

ANXIETY DISORDER IN SOPHIE KINSELLA'S NOVEL *FINDING AUDREY*

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Abstract

This study delves into the portrayal of anxiety disorder in Sophie Kinsella's novel, *Finding Audrey*. It aims to comprehensively analyze how anxiety disorder is depicted, as well as to explore the underlying causes and resulting effects on the protagonist. Employing psychoanalytic theories pioneered by Sigmund Freud (1964), this research intertwines the realms of psychology and literature to unravel the complexities of the protagonist's condition. Using a descriptive method outlined by Creswell, the study meticulously examines the novel's narrative to extract pertinent data. Through this approach, the research sheds light on various facets of anxiety disorder as portrayed in the novel. Notably, the analysis uncovers instances where the protagonist grapples with manifestations of anxiety, including feelings of threat and fear, as well as corresponding behavioral responses. The findings underscore the multifaceted nature of anxiety disorder, elucidating its nuanced effects on the protagonist's daily life. For instance, the protagonist's coping mechanism of wearing sunglasses to evade eye contact serves as a tangible representation of her struggle with social interactions. Furthermore, the narrative elucidates how the protagonist's anxiety manifests in her reluctance to attend school and her pervasive fear of leaving the safety of her home environment. By meticulously examining the interplay between psychological theories and literary representation, this study enriches our understanding of anxiety disorders while illuminating the narrative intricacies of Kinsella's work.

Keyword: anxiety; cause of anxiety; effect of anxiety; disorder

1. Introduction

Anxiety is a natural human experience, often arising unexpectedly in response to life's challenges. However, humans are expected to confront and manage these challenges. While some individuals successfully navigate their difficulties, others find themselves overwhelmed. Al-Kumay (2005) highlights the urgency of addressing modern-day problems, many of which stem from internal mental struggles.

Sophie Kinsella's *Finding Audrey* intricately examines social anxiety disorder through the lens of its protagonist, Audrey Turner. The novel chronicles Audrey's journey as she grapples with the aftermath of a traumatic experience, contending with depression and social anxiety disorder. Unlike typical teenagers, Audrey's life is

punctuated by fear and apprehension, manifesting in her avoidance of social interactions and her preference for isolation at home. Her anxiety reaches a point where even the simplest interactions induce panic attacks, compelling her to shield herself behind sunglasses as a coping mechanism.

This portrayal underscores the profound impact of anxiety disorders on individuals' lives, prompting a deeper exploration of the causes and effects of Audrey's condition. By delving into Audrey's psychological landscape, the novel provides a poignant narrative that merits further examination.

This research endeavors to dissect the underlying factors contributing to Audrey's anxiety disorder and elucidate its far-reaching effects. *Finding Audrey* serves as a valuable literary lens through which to explore the complexities of mental health issues, offering insights that resonate beyond the confines of its narrative.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Protagonist

According to Minderop (2005), character can also be a person, community, race, mental and moral attitude, the quality of reasoning, famous persons, and fictional figures in literature. Character in a piece of literature can be seen as a depiction of a person. A character is created to deserve our attention, affection, and support through actions, traits, and descriptions. Protagonist and antagonist are terms used to describe the two major characters in a narrative. The main driving force and specific goal of the protagonist are always present. It is crucial to remember that a novel's protagonist could be one person (just the main characters). Besides protagonist, hee is an antagonist that shows a different type of character whose role is to prevent the protagonist from attaining his overt goal. The protagonist is a character that the reader or audience empathizes with in a tale, novel, play, or other literary work. There are only a few different types of characters, but the main character is the one who captures the audience's interest the most and ends up in the spotlight. The most scenes are also for this character.

The protagonist always comes along with his chief motivating force and tangible objective. It is important to note that the protagonist in a novel can be singular (just the main characters). The protagonist is one of the characters in a story, novel, drama, or other literary work, the characters that the reader or audience empathizes with. Shaffer (2008: 147) states that the protagonist is the leading character who generally exhibits superior qualities or who simply is the main character.

2.2 Psychology and Literature

There is a very strong correlation between literature and psychology for the fact that both of them deal with human beings and their reactions, perceptions of the world, miseries, wishes, desires, fears, conflicts and reconciliations also individual and social concerns, by means of varied concepts, methods, and approaches.

According to Ratna (2004), literary psychology is an analysis of literary works using psychological considerations and relevance. This means that psychology can be used to analyze literary works from the psychological perspective of the author, character and reader.

Therefore, psychology can be defined as better as the scientific study of human behavior and human relations. Davis and Paladino say in Siswantoro's book that

psychology is the scientific study of behavior and mental processes (Siswantoro, 2005: 26).

According to Endraswara (2003: 96), there are two basic assumptions saying that literature involves psychology for literary research. First is that literary work is a psychological and thinking product of a writer gained from his/her subconscious experience and constructed clearly in a textual form in their conscious condition. Second, this research is to analyze the psychological characterization of the characters and the mind or feeling of the writer beyond the text in literary works. By using the psychological approach to literature, we can see many levels that may not be noticed while just reading a piece of literary work. As stated above, psychology in literature studies human's behavior. In this case, it is the character's behavior which exists in a literary work. This behavior can be of various kinds depending on our point of view; for example, anxiety of the character. It will give a great influence to the character since it is directly related to the condition of the character's mind.

2.3 Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis

One of the modern theories used in English literature is psychoanalysis. It is a psychoanalysis-guiding theory that is regarded as a theory of personality organization and personality dynamics. The academic field of literary criticism or literary theory has long exploited the hidden relationship between literature and psychoanalysis. Freud is considered as the first person who maps a human's unconscious mind. According to Freud in Semiun (2006: 61), he believes that unconsciousness is the determining factor of important and dynamic behavior. This statement shows that all humans behavior is unconsciously affected by the unconscious mind. In the psychoanalysis which includes personality structure and dynamics of personality, he considers the mind as a system of energy. There is a separate mental system in the other system of the human body. The purpose is also different, for example, to fulfill the body's need, to reflect social guidelines and regulation and to seek a plan to balance the biological drive and the social stress. Psychoanalysis is concerned with the functions and development of the human mind. This branch of psychology contributes significantly to literary research.

2.4 Anxiety Disorder

According to Freud in Boeree (2006: 19), "Anxiety is as a signal to the ego that danger is coming. It warns the ego to do something to prevent the danger from doing harm to the ego." People would prefer not to experience the discomfort and uncomfortable feelings that anxiety causes. Anxiety can be categorized as an extreme feeling. Anxiety itself has a bad influence on someone who feels it, because anxiety is a detrimental energy in a person. Anxiety was also described as a vague, uncomfortable feeling aggravated by prolonged stress and the existence of numerous pressures. Freud also explained that the term of anxiety can be classified because of the conflict between Ego and Superego, yet, problems outside also have a big role in producing anxiety, it can be a threat, environment, repression, frustration, gender, fear, response, age, and desire conflict.

2.5 Causes of Anxiety

There are several causes of anxiety that need to be understood i.e. threat, fear, response, repression, and frustration.

2.5.1 Threat

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2023), a threat is defined as an expression of an intention to inflict evil, injury, or damage on someone or something. It also can be defined as the possibility or likelihood of trouble, danger, or harm. Threat is when a person or thing that is regarded as a possible danger or source of harm. In general, a threat refers to a statement, action, or circumstance that has the potential to cause harm, danger, damage, or trouble to individuals, organizations, or society as a whole. Adler and Rodman (2006: 50) states that threat can be from the inside feeling of a person or it can be from the outside person. It can involve an explicit or implicit intention to inflict harm, and it may manifest in various forms such as physical, verbal, psychological, or cyber threats.

2.5.2 Fear

According to Cambridge Dictionary (2023), fear is an unpleasant emotion or thought that you have when you are frightened or worried by something dangerous, painful, or bad that is happening or might happen. From a psychological perspective, fear serves as a protective mechanism that prepares an individual to respond to potential harm. It triggers the body's "fight-or-flight" response, leading to physiological changes such as increased heart rate, rapid breathing, heightened alertness, and heightened sensory perception.

2.5.3 Response

According to the American Psychological Association (2023), response is a reaction or reply to a stimulus, situation, or event. It can be verbal, written, or nonverbal and is typically influenced by one's thoughts, emotions, and previous experiences. A response is often a direct or indirect action taken to address or engage with the stimulus, and it can vary in intensity, tone, and effectiveness depending on the context. In psychology, a response can refer to an organism's behavior or physiological reaction to a specific stimulus in a particular environment. Overall, a response is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various forms of expression and interaction in response to external or internal stimuli. Adler and Rodman (2006: 43) states that a person's ability examines the stimulus' capability to affect the manifestation of anxiety.

2.5.4 Repression

According to the American Psychiatric Association (2023), repression is the unconscious blocking of unpleasant emotions, impulses, memories, and thoughts from your conscious mind. On the other hand, Boag, S (2006: 74) states that Repression is a defense mechanism whereby unpleasant-provoking mental processes, such as morally disagreeable impulses and painful memories, are actively prevented from entering conscious awareness. Repression can be defined as a defense mechanism when someone tries to minimize feelings of guilt and anxiety.

2.5.5 Frustration

According to Adler and Rodman (2006: 78), all humans live to fulfill their necessities. They can be good fantasies or bad desires. When they can have what they want, they will be satisfied. On the contrary, when they cannot fulfill them, they will be upset. This sadness can put them in a frustrating situation. This condition will persist from the time they are children until they are adults. If this condition is not handled soon, they will be experiencing acute anxiety.

2.6 The Effects of Anxiety Disorder

The following are some of the effects of anxiety according to Freud in Boeree (2006: 78)

2.6.1 Using Sunglasses to Avoid Eye-contact.

According to Schneier (2011: 81), individuals with anxiety disorder experience intense feelings of being looked at by other individuals and show a marked avoidance and fear of eye contact during social interactions. According to the American Psychological Association (2023), a person with anxiety disorder might only go out when accompanied, and might wear sunglasses to avoid eye contact.

2.6.2 Getting Out from School

Anxiety disorders cause people to feel frightened, distressed, or uneasy during situations in which most people would not feel that way. Left untreated, anxiety disorders can make it hard for students to get schoolwork done or study. It may affect their relationships with peers and teachers, too. In some cases, students with anxiety disorders miss a lot of school days. Or even worse, they will drop out of school. According to KidsHealth (2019) in *Anxiety Disorders Factsheet*.

2.6.3 Being Afraid Out of Home

According to the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing (2005), a person with anxiety disorder is afraid to leave environments they know or consider to be safe. In severe cases, a person with anxiety disorder considers their home to be the only safe environment. They may avoid leaving their home for days, months or even years.

3. Research Method

This research outlines the methodology employed to collect and analyze data, with a focus on utilizing the descriptive method for comprehensive elucidation. According to Creswell (2012: 274), the descriptive method is particularly suited to elucidating current conditions by systematically detailing and explaining the subject under scrutiny. In the context of this study, the researcher aims to explore the causes and effects of the protagonist's anxiety in Sophie Kinsella's *Finding Audrey*.

Data analysis involves scrutinizing underlying sentences and dialogues from the novel to substantiate the discussion's authenticity, ensuring that all insights derive directly from the text. The collected data is meticulously organized and discussed following established procedures. Quotations from the novel, encompassing paragraphs, phrases, or sentences, serve as the primary source material. It is imperative to note that these excerpts remain unaltered, preserving the original context and viewpoints presented in Kinsella's work. This approach maintains the integrity of the novel's

narrative while facilitating a rigorous examination of the protagonist's experiences with anxiety.

4. Discussion

The discussion focuses on certain matters that have been described in scope of this study. They are causes: threat, fear, response, and effects: using sunglasses to avoid eye-contact, getting out from school and being afraid out of home. All of these become the presented points of analysis which are primarily based on Sophie Kinsella's *Finding Audrey*.

4.2 Causes of Anxiety Disorder

Experiencing occasional anxiety is a normal part of life. However, people with anxiety disorders frequently have intense, excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations. Often, anxiety disorders involve repeated episodes of sudden feelings of intense anxiety and fear or terror that reach a peak within minutes.

4.2.1 Threat

Many threats involve a promise to physically harm someone in retaliation for what they have done or might do. It can be seen that Audrey experienced anxiety caused by threats as described below:

I haven't been to school since February, because some stuff happened there. Not great stuff. Whatever. Anyway. Moving on. After that, I got ill. (Kinsella, 2015: 18)

Audrey states that something happened to her at school. Going to school is, in fact, a must for a student and she does not want to tell it to anyone. It can be seen that Audrey could have experienced threats at her school, so she did not want to remember.

He comes into the den and instinctively my fists clench in fear. He must have wandered off while Mum and Frank were fighting. But no-one comes in this room. This is my space. (Kinsella, 2015: 22)

Audrey also felt a threat when someone entered her personal space. For people (people outside their closest family member) with anxiety disorder, are a threat even if that person does not do anything to threaten them. The existence of a outsider himself was already a threat to them.

What Audrey experiences when she realizes a stranger has entered her room is clarified in the following.

My chest is starting to rise in panic. Tears have already started in my eyes. My throat feels frozen. I need to escape. I need—I can't— No-one comes in here. No-one is allowed to come in here. (Kinsella, 2015: 22)

Some other points of trespassing her personal space can be seen in the quotation below:

Your body believes the threat is real, Audrey. But the threat isn't real.
"Hi," he tries again. "I'm Linus. You're Audrey, right?"

The threat isn't real. I try to press the words into my mind, but they're drowned out by the panic. It's engulfing. It's like a nuclear cloud. My chest is pumping with terror. Somehow I manage to edge past him. "Sorry," I gasp, and tear through the kitchen like a hunted fox. Up the stairs. Into my bedroom. Into the furthest corner. Crouched down behind the curtain.
(Kinsella, 2015: 22)

The quotation above shows that Audrey has threats to communicate with strangers. When Audrey found out that her brother had invited a friend to visit their house, Audrey showed an anxious reaction, she feels to be threatened by people who did not even do anything to her.

4.2.2 Fear

For people who have anxiety disorders, the fear they have is often different and exaggerated compared to what normal people feel. For people with anxiety disorders, fear often arises because of the constant fear of being watched, rejected, and judged by others. Causes of this anxiety are often provoked by social situations. On Audrey's side, Audrey experienced fear when people suddenly saw or greeted her.

"Oh, Audrey," says Ollie suddenly, spotting me. "Hi, how are you?" I shrink back from my position at my bedroom window in fright. My window is tucked away on a corner, and no-one was meant to notice me).
(Kinsella, 2015: 10)

When there is an incident when Audrey's mother would throw her brother's computer out of the house through the window in anger, it becomes strange for her. This incident becomes crowded because some neighbors and all of Audrey's family gathered outside the house to watch. Surprisingly, her one neighbor noticed Audrey through the bedroom window while unexpectedly greeting her. Audrey shows a discomfort reaction by shrinking back from her position to avoid them. Audrey is truly afraid of being noticed, even though it is just a normal interaction. It can be seen in the line "in fright." Audrey overreacted and tried to hide from her neighbor, Ollie. He is also her brother's friend or in other words, he is not a stranger. Normally, when people meet someone they already know, they are not afraid to be noticed because unconsciously relationships have been formed through meetings but not with Audrey. Meanwhile, when everyone watches the incident outside the house, Audrey remains to watch the incident in her safe room. This shows that Audrey becomes withdrawn in a crowd situation.

"It's simply a fact. You believe the whole world is thinking about you constantly. You believe the world is judging you and talking about you."
"They are all talking about me." I seize the opportunity to prove her wrong.
(Kinsella, 2015: 68-69)

Audrey's fear of being judged by people is also evident. When Audrey's psychiatrist, Dr. Sarah, assured her it was just a fear in Audrey's head, Audrey still

insists that everyone is talking about her. Audrey feels that everyone would be judging her, which is actually just her assumption.

4.2.3 Response

Response is when Audrey's ability scrutinizes the capacity of stimulus that will influence the appearance of anxiety. Audrey is always worried about something that has not happened yet. Before Audrey does anything, she is always worried about people's responses, she thinks about the bad thoughts that makes her scared to do something. This idea is maintained by statement below:

Which is not a good thing, by the way. I think too much. Waaaay too much. Everyone's agreed on that.

Normally, people should not care much about what other people think, as long as it is good and pleasing to them. But not for Audrey, Audrey herself was aware that she was thinking too much. Thinking too much about what other people think of her, about how people would respond to what she did. To put it simply, Audrey is thinking too much about unimportant things, things that are outside her control.

“You think too much. That's your trouble. Just stop thinking.” Frank breaks off midclick.

“Oh. Shit. I don't know what I just did. Did you see what I did?”
(Kinsella, 2015: 78)

With the reference to the above quotation, it proves that it is not only Audrey aware of this, but the people around her are also aware that Audrey had problems with herself and often reprimanded Audrey not to overthink things. Then, the above data also shows that Audrey overreacted to what she does, being afraid of people's response.

4.3 Effects of Anxiety Disorder

There are many effects of having an anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorders often affect a person to be unable to carry out daily activities. The effects of anxiety disorder that are portrayed are using sunglasses to avoid eye-contact, being afraid of home, getting out from school.

4.3.1 Using Sunglasses to Avoid Eye-Contact.

Humans usually do not need sunglasses in carrying out their daily activities because the use of sunglasses is naturally for fashion which is often used in summer to avoid sunlight. People with anxiety will act or show anxiety symptoms such as avoiding eye contact. That is what happened to Audrey as seen in the quotation below.

And I wear dark glasses all the time, even in the house. It's... Well. A thing. My thing, I suppose. Hence the “celebrity” quips from Rob our neighbour. He saw me in my dark glasses, getting out of the car in the rain, and he was all like, “Why the shades? Are you Angelina Jolie?” I'm not trying to be cool. There's a reason.
(Kinsella, 2015: 15)

In this quotation, since Audrey has problem with her eye contact to other people. Audrey, then, explains that she wears sunglasses either outside or inside of the room.

Eye contact is a big deal. It's the biggest deal. Just the thought makes me feel sick, right down to my core. I know in my rational head that eyes are not frightening. They're tiny little harmless blobs of jelly. They're, like, a minuscule fraction of our whole body area. We all have them. So why should they bother me? But I've had a lot of time to think about this, and if you ask me, most people underestimate eyes. For a start, they're powerful. They have range.

"I find eye contact hard," I admit. "Even with my family. It's too...I dunno. Too much."

(Kinsella, 2015: 66)

Audrey stated that eye contact was a big problem for her. Eye contact is an essential tool for communication, but for those struggling with social anxiety, it can be a source of unnecessary stress and discomfort.

Therefore, it can be said that the use of sunglasses for Audrey is a must as a protector to avoid eye contact. She is so nervous and uncomfortable when she looks at someone's eyes, even if it is just a slight. She could not even make eye contact with her own family.

My parents' eyes—forget it. They're full of worry and fear and too much knowledge. And kind of too much love, if that makes sense? If I look at them, it's like it all comes flooding back over me in a gush—mingled in with their anger, which is pretty righteous. I mean, it's not directed at me, obviously, but still. It feels toxic.

(Kinsella, 2015: 47)

When Audrey makes eye contact, even with her parents, Audrey gets an emotional response, such as experiencing overload and meltdown. She is afraid of her parents to get a wave of anger toward her which is just her assumption. It is because she overthinks people's judgment. Audrey has great distress because anxiety attacks every time Audrey looks into someone's eyes. Therefore, the use of sunglasses helps her to reduce the feeling of worry about her being overcritical.

4.3.2 Getting Out from School

Audrey's anxiety stems from a painful emotional experience, which has left a lasting negative memory. This trauma has instilled in her a bleak perception of society, where she perceives people as sources of pain and harm. Consequently, her anxiety disorder has led her to withdraw from school. As illustrated, anxiety disorder can significantly disrupt daily activities, such as attending school regularly.

Although to be truthful, Stokeland isn't 'my school' any more. I haven't been to school since February, because some stuff happened there. Not great stuff. Whatever. Anyway. Moving on. After that, I got ill. Now I'm going to change schools and go down a year so I won't fall behind. The new school is called the Heath Academy and they said it would be sensible to start in September, rather than the summer term when it's mainly exams. So, till then, I'm at home...

(Kinsella, 2015: 18)

Something happens to Audrey that makes Audrey unable to go to school anymore. Because Audrey could not attend her old school, Audrey planned to attend the Health Academy, a special school for people with anxiety disorders or mental health like Audrey.

“Improving?” I break off, trying to speak calmly. “I’m supposed to be starting a new school in September. I can’t even talk to people. One new person comes to the house and I freak out. How can I go to school? How can I do anything? What if I’m like this forever?”
(Kinsella, 2015: 25)

The excerpt illustrates Audrey's struggle to lead a conventional life, rendering her unable to attend school. The educational setting necessitates interaction with numerous individuals—a task Audrey finds daunting. Her social anxiety impedes her ability to communicate with others, even causing distress when encountering new visitors to her home.

4.3.3 Being Afraid Out of Home

In this life, many things we need to do are outside the home. Going to school, working, shopping, traveling and much more become big problems for Audrey. However, not everyone can leave the house without anxiety. People with anxiety often have the effect of not being able to move outside of their comfort zone. Leaving the house requires extra energy and it is scary for people who have anxiety disorders. People with an anxiety disorder are often wary of what they will experience if they leave the house. That is why many people with anxiety disorder are not brave or afraid to go outside.

My parents took me out of Stokeland instantly, and I’ve been at home ever since. Well, and hospital, which I told you about already. The idea is that I “start again” at the Heath Academy. Only to “start again” you need to be able to “get out of the house,” which is where I have a teeny problem”
(Kinsella, 2015: 34)

The above quotation indicates that Audrey is always at home, apart from going to the hospital. There it explains that Audrey is unable to get out of the house, and she has a teeny problem because of that. It is understandable seeing how Audrey cannot even make eye contact even with her own family, let alone being outside the house, who knows what and who she will face.

“No, let’s meet at Starbucks” A jolt of panic goes through me like white fire. Starbucks? Is he nuts? Then a second text comes through: You have to go there anyway, right? Isn’t that your project? But...but...but... Starbucks? Tomorrow? My fingers are trembling. My skin feels hot. I’m breathing in for fourcounts and out for seven and trying to channel Dr. Sarah. How would she advise me? What would she say? But already I know what she’d say. Because she’s said it. I can hear her voice in my head, right now”
(Kinsella, 2015: 120)

According to the sentences provided, Audrey feels afraid, trembles, and experiences shortness of breath merely upon hearing the name of Starbucks. This reaction occurs even though she has not yet visited the establishment.

I'm starting to panic. My chest is rising and falling. I can't stay. I can't do this. Dr. Sarah's wrong. I'm never going to get better. Look, I can't even sit in Starbucks. I'm a total failure and now darker thoughts are circling my head, dragging me down. I should just hide away. I shouldn't even exist. What's the point of me, anyway?

(Kinsella, 2015: 25)

Audrey finds herself trapped within the confines of her home, unable to venture beyond its walls. Even a simple outing to Starbucks evokes overwhelming panic within her. The tightness in her chest and the erratic rhythm of her breathing leave her feeling helpless. Doubts about her own worthiness and capabilities creep into her mind, casting a shadow over her sense of self. The profound impact of Audrey's anxiety becomes strikingly apparent as she grapples with the daunting prospect of stepping outside.

5. Conclusion

Based on the discussion, it is evident that Audrey's experiences in *Finding Audrey* highlight various causes, responses, and effects related to anxiety disorder. Audrey's anxiety seems to stem from threats to her safety and personal space, as well as from the fear of judgment and social interactions. These threats and fears contribute to her intense worry and persistent anxiety, leading to avoidance behaviors. Audrey's responses to her anxiety include excessive worry and overthinking, particularly concerning how others perceive her and how they might respond to her actions. This overthinking exacerbates her anxiety and leads to avoidance behaviors, further reinforcing her fear and discomfort in social situations. The effects of Audrey's anxiety disorder are profound and significantly impact her daily life. She exhibits avoidance behaviors such as wearing sunglasses to avoid eye contact, withdrawing from school due to traumatic experiences, and experiencing fear and panic when venturing outside her home. These effects illustrate the debilitating nature of anxiety disorders and the challenges individuals face in carrying out routine activities. Overall, Audrey's experiences in *Finding Audrey* underscore the complex interplay between threats, fears, responses, and effects associated with anxiety disorder. The novel sheds light on the debilitating impact of anxiety on individuals' lives and emphasizes the importance of understanding and addressing the underlying causes and responses to effectively manage anxiety disorders.

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