

CHAPTER II

THEORY AND METHOD

2.1. Theoretical Framework

This chapter contains all the theories adopted by the writer in doing her analysis. It is important to use all the relevant theories to solve the research's problems. The theoretical framework includes intrinsic and extrinsic elements.

2.1.1. Intrinsic Elements

Intrinsic elements are elements that build the literary work from the work itself. In this study, the researcher will discuss four intrinsic elements of the novel, there are character, characterization, setting, and conflict.

2.1.1.1. Character

Character is one of the essential elements in fiction. According to Kenney, the character is the 'people' in fiction (1999:24). As a fictional person, a character is expected to be lifelike and relatable, with traits and qualities that make them resemble real people. Readers expect characters to behave in ways consistent with human nature, exhibiting emotions, thoughts, and actions that reflect reality within the story's context.

In addition to Kenney, Abrams and Harpham also propose another definition of characters. Abrams and Harpham describe characters as individuals depicted in a story or play. Readers perceive these characters as having specific moral,

intellectual, and emotional traits based on their speech, unique manner of speaking, and actions (1999:48).

Kenney divides characters into two general categories, namely simple characters and complex characters (1966:28). A simple character is also called a flat character because the reader only sees one side of him. Kenney argues that this character is more the embodiment of a particular attitude or obsession than a reflection of an actual personality (1966:28). In his book, Kenney divides simple characters into two types. The first one is the stereotyped simple character. The familiar types or stereotype character characteristics can be summed up adequately in a formula (Kenney, 1966:28). The other type of simple character is the individualised simple character. This character is similar to a stereotype character because it can be summed up in a formula; the difference is that this character has his formula, and no other character in fiction can fit.

A complex character is also called a round character because the reader can see all aspects of this character. Compared to simple characters, complex characters are more realistic due to their complexity. People in real life are not simply the embodiment of single attitudes (Kenney, 1966: 29). Complex characters are marked by their capability to surprise the reader; however, the surprise must not result from a plausibility violation.

2.1.1.2. Characterization

Characterization is the technique the author uses to depict his characters. Characterization is divided into two categories: direct and indirect characterization.

Direct characterization tells the reader about the character by explicitly describing or commenting on a character's traits. Indirect characterization requires readers to infer a character's traits through subtler cues like their actions, speech, or appearance (Baldick, 2001:37).

2.1.1.3. Setting

The setting is the physical, and sometimes spiritual, background against which the action of a narrative takes place (Holman, 1980:413). It encompasses not only the visible backdrop or the specific locations where the events occur but also extends to elements such as the time of day, season, climate, and broader social and cultural contexts. Additionally, the setting includes the historical period, situating the story within a particular temporal framework that can influence the characters and plot (Stanton, 1966:18). By integrating these aspects, the setting plays a crucial role in shaping the narrative, providing a foundation for the story's atmosphere, themes, and interactions between characters.

Kenney categorises setting into three main types: the setting of place, the setting of time, and the setting of environment. The setting of place refers to the geographical location of the story, encompassing its physical features such as topography, scenery, and spatial arrangements (Kenney, 1966:40). This element is vital in fiction, as the essence and realism of a story often depend heavily on its connection to place. Eudora Welty, as cited by DiYanni (2007:67), emphasizes the significance of place, describing it as the medium through which the emotions, beliefs, and moral convictions of a story are conveyed. She asserts that place gives

life to characters, grounding them in reality and enhancing their authenticity. Without a well-defined sense of place, characters and their stories would lose their distinctiveness, becoming unrecognizable as works of art. Thus, the setting of the place is not merely a backdrop but an integral force that shapes the narrative and breathes life into its elements.

The setting of time reveals the time in which the action takes place (Kenney, 1966:40). It tells the specific time or period when the story occurs. In many works, particularly historical fiction, the time of the action is of the utmost importance. The time in which the action occurs in the fiction could also portray the customs and moral conventions at a particular time (Kenney, 1966:42). The last is the setting of the environment which covers both the physical and social environment of the character. This setting reveals the religious, mental, moral, intellectual, social, and emotional environment of the characters (Kenney, 1966:40).

2.1.1.4. Conflict

One of the important elements in a literary work is the plot. According to Kenney, the plot informs the reader of the events' temporal and causal relationships (1966:14). That is what makes a plot different from a story. While a plot is a narrative of events with a focus on casualties, a story is a piece of fiction that deals with events that occur in a temporal sequence. The presence of a plot in a novel helps the reader recognize that events are not just part of a chronological sequence but are interconnected through a complex web of cause and effect (Kenney, 1966:14),

A plot has its structure, which is divided into some parts, one of which is conflict. Conflict typically emerges midway through the story as the elements that create instability in the initial situation come together, forming a recognizable pattern of tension and opposition (Kenney, 1966:17). According to Stanton, conflict is divided into two: conflict internal and conflict external (1966:16). An internal conflict is a conflict within a single character that happens because there are two desires, while external conflict is a conflict between characters or between a character and his environment (Stanton, 1966:16).

2.1.2. Extrinsic Elements

Extrinsic elements refer to factors outside a literary work that indirectly shape its structure and development. Several things are categorized as extrinsic elements in literary works, and one of them is psychological states.

In this study, the writer focuses on the psychological state of the main character, Marin, after experiencing the loss of someone she loves and her way to overcome the grief. The stage of grief that Marin experienced was analysed using the stages of grief theory by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler, while Worden's task of mourning was used to explore Marin's way of healing.

2.1.2.1. Stage of Grief

Grief is a reaction to loss, involving emotional, cognitive, and physical responses as one adjusts to life without the person or thing lost. A person experiencing grief does not immediately accept the loss with composure. Initially, they often undergo denial and shock before eventually reaching the stage of

acceptance. This process of grieving was first proposed by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in her book *On Death and Dying (1969)* named as the stages of grief theory which addressed an individual who has a near-death experience. Years later this theory is developed by Kübler-Ross and David Kessler in their book *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss (2005)*. In this book, they explain that stages of grief are not only experienced by those who are terminally ill, but also by those who have lost their loved ones.

Kübler-Ross and Kessler describe five stages of grief that individuals may experience: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. However, these stages are not universal, nor do they occur in a fixed order, as each person processes grief in their way. They emphasize that these stages are not confined to specific durations but are emotional responses that can fluctuate, lasting minutes or hours, as individuals move back and forth between them. “We do not enter and leave each individual stage in a linear fashion. We may feel one, then another, and back again to the first one” (Kübler-Ross and Kessler, 2005:18).

2.1.2.1.1. Denial

The first stage is denial. For a person who lost a loved one, Kubler-Ross and Kessler said that denial is more symbolic than literal (2005:8). This means that when an individual loses their loved one, they will not believe the new information and cannot adapt to the new situation. Denial does not involve rejecting the reality of death itself but rather the surrounding circumstances. In this stage, a person may initially react with shock or experience a sense of numbness. Then the individual

will start to deny the fact, they disbelieve the information that their loved one is dead and think that it is just a dream.

Denial as the first stage of grieving helps people to survive the loss. This stage makes people think that the world is meaningless and overwhelming, and then they will start to question their reality. Denial and shock help people to cope and make survival possible by giving them moments away from their pain and by helping people to pace their feelings of grief. Denial acts as a coping mechanism, allowing individuals to process only what they can handle at a time. Facing all the emotions tied to loss simultaneously would be emotionally overwhelming. One-way grieving individuals cope is by repeatedly recounting the story of their loss, which helps them momentarily distance themselves from the pain while gradually coming to terms with the reality of their situation. As denial diminishes, it is replaced by the recognition of the loss. This acceptance prompts individuals to reflect and ask questions, unknowingly marking the beginning of their healing journey.

2.1.2.1.2. Anger

Anger in the grieving process is often irrational, it can be directed to anyone and can present in many forms (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005:11). Anger arises when a person already feels safe in knowing that he or she will be able to get through whatever comes. Anger is a necessary stage of the healing process because the more they truly feel it, the more it will begin to dissipate and the more they will heal (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005:12). There are other emotions under the anger but

anger is usually chosen to avoid those other feelings and it is the emotion one most used to manage. Anger is a part of emotional management. If one has successfully passed the first waves of it, means that one is ready to go deeper and have many subsequent visits with anger in many forms.

According to Kübler-Ross & Kessler, anger is strength and it can be an anchor, giving temporary structure to the nothingness of loss (2005:15). Anger is a bridge to connect a grieving person with people around them. Anger provides something tangible to cling to, offering a sense of connection that feels more bearable than emptiness.

It is not advised to harbour anger because anger should be expressed. Anger shows the capability of one to feel love, it can also show the intensity of love. Anger means one is progressing, that one is allowing all those feelings that were simply too much before to come to the surface (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005:16). One should allow anger to present itself without any attempt to judge it or find meaning behind it. Anger is a normal response to the unfairness of loss. It is important to express anger in the right way, because if not it can isolate individuals from their friends and family.

2.1.2.1.3. Bargaining

There are many types of bargains proposed by grieving people. The first one is the bargaining before a loss. In this situation, one will bargain to God that they will do anything if their loved one may be spared. The second one is to bargain after a loss which is proposed in the form of a temporary truce. There will be “what if”

and “if only” statements proposed in this situation that caused people to find fault with their selves and what they “think” they could have done differently. That is why sometimes, guilt comes with bargaining. People also bargain with the pain by doing anything that can distract them from the pain of the loss. For example, remain in the past so one can negotiate their way out of the hurt.

According to Kübler-Ross and Kessler, bargaining can offer temporary relief from the pain of grief, serving as both an escape from emotional suffering and a distraction from the harsh reality (2005:19). They explain that bargaining helps the mind transition from one stage of loss to another, acting as a psychological pause that provides time to adjust. During this stage, bargaining can fill the emotional void left by intense feelings, creating distance from suffering. It also fosters the belief that we can regain control amidst the chaos caused by loss.

Over time, bargaining evolves. Additionally, the type of bargain may vary. The mind modifies historical events as we proceed through the bargaining process, investigating all those "what if" and "if only" scenarios. The mind naturally reaches the same awful conclusion, which is that our loved one has passed away.

2.1.2.1.4. Depression

Depression arises when grief and a profound sense of emptiness deeply affect an individual's life. Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2005:20) emphasize that depression is not a sign of mental illness but rather a natural and appropriate reaction to a significant loss, particularly the loss of a loved one. Experiencing

depression in such circumstances is expected, as losing someone close is an inherently distressing and sorrowful experience.

Society treats depression caused by grief as something to be treated. According to Kübler-Ross & Kessler, depression in grief is nature's way of protecting grieving people by causing the nervous system to shut down, allowing them to adjust to something they feel they cannot handle (2005:21). Depression has elements that can be helpful in grief. Depression could help the bereaved to slow down and truly process the extent of the loss. It compels them to rebuild their selves from the foundation, creating space for personal growth. This stage guides them to delve into the deeper parts of their soul that they might not typically examine.

2.1.2.1.5. Acceptance

Acceptance does not imply that everything is well or that what has occurred is acceptable. Kübler-Ross and Kessler describe acceptance as coming to terms with the fact that a loved one is no longer physically present and understanding that this new reality is permanent (2005:25). Acceptance is not about liking the situation, no one will ever like the new reality where their love one was gone. It is about recognizing everything that has been lost and finding a way to live with that loss (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005: 26). Although healing appears and feels like an unachievable state, acceptance is where the final healing and adjustment can firmly take hold.

Acceptance is a process that grieving people experience, not a final stage with an endpoint (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005:27). Everyone has their own time

and pace in achieving acceptance. There is always a struggle that leads people to their own personal and unique acceptance. Time gives grieving people the chance to withdraw their energy from the loss little by little before they begin to invest in life. Grieving people put the loss into perspective by learning how to remember their loved ones and commemorate the loss. They begin forming new relationships or invest more time in their current ones. It is important to not deny the feelings and give grief its time so grieving people can move on and start their lives again.

2.1.2.2. Task of Mourning

According to Worden, grief refers to the personal experience of the loss, while mourning is the process that occurs after a loss (2009:37). Various theorists have interpreted grief as a process in different ways, mainly as tasks, phases, and stages. The stage of mourning has the same definition as the stage of grief that previously has been explained before. A phase suggests a process that the mourner experiences passively, as something they must simply go through. In contrast, a task is more active, implying that the mourner can take action and engage in efforts to cope. The task-oriented approach offers a sense of empowerment and hope, emphasizing that the mourner can take deliberate steps to adjust to the loss of a loved one (Worden, 2009:38).

Worden's task of mourning involves the four basic tasks: (1) to accept the reality of the loss; (2) to process the pain of grief; (3) to adjust to a world without the deceased; (4) to find an enduring connection with the deceased in the midst of embarking on a new life (2009:39-53). The grieving person must address the issue

of these tasks to adapt to the loss. These tasks can be reviewed and completed repeatedly over time; they are not required to be completed in a particular order. Additionally, some tasks can be completed concurrently.

2.1.2.2.1. Task I: To Accept the Reality of the Loss

The first task that the mourner has to do to overcome grief is to accept the reality of the loss. To take the loss, one must face the fact that the deceased is no longer alive and will never return (Worden, 2009:39). A part of accepting this fact is realizing that reunion is not possible in this lifetime.

Worden stated that not believing is the opposite of accepting the reality of the loss (2009:40). Those who refuse to believe that death is real will get stuck at this first task. The mourners do this through some type of denial; there are denying the facts of the loss, the meaning of the loss, or the irreversibility of the loss (Worden, 2009:40). There are several levels of denial about the fact of the loss, ranging from mild distortion to complete hallucination. Though it may lessen the severity of the loss, this distorted way of thinking can also make it more difficult to acknowledge the death's reality. The other type of denial is denying the meaning of the loss. In this sense, the loss may appear less important than it truly is. Denying the meaning of the loss can also be done by selective forgetting. The last type is denying that death is irreversible. The strategy that people use to deny the finality of death involves religious spiritualism.

Accomplishing Task I is not easy since this process takes a lot of time for the mourner to finally accept the reality of the loss. It is because this task is not only

intellectual acceptance but also an emotional one (Worden; 2009:42). Before the mourner's emotions permit them to accept the information as true, they will first logically acknowledge the loss's finality. Although it takes time for the mourner to accomplish this task, the way to validate the reality of death is relatively easy, for example, by holding a traditional ritual such as a funeral. In cases of unexpected death, it can be very challenging to face unreality, especially if the survivor does not see the deceased's body. Therefore, an external way is needed for people who cannot attend the funeral of their loved ones so that they can still get validation about the reality of death.

2.1.2.2.2. Task II: To Process the Pain of Grief

Worden stated that the mourner must acknowledge and work through their pain or it can manifest itself through physical symptoms or some form of aberrant behaviour (2009:44). One's duration of grief may be prolonged if one avoids or represses the pain. The forms of pain one might experience after loss are sadness, dysphoria, anxiety, anger, guilt, depression and loneliness. However, society labels grieving as morbid, unhealthy, and demoralizing. Society feels uncomfortable with the mourner's feelings; hence, they give some messages and platitudes to the mourner with the hope that it can help. According to Worden, the two factors—the society's comments and the mourner's defence—can lead to the denial of the need to grieve (2009:44). The connection between the mourner and society complicates task II.

The opposite of this second task is “not feeling”. There are many ways the mourners do to shorten the task II, the most evident of which is by denying the pain and cutting off their emotions. Avoiding painful thoughts is the mourner’s way to hinder the process. To prevent themselves from experiencing the dysphoria that comes with the loss, they engage in thought-stopping procedures. Some people deal with grief by focusing entirely on happy memories of the deceased, protecting themselves from the discomfort of those who are hurt. People may avoid addressing the challenges of Task II by idealizing the deceased, steering clear of reminders of them, or turning to substance abuse, such as drugs or alcohol. Others attempt to escape their grief by relocating, hoping a change in environment will help them avoid the pain of mourning.

2.1.2.2.3. Task III: To Adjust to a World Without the Deceased

Three areas need to be adjusted after the death of a loved one: external, internal, and spiritual adjustments.

2.1.2.2.3.1. External Adjustment

Worden explains that adapting to life in a new environment without the deceased varies for each individual, depending on the nature of their relationship with the deceased and the roles the deceased fulfilled (2009:46). The bereaved person’s awareness of the role that the deceased’s played usually comes some times after the loss has occurred. In the beginning, they hate the idea of having to develop new skills and step into responsibilities that the deceased used to fill. But after some time, they realize that they like doing the new skill and will never accomplish it if

the deceased still been alive. The successful completion of task III frequently includes the coping strategy of redefining the loss in a way that can benefit the survivor (Worden, 2009:47).

2.1.2.2.3.2. Internal Adjustment

Besides having to adjust to the new roles, the bereaved also need to adjust to their sense of self. What Worden is referring to here is not merely about their new role in society, but more fundamentally, like how death affects self-definition, self-esteem, and sense of self-efficacy (2009:48). Death can affect self-definition if one defines their identity through relationship and caring for others. Death can impact self-esteem, particularly if a person's sense of self-worth is closely tied to the individual they have lost. Bereavement can also undermine a person's sense of self-efficacy—the belief in their ability to influence events in their life (Worden, 2009:48). This loss of confidence may result in profound regression, where the bereaved feel helpless, inadequate, incapable, childlike, or entirely devoid of personal resources. Self-esteem may decline as a result of unsuccessful attempts to fulfil the deceased's roles. When this occurs, people may question their efficacy and blame any change on fate or chance rather than their skills and abilities.

2.1.2.2.3.3. Spiritual Adjustment

The last adjustment is the adjustment to one's sense of the world. According to Neimeyer death has the power to disrupt one's presumptive universe (Worden, 2009:48). Fundamental life values and philosophical beliefs—beliefs shaped by friends, family, education, religion, and life experiences—can be called into question by a loss brought on by a death. People often feel as though they have lost

their purpose in life after losing a loved one. In trying to make sense of the loss and recover some control over their lives, the grieving individual looks for meaning in it and the changes that come with it. One's beliefs may also be called into question by an unexpected and sudden death. Not all deaths challenge one's basic beliefs, some deaths fit the expectations and validate the assumptions.

The result of the grieving process depends on how well a person completes task III. Those who are unable to finish job III will also find it difficult to adjust to the loss they have endured. Worden suggests that individuals can hinder their progress by fostering a sense of helplessness, neglecting to develop coping skills, or retreating from the world and avoiding the demands of their surroundings (2009:49). But most individuals do not go down this disastrous path. Instead, individuals typically choose to take on unfamiliar responsibilities, acquire new abilities, and proceed with a fresh perspective on the world and themselves.

2.1.2.2.4 Task IV: To Find an Enduring Connection With the Deceased in the Midst of Embarking on a New Life

The final task of mourning involves establishing a lasting connection with the deceased while simultaneously moving forward with life. This does not mean the bereaved detaches emotionally from the person who has passed away. Instead, they develop enduring bonds with the deceased. The bereaved do not completely forget the significant individual or entirely withdraw their emotional investment in their memory. Mourning is considered complete when the mourner no longer feels the need to revisit the memory of the deceased with heightened intensity in their

daily life. A person is considered ready to embrace a new relationship when they can emotionally integrate the deceased into their inner world in a meaningful way that still allows space for new connections. This process helps the bereaved create a balanced place for the departed in their emotional life, enabling them to move forward and engage fully with the world.

"Not living" is the best way to describe the failure to complete task IV. When their beloved one dies, their life comes to an end and does not start again. When one clings to the previous attachment in a way that prevents the formation of new ones, the fourth job is impeded. Task IV is the most challenging for some people to do. This is because they become mired in their grief at this point and subsequently come to the realisation that their life somehow came to a halt at the moment of the loss.

2.2. Research Method

Wellek and Warren, in their book *Theory of Literature (1956)*, highlight the relationship between psychology and literature. Psychology of literature according to them is the psychological study of the writer; the study of the creative process; or the study of the psychological types and laws present within works of literature; or the effects of literature upon its readers (1968:75). The focus on this study is on the psychological types and laws that present in the novel *We Are Okay*.

This subchapter contains the methods which apply to this study, including the research approach and the method of data collection.

2.2.1. Research Approach

The background of the study mentions that *We Are Okay* depicts the psychological phenomena of someone who is grieving through the main character's journey. This study employs a psychological approach to analyse the data regarding the psychological phenomena portrayed in the novel. A psychological approach to literature examines the psychological dimensions of literary works, focusing on how authors portray the psyche and psychological states of their characters (Wellek & Warren, 1968:86). The psychological theory applied in this study is the five stages of grief theory by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler and the task of mourning theory by James William Worden.

2.2.2. Method of Data Collection

The data in this study were collected using the library research method. According to George, library research involves identifying and locating sources that provide factual information from personal to expert opinions on a research question (2008: 6). Primary and secondary data sources make up the two categories of data sources used in this study. The researcher's direct access to data from Nina LaCour's book *We Are Okay* serves as the main source of information. The phases of grieving that Marin went through and the mourning process that Marin completed in the book serve as the main sources of information. Data gathered by researchers from pre-existing sources are known as secondary data sources. The research was

supported by secondary data that was gathered from a few books, articles, journals, and websites.