

IDENTITY CRISIS IN PAUL KALANITHI'S NOVEL *WHEN BREATH BECOMES AIR*

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Received: 2024-02-11

Accepted: 2024-05-01

Published: 2024-05-15

Abstract

An identity crisis, a prevalent social phenomenon, can manifest in individuals at any stage of life within society. This study explores the protagonist's struggle with identity in Paul Kalanithi's *When Breath Becomes Air*, aiming to identify and elucidate the types of identity crises encountered. Drawing upon identity crisis theories proposed by Erikson and Baumeister, et al., the researchers employ descriptive qualitative analysis to examine and interpret the novel. The findings of the research reveal several facets of the protagonist's motivation crisis. Firstly, the causes of Paul's motivation crisis stem from his battle with liver cancer. Secondly, Paul undergoes a range of subjective experiences, including vacillating commitment, confusion about values, regular bouts of vagueness, feelings of emptiness, and self-unconsciousness, as well as anxiety. Furthermore, the study highlights various behaviors exhibited by Paul amidst his identity crisis. These include comparing his activities as a doctor and as a patient, viewing the world through the contrasting lenses of hope and death, and grappling with a sense of hopelessness as his dreams, hard work, and life choices are shattered. Overall, the research sheds light on the complexity of identity crises and their profound impact on individuals, as exemplified through the protagonist's journey in *When Breath Becomes Air*.

Keywords: behavior; crisis; experience; identity

1. Introduction

Identity is a characteristic or sign attached to someone or something useful to distinguish one from another. According to Feist (2010: 305) identity means a clear self-image including several clear goals to be achieved, values, and beliefs that the individual chooses. These commitments have increased over time and have been made because of the goals, values, and beliefs one seeks to achieve and the importance of giving direction, purpose, and meaning to life.

In their development, humans often experience shifts and conflicts with other humans. As a result, they often experience crises in their lives, one of which is an identity crisis. Everyone can experience an identity crisis, regardless of gender, age, race, culture, profession, or social status. The term identity crisis is first coined by Erik Erikson, a German psychologist and psychoanalyst. He theorizes that psychological

challenges like this can be experienced not only by teenagers but also by middle-aged or adults. This means that identity is something that continues to grow throughout life as a person faces new challenges and overcomes various problems.

When Breath Becomes Air is a non-fiction autobiographical book written by American neurosurgeon, Paul Kalanithi. Paul Kalanithi was born on April 01, 1977 and died on March 09, 2015. This novel was published by Random House on January 12, 2016. *When Breath Becomes Air* (2016) tells the story of the journey of Kalanithi, an English literature scholar who later continues his studies in the medical field. The reason he chooses medicine, apart from wanting a stable career, is he wants to dedicate his life to something more meaningful. At the age of thirty-six, at the end of his ten-year training as a neurosurgeon, Paul is diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer. This disease evaporates all the dreams and ideas he has. This condition also makes things change instantly, one day he is a doctor who treats people who are dying, and the next day, he is a patient trying to survive (Lit chart, 2019).

Identity crisis can be analyzed through sociological aspects and identified more deeply through character. Swingewood in Faruk (1999) explains that sociology is a scientific and objective study of humans in society, the study of social institutions and processes. Damono then (2013: 3), states that an approach to literature that considers social aspects is called the sociology of literature by using text analysis to find out its structure, and then used to understand more deeply social phenomena outside of literature. Pradopo (2001: 34) states that the purpose of sociological studies in the literature is to obtain a complete picture of the relationship between authors, literary works, and society. In line with this statement, the identity crisis in Paul Kalanithi's novel *When Breath Becomes Air* can be analyzed using a sociology of literature approach. Paul's identity crisis is part of research on humans and their social problems. Throughout the novel, it is believed that Paul cannot adjust himself to a social environment. As a result Paul always questions who he is resulting in aspects of life's (career, family, and partner) problems, and experiences inner conflicts.

The choice to explore the protagonist's identity crisis in this study stems from several compelling reasons. Firstly, the characters depicted in the narrative are not fictitious but real individuals, with the protagonist being none other than the author himself, Paul Kalanithi. His memoir serves as a poignant account of his life and illness, lending a raw authenticity to the exploration of identity struggles. Secondly, the protagonist's swift transition from doctor to patient encapsulates a profound shift in identity, making it a pivotal aspect of the narrative. This abrupt transformation underscores the fragility and fluidity of identity, prompting deeper reflection on the human experience. Moreover, the novel is replete with moral lessons that offer valuable insights for readers. A hallmark of a great literary work is its ability to impart wisdom and provoke introspection. From Kalanithi's story, readers glean important moral messages, such as the imperative of finding purpose in serving others, the resilience required to persevere in the face of adversity, and the significance of holding onto hope even in the bleakest of circumstances. By delving into the protagonist's identity crisis within the context of these profound themes, this study not only enriches our understanding of the narrative but also provides readers with meaningful takeaways for personal growth and reflection.

2. Literature Review

Erikson (1993) states that an identity crisis is a time to analyze and explore in

seeing oneself from a different way, in which, during this exploration period, a person sees a perspective other than his or her point of view. An identity crisis is a condition when a person often questions various things related to his/her identity, such as beliefs, life values, life goals, experiences, and feelings.

2.1 The Symptoms of Identity Crisis

According to Silitonga (2020: 31) an identity crisis contains the following characteristics:

a. Role Confusion

This stage may occur throughout adolescence. However, people in adulthood may experience similar feelings based on their own experiences. People are left wondering who they are and what they can be as a result of role uncertainty. People will feel insecure about their lives as a result of the query. People have many personal struggles as they try to figure out who they are and their place in society.

b. Feeling Isolated

In this stage, when people are going through an identity crisis, they are terrified of rejection such as being turned down for jobs or having the end of their relationship. They are used to suffering, and for some, rejection is so terrible that their egos can no longer endure it.

c. Doubtfulness

At this point, people will be asking for themselves due to an identity crisis. Is it possible for me to make a difference in my life? That question will cause people to doubt themselves, and as a result, they will be unable to live a comfortable existence both inside and outside of their homes. People search for more meaning, reason, or passion in their life.

2.1 The Concept of Identity Crisis

Alo Liliweri (2007: 67) describes that etymologically the word identity means: 1) conditions or facts about the same thing, similar to each other; 2) conditions or facts about something that is the same between two people or two things; 3) conditions or facts that describe something that is the same between two people (individuality) or two groups or objects; 4) showing a habit to understand identity with the word "identical".

Erickson in Hjelle and Ziegler (1981: 127) states that when a person fails to develop his identity because of unfortunate childhood experiences or present social circumstances, the person has got identity crisis. Erikson also states in his theory of Psychological Development that an identity crisis occurs in the individual who is in the stage of identity and role confusion. In this stage, the main task for the individual is to develop a personal identity. He also adds that an identity crisis is a time of intensive analysis and exploration of different ways of looking at oneself.

Erickson believes that every human being goes through a certain number of stages to reach his or her full development. He feels the course of development is determined by the interaction of the body (genetic biological programming), mind (psychological), and cultural (ethos) influences. Erikson's psychological stages are characterized by a different conflict that must be resolved by the individual. When the environment makes new demands on people, conflict arises. If a person is unable to

resolve a conflict at a particular stage, they will confront and struggle with it later in life. Each stage is thought to be accompanied by a "psychosocial crisis," which demands a resolution of some kind before the next stage is confronted.

2.2 Types of Identity Crisis

In their journal article, Baumeister et al. (1985), states that identity crisis can be divided into two types. They are:

2.2.1 Legitimation Crisis

It refers "to the multiply defined self whose multiple definitions are incompatible"; it means that a person who experiences this crisis has multiple identities. Consequently, he needs a commitment to choose what his identity is. There might be a possibility that he may betray the other identity which he has (Baumeister *et.al*, 1985: 199).

a. The Causes

1. Two components have been always compatible but suddenly begin to make conflicting prescriptions for action.
2. Circumstances or choices dictate the acquisition of a new identity component that is soon found to conflict with long-standing components (Baumeister *et.al*, 1985: 412).

b. Subjective Experiences

1. A person with identity conflict will experience the impossibility to act without betraying oneself and one's loyalty to the other person, an ideology, or an institution. A person must feel some guilt over being a 'traitor.'
2. Experiencing emotional paralysis because the person resents being forced to act but also not enough to abandon passivity and resist this force (Baumeister *et.al*, 1985: 416).

c. Behavior

1. The hallmark of identity conflict is the subjective experience of being torn between incompatible commitments, which does not logically entail any particular behaviors.
2. The only behavior characteristic of identity conflict may be the attempts to affiliate with role models who have successfully managed to resolve such conflict (Baumeister *et.al*, 1985: 416).

2.2.2 Motivation Crisis

It refers to "to an inadequately defined self, characterized by lack of commitment to goals and values. A person who experiences this crisis is not consistent in his decision. Therefore, he might seek sources of value, meaning, even he questions himself (Baumeister *et.al*, 1985: 199).

a. The Causes

1. The cognitive advance that facilitates the increased self-consciousness of early adolescents, enabling adolescents to take great control over their identity.
2. The situation that demands choices can also be the cause of identity deficit.
3. The situational demands for choice. The adolescent often must face the incompatibility of various future identities. The reluctance to let go of any of one's potentialities could constitute a reluctance to commit oneself. Such

reluctance, coupled with a sincere desire for commitment, maybe the hallmark of the crisis (Baumeister *et.al*, 1985: 410).

b. Subjective Experiences

The reluctant themes that motivation crisis people experience seem to include, “vacillating commitment and confusion about values,” regulars of vagueness, emptiness, preoccupation with great, seemingly unresolvable questions, with the result of disinterest in the mundane concerns of everyday life, self-consciousness, including rumination about implications of one’s actions, leading to an ‘overexamined life,’ anxiety, tensions, and feelings of confusion, bewilderment, and occasional discouragement (Baumeister *et.al*, 1985: 416).

c. Behavior

People with motivation might dramatically plunge into a new activity which can be seen in some instances of the mid-life (identity deficit) crisis as well as adolescents (Baumeister *et.al*, 1985: 416).

2.2.3 The Causes of Identity Crisis

There are many explanations for why identity crisis exists, according to Erik Erikson in Silitonga (2020: 32), include:

1. Individual psychology determines whether they are imperfect creatures and of no value in the universe.
2. Identity crisis occurs during adolescence because it is the time for people to become aware of themselves in the present and their status or place in social life at the time or in the future.
3. People's perceptions of how their family handles them are influenced by parental values. If their families mistreat them, they will have less confidence and carelessness and wonder what they should do with their lives, affecting their minds, spirit, and social characteristics.
4. Life's unfortunate events. People's identities and questions about themselves may be influenced by a traumatic event or something that makes them scared of the past; whether or not they are worthy of the universe. Divorce, the transition from adolescence to adulthood, being alone due to an accident, how society handles them, and so on are all examples of negative experiences.

2.2.4 The Impact of Identity Crisis

The following are some of the impacts of the quest for the self-identity crisis, according to Erik Erikson in Silitonga (2020: 32).

1. They still believe that they are worthless in this universe and do not deserve any opportunities.
2. They have less faith in themselves and are unsure about what to do next in life, which causes them to be confused.
3. Losing self-confidence in doing or starting a new thing or even the hobbies that they like.
4. They have become isolated due to being mistreated by society or by the people around them, including their families.

3. Research Method

In conducting the research, the researchers use a descriptive qualitative analysis as a method to describe and analyze the novel. Walliman (2011) defines that descriptive research is related to an observation in collecting data. In addition, Nassaji (2015) also states that the goal of descriptive research is drawing and classifying the social phenomenon. The researchers then uses the library research technique. According to Ary, Jacobs, and Ashgar (1972), library research relies on finding documentation in the library or other archives, including online sources, to summarize, analyze, synthesize and evaluate the data.

The data source for this research is taken from the English novel *When Breath Becomes Air* by Paul Kalanithi. There are several steps that the researchers use to collect the data. They are: 1. Collecting data by highlighting the quotations. The data are in the forms of phrases, sentences, and dialogues about identity crisis. 2. Classifying the data based on the theory of Identity Crisis proposed by Erik Erikson and assisted by explanations of Identity Crisis proposed by Baumeister, *et al* (1985).

In data analysis, the steps are: retrieving data that have been classified and stating the type of identity crisis experienced by the protagonist and finally interpreting and descriptively describing the data.

4. Discussion

In *When Breath Becomes Air* by Paul Kalanithi, the concept of Identity Crisis is explored primarily through the lens of Motivation Crisis, as delineated in the narrative. While Identity Crisis typically encompasses both Legitimation Crisis and Motivation Crisis, only the latter is evident in this particular novel, prompting the researchers to focus exclusively on this aspect.

Within the realm of Motivation Crisis, the researchers methodically dissect its components, namely the causes, subjective experiences, and resulting behaviors. This analytical approach provides a comprehensive understanding of how the protagonist navigates the complexities of his crisis, illuminating the underlying factors, emotional journey, and observable manifestations thereof.

4.1 The Causes

An identity crisis is a crisis that occurs when a person doubts his decisions and actions. Generally, a motivation crisis occurs due to major changes or pressures in life that can cause a person to change and stress. Examples of causes include situational demands (loss of job, retirement, divorce), and unfortunate life events (accident, diagnosis of a serious illness, or loss of a loved one). In line with the statement above, the protagonist in this novel, Paul Kalanithi, experiences an unfortunate event in his life, being diagnosed with liver cancer. Further explanation is discussed through the quotations below:

I flipped through the CT scan images, the diagnosis obvious: the lungs were matted with innumerable tumors, the spine deformed, and a full lobe of the liver obliterated. Cancer is widely disseminated.
(Kalanithi, 2016: 12).

The quotations above clearly explain the causes of the motivation crisis experienced by Paul. As explained from the examples of causes of motivation crises, Paul experiences one of them, namely being diagnosed with a serious illness, liver

cancer. It is revealed through a CT scan that Paul's liver is filled with countless tumors and many other damages to his organs.

The next quotations also explain the cause of the motivation crisis experienced by Paul, namely being diagnosed with liver cancer. Further explanation is discussed through the data below:

We held each other tightly, like young lovers. In the past year, we'd both suspected but refused to believe, or even discuss, that a cancer was growing inside me.
(Kalanithi, 2016: 12).

Through the explanation above, it can be seen that Paul's cancer develops since a year before. Paul and his wife are both doctors. They would know about cancer without consulting other doctors because they are familiar with all kinds of diseases and often give diagnoses to patients. However, they refuse to believe and discuss the symptoms of the cancer. This reaction is the most natural for survivors because anyone certainly does not want to get the disease. So it can be concluded that someone who suffers from illness can also experience a motivational crisis.

4.2 Subjective Experiences

Subjective experience refers to the emotional impact of human experience. That is, objective experience in crisis motivation is the emotional impact of someone who is experiencing a crisis of his decisions and commitments in life. In the novel, the researchers find four types of subjective experiences experienced by the protagonist, vacillating commitment and confusion about values, regulars of vagueness, emptiness and self-consciousness, and anxiety. These are analyzed in detail below:

1. Vacillating Commitment and Confusion about the Value

Why was I so authoritative in a surgeon's coat but so meek in a patient's gown? The truth was, I knew more about back pain than she did—half of my training as a neurosurgeon had involved disorders of the spine. But maybe a spondy was more likely. It did affect a significant percent of young adults—and cancer in the spine in your thirties? The odds of that couldn't be more than one in ten thousand. Even if it were one hundred times more common than that, it'd still be less common than a spondy. Maybe I was just freaking myself out.
(Kalanithi, 2016: 13)

Everyone must have thought that when doctors wear their royal robes, they would look very dignified. This feeling is also felt by Paul. However, his feeling changes instantly. He is no longer wearing a doctor's robe but is wearing a patient's robe. Then he begins to self-diagnose the disease, comparing pain and percentage of life. These things make him confused about the values he believes in. Questions of indecision slowly envelop him. He believes that he has always been a great doctor, but instantly he turns into a patient.

Other vacillation that Paul feels can be explained through the following quotations:

During my residency, I had sat with countless patients and families to discuss grim prognoses; it's one of the most important jobs you have, as a physician. It's easier when the patient is ninety-four, in the last

stages of dementia, with a severe brain bleed. But for someone like me—a thirty-six-year-old given a diagnosis of terminal cancer—there aren't words.

(Kalanithi, 2016: 67).

The quotations above explain that Paul Kalanithi's job immediately changes as a result of his cancer. Usually, he explains medical matters related to disease and diagnosis to patients and their families. He is too used to diagnosing someone to consider this task not a burden anymore. Moreover, someone who is diagnosed is an old patient. But now, his diagnosis has to be explained to himself, a mere thirty-six-year-old. Age is relatively young to have cancer. It is hard to believe it, let alone express it in words.

The latest data to show the reluctance felt by Paul can be seen below:

What better way to understand it than to live it? But I'd had no idea how hard it would be, how much terrain I would have to explore, map, and settle. I'd always imagined the doctor's work as something like connecting two pieces of railroad track, allowing a smooth journey for the patient. I hadn't expected the prospect of facing my own mortality to be so disorienting, so dislocating.

(Kalanithi, 2016: 72-73).

The quotations above show the big unresolved questions Paul feels. The more he wants to understand his deeply held values, the more demotivated he becomes. He wonders whether everything he has done during his process of becoming a doctor is good, or it is just misleading his mind. It is this crossroads on values that make Paul lose his motivation even more. As a result, he loses interest in the mundane problems of everyday life. He only thinks about how death will come and how to accept it.

2. Regulars of Vagueness

Like my own patients, I had to face my mortality and try to understand what made my life worth living—and I needed Emma's help to do so. Torn between being a doctor and being a patient, delving into medical science and turning back to literature for answers, I struggled, while facing my own death, to rebuild my old life—or perhaps find a new one (Kalanithi, 2016: 69).

The data above show the regular vagueness felt by Paul throughout his life. In the past, he hesitates to choose between literature and medicine. However, in the end, he chooses medicine because of the values contained therein. He feels that by choosing this path his life will be more worthy to live because it is related to humanity and helping others. Today, the vagueness has resurfaced. He is confused about defining himself as a doctor or patient, or he should go back to study literature to find the true meaning of life. It is these uncertainties felt by Paul that slowly erode the motivation he has so far.

Another vagueness that Paul feels can be seen through the quotations below:

My own hubris as a surgeon stood naked to me now: as much as I focused on my responsibility and power over patients' lives, it was at

best a temporary responsibility, a fleeting power. Emma hadn't given me back my old identity. She'd protected my ability to forge a new one. And, finally, I knew I would have to.
(Kalanithi, 2016: 80).

Surgeons are specialist doctors who treat disease, injury, or emergency conditions in the body through surgical methods and medicine. Compared to other types of medical professionals, surgeons have a higher prestige. It is this prestige that Paul feels when he becomes a surgeon that makes him arrogant. But now, all of that motivation is gone, replaced by obscurity or vagueness. On the one hand, he has to carry out his role as a doctor who focuses on responsibility to his patients; on the other hand as a patient he must obey the doctor who treats him. Though he is now able to return to his activities, his identity as a doctor has not recovered because at the same time, he has to accept his new identity.

3. Emptiness and Self-Unconsciousness

"Victoria," I said, "I'm never coming back to this hospital as a doctor. Don't you think?" One chapter of my life seemed to have ended; perhaps the whole book was closing. Instead of being the pastoral figure aiding a life transition, I found myself the sheep, lost and confused.
(Kalanithi, 2016: 61).

Emptiness is often associated with hopelessness, mood disturbance, or loneliness. When a person experiences emptiness, the individual will plunge into inner conflict. This is what appears from the conversation between Paul and Victoria. Paul conveys that he will never be the same individual again as before. He will not go to the hospital as a doctor but as a patient. The motivation that has controlled him all this time evaporates and ends. Therefore, he feels lost and confused about his life.

Another emptiness felt by Paul can be proven through the quotations below:

Everyone succumbs to finitude. I suspect I am not the only one who reaches this pluperfect state. Most ambitions are either achieved or abandoned; either way, they belong to the past. The future, instead of the ladder toward the goals of life, flattens out into a perpetual present. Money, status, all the vanities the preacher of Ecclesiastes described hold so little interest: a chasing after wind, indeed.
(Kalanithi, 2016: 93-94).

The quotations above explain clearly the emptiness that Paul feels. From his illness, Paul learns that everyone dies and succumbs to mortality. Nothing is eternal. Humans are sometimes full of arrogance and endless ambition. They like to challenge themselves to reach the maximum limit in life. This is also done by Paul. He challenges himself to achieve endless ambitions. But now, instead of thinking about future ambitions, he has to stop in place to think about his illness. This disease is a strong blow to Paul because money, position, status, dreams, and ambitions disappear in an instant. The ambition he feels is no longer interesting to pursue, now only emptiness remains.

The last data show the emptiness that Paul feels in his life. This will be proven

through the quotations below:

My brother Jeevan had arrived at my bedside. "You've accomplished so much," he said. "You know that, don't you?"

I sighed. He meant well, but the words rang hollow. My life had been building potential, potential that would now go unrealized. I had planned to do so much, and I had come so close. I was physically debilitated, my imagined future and my personal identity collapsed, and I faced the same existential quandaries my patients faced. The lung cancer diagnosis was confirmed. My carefully planned and hard-won future no longer existed.

(Kalanithi, 2016: 61).

The data above show the emptiness and self-unconsciousness felt by Paul. Even though Jeevan, his younger brother, gives the motivation to cheer him up, he is still depressed. He knows all the processes of life and the successes he has achieved so far are slowly fading away and replaced with despair. The potential success he wants to achieve would not be realized. The identity he is proud of as a doctor collapses and is replaced by the identity of a survivor. Thus, the future that he has meticulously planned is destroyed.

4. Anxiety

I thought: Prosopagnosia is a neurological disorder wherein one loses the ability to see faces. Pretty soon I would have it, hacksaw in hand (Kalanithi, 2016: 31).

The data above are an expression of the anxiety felt by Paul. Anxiety is a feeling of restlessness, fear, and excessive worry. This explanation is in line with the quotations above where fear and anxiety slowly approach Paul as a result of his cancer. He is afraid and worried because his cancer would get worse. One of the symptoms that appears is *prosopagnosia* or a nervous breakdown, where a person will lose the ability to recognize other people's faces.

Other anxieties that seem to be found in the novel are discussed through the quotations below:

Lying next to Lucy in the hospital bed, both of us crying, the CT scan images still glowing on the computer screen, that identity as a physician—my identity—no longer mattered. With cancer having invaded multiple organ systems, the diagnosis was clear. The room was quiet. Lucy told me she loved me. "I don't want to die," I said.

(Kalanithi, 2016: 61)

The quotations above show that Paul's anxiety is getting worse. Anxiety usually occurs when a person has to deal with a situation that is considered to cause stress and pressure. Anxiety is the most normal reaction in the face of pressure and problems. But in Paul's case, he cannot think positively anymore. Anxiety can no longer be used as motivation or encouragement to overcome challenges, as he is used to doing. He cannot control the feeling anymore. As a result, he is scared to death of his condition; he is afraid of death and does not want to die.

4.3 Behavior

Behavior is an expression and action of a person's character with himself or his environment. The visible behavior of someone who experiences crisis motivation is to jump dramatically into a new activity. They do new things that they are not used to doing. This is in line with the behavior shown by Paul Kalanithi who does habits that he is not used to as a doctor. This is discussed further through the quotations below:

I received the plastic arm bracelet all patients wear, put on the familiar light blue hospital gown, walked past the nurses I knew by name, and was checked into a room—the same room where I had seen hundreds of patients over the years. In this room, I had sat with patients and explained terminal diagnoses and complex operations; in this room, I had congratulated patients on being cured of a disease and seen their happiness at being returned to their lives; in this room, I had renounced patient's dead. I had sat in the chairs, washed my hands in the sink, scrawled instructions on the marker board, and changed the calendar. I had even, in moments of utter exhaustion, longed to lie down in this bed and sleep. Now I lay there, wide awake.

(Kalanithi, 2016: 13)

Through the data above, Paul compares the differences between the activities he does when he is a doctor and a patient. Usually, he visits the patient's room to control and treat them. But now he is being treated in the patient's room. Another thing, as a doctor he wants to sleep on the patient's bed for a while, just to overcome his fatigue. Now he lies on the bed for an unknown amount of time. The explanation above shows clearly how Paul carries out activities that are contrary to his usual activities.

Paul's other new activities can also be seen through the following quotation:

Once I had been diagnosed with a terminal illness, I began to view the world through two perspectives; I was starting to see death as both doctor and a patient. As a doctor, I knew not to declare "Cancer is a battle I'm going to win!" or ask "Why me?" (Answer: Why not me?) I knew a lot about medical care, complications, and treatment algorithms. I quickly learned from my oncologist and my own study that stage IV lung cancer today was a disease whose story might be changing, like AIDS in the late 1980s: still a rapidly fatal illness but with emerging therapies that were, for the first time, providing years of life (Kalanithi, 2016: 69).

The new behavior shown by Paul is that he begins to see the world from two perspectives. In the past, he only conveys diagnoses or death sentences to his patients normally. But now he can feel the same feeling when the verdict befalls someone because he is now in that position. As a doctor, he wants to win against his disease and he knows there are many medications and treatments to cure his illness. This treatment will provide a life expectancy of many years. But as a patient, he does not want to brag about all his medical knowledge. No one knows what will happen in the future.

The final evidence to show Paul's behavior in the motivation crisis is shown through the data below:

Once again, I had traversed the line from doctor to patient, from actor to acted upon, from subject to the direct object. My life up until my

illness could be understood as the linear sum of my choices.
(Kalanithi, 2016: 87)

The data above further confirm Paul's behavior in joining new activities. This activity is a change in the role of a doctor to a patient, from a person who treats patients to recipient or patient who receives treatment. His life before his illness is his dream; his success owing to hard work, and the right choice.

5. Conclusion

Through an examination of the protagonist's identity crisis in Paul Kalanithi's poignant memoir, *When Breath Becomes Air*, a series of profound conclusions emerge, shedding light on the intricate nuances of Paul's journey. Paul's identity crisis stems from the devastating blow of his cancer diagnosis. The revelation of his affliction, specifically liver cancer, serves as the catalyst for his existential turmoil. The onset of cancer precipitates a profound crisis of motivation for Paul. As he grapples with the harsh realities of his illness, his once unwavering drive and ambition begin to wane, gradually reshaping his perspectives and priorities in life. The exploration of Paul's crisis of motivation is dissected through a comprehensive framework, delving into three key dimensions: the underlying cause of his crisis, his subjective experiences navigating through it, and the observable behaviors manifested as a consequence. The researchers meticulously collect and analyze fifteen distinct data points encapsulating Paul's crisis of motivation. These data points offer invaluable insights into the multifaceted nature of Paul's struggle, providing a comprehensive foundation for analysis and interpretation. Overall, the examination of Paul's identity crisis unveils the profound impact of illness on one's sense of self and purpose, underscoring the transformative power of adversity in shaping the human experience.

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