his decision to suicide. Besides, they might change his mind if they ask what he wants in his life but they do not.

## V. Conclusions

There are causes of assisted suicide and the causes of objectification as reflected in *Me Before You's* character. The causes of assisted suicide are because he wants to free from physical pain and emotional pain. Therefore, to be free from physical pain he uses his freedom to choose by choosing to end his life through assisted suicide. To be free from the emotional pain he chooses to isolate himself. Therefore, for the causes of objectivity, two factors make Traynor objectified, *The Look* and *The Body*. He becomes objectified by the others when they try to change his mind not to commit suicide. In *The Look*, Traynor has negative thinking to others. In *The Body*, the reason people fail to change his mind is that because everyone decides to control them.

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