

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

As human beings, individuals cannot be separated from problems. Problems in humans are usually related to the environment, themselves, or even God. This problem can cause conflict and psychological problems that humans can experience feelings such as fear, anxiety, dread, sadness, and mental disorders.

Literary works are made based on phenomena that occur in the real world such as a psychological disorder experienced by the main character. A novel is one form of literary work that is considered an expression of human life. There are many kinds of events in life that are experienced by the characters in the novel, which are psychological aspects. Trauma is one of the psychological aspects of humans. Trauma is a psychological reaction and an extreme emotional response to losses, such as the death of a loved one (Harvey, 2002: 23).

Trauma is an emotional condition experienced by people after a bad event happens to them. These adverse events can vary widely, including accidents, natural disasters, violence, loss of a loved one, or experiences such as bad event. These events have the potential to have a profound and lasting effect on people's mental, emotional, and physical well-being (Schiraldi, 2009: 3). Understanding the impact of trauma on everyday life is essential to coping and supporting those who have experienced it. Berger (1997: 569-582) states that "trauma is not just disaster but it's the effect of an event that can spread and develop into many forms which are

not related to the event. In summary, trauma is a complex and pervasive aspect of everyday life that can have profound and lasting effects on individuals and communities. Recognising and understanding the impact of trauma is essential for providing appropriate support and care to those who have experienced it and for promoting resilience and healing in everyday life.

Trauma is an interesting theme in literary works to analyze, because through the trauma experienced by the character, it can be explored the depth of emotions and resilience in the characters. *We Are Okay* by Nina LaCour is a Young Adult novel covering grief, avoidance, and unresolved trauma. This novel tells the story of a character named Marin who left her hometown, San Francisco, for New York after her Gramps died. Marin lives with her grandfather in San Francisco near the beach. Her mother died in a drowning accident and her father doesn't know that Marin exists. Marin lives happily with her Gramps and they respect each other's privacy. Marin has always been very curious about what her mother was like when she was alive because her mother died when Marin was two years old, but her Gramps refuse to talk about it. After her Gramps died, no one knew what had happened to Marin until four months later her best friend Mabel visited Marin's dorm during winter break to take Marin back to San Francisco. However, Marin refused to go back there. Mabel didn't give up so easily. As the story continues, Marin eventually shares what happened to her after her Gramps died, revealing a shocking and disappointing truth. Although the novel doesn't implicitly state that Marin is experiencing PTSD, she shows many symptoms of PTSD, such as avoidance, intrusive memories, mood swings, and difficulties in relationships.

Through Marin's journey, the novel delves into the intricate dynamics of guilt, the stages of grief, and avoidance issues, offering readers a deep understanding of the complex and transformative nature of trauma in the context of overwhelming loss.

1.2 Research Problems

There are three research problems of this study based on the research background, as follows:

1. What symptoms did Marin experience that caused her to suffer from PTSD?
2. What causes Marin's character in Nina LaCour's *We Are Okay* experience PTSD?
3. How does trauma impact Marin's character in Nina LaCour's *We Are Okay*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To identify the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder that Marin experiences
2. To identify the causes of Marin's trauma in Nina LaCour's *We Are Okay*
3. To analyze the trauma effects of Marin's character in Nina LaCour's *We Are Okay*

1.4 Previous Studies

After searching similar previous studies, there are several previous studies related to this study's object found in thesis, book reviews, and blogs. These works are referred to in order to highlight the originality of this research and to ensure that it doesn't overlap with or replicate existing studies. Here are ten previous

studies that are related to this object of discussion about the novel *We Are Okay* by Nina LaCour.

The first previous study published in 2017 by Joy Piedmont is a book review entitled “*We Are Okay*”. In her review, Joy Piedmont states that reading *We Are Okay* is a deeply emotional experience, so strong that she could barely finish it because the story touched her heart. Joy praised how LaCour accurately expressed complex and raw emotions through a concise yet meaningful writing style, which moved her to tears throughout the last 40 pages. The story’s structure, which shifts between the present and flashbacks, creates an atmosphere that feel haunting where Marin’s secret and wounds slowly emerge through dialogue, atmosphere, and actions.

The second previous study is a book review by Katie Monthie entitled “*Book Review: We Are Okay*” published in 2017. This review highlights how *We Are Okay* presents LGBTQ+ themes without making the solely a romantic focus. The novel is strong not because of its action plot, but because of its emotional depth. The strength of the story goes into how LaCour shows Marin’s grief and loneliness after losing her Gramps. Even though it’s simple, the author sees a quietness that makes readers feel Marin’s trauma more deeply. The author concludes that *We Are Okay* is about loss, trauma, and also about finding hope to heal through the presence of caring people like Mabel.

The third previous study is a blog post by Ella published in 2019 entitled “*An Essay on Loneliness and Grief: We Are Okay by Nina LaCour*” discuss on the themes of loneliness, loss, and the healing process through the story of Marin after

she is left by her Gramps and distance herself from her best friend, Mabel. The author explains that the novel depicts Marin's struggles with love, identity, fear of rejection, how grief and queerness affect her relationships with others.

The fourth previous study is a thesis entitled "*Lesbianism Portrayed in Nina Lacour's Novel We Are Okay*" written by Muktas Hasan Hasibuan published in 2019. This thesis discusses the causes of the main character becoming a lesbian.

The fifth previous study by Vetri and Erika published in 2022 entitled "*A Portrayal of Main Characters' Interpersonal Behaviour In Nina LaCour's We Are Okay*" discusses the interpersonal behaviour of Marin and Mabel, and it also explains its impact on Marin and Mabel. This study uses William Schutz's theory to analyze.

The sixth previous study, entitled "*Anxiety and Self-defence Mechanism of the Major Characters in Nina LaCour's We Are Okay*" by Ilham Ardian published in 2022. The topic deals with anxiety and defence mechanisms experienced by the main character 'Marin'. The writer uses Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory and finds three types of anxiety experienced by the main character and uses defence mechanisms to reduce her pain.

The seventh previous study is a book review by Devon Trevarrow Flaherty published in 2023 entitled "*Book Review: We Are Okay*". The author describes *We Are Okay* as a quite yet emotional story written in a subtle atmospheric style. The story describes as slow, lazy, close-to-home plot. However, throughout the story, the author realizes that the message of the novel is that we don't always know what's best for us, and we have to face the consequences of the choice we make.

The author also feel that the themes of mental health and psychological wounds in the story are not explored in greater depth, perhaps so that readers can interpret it for themselves.

The eighth previous study is a book review by Jamie Rose published in 2024 entitled "*A Devastating Story of Grief: We Are Okay by Nina LaCour*" on Lesbrary offers a deeply emotional and insightful review of the novel. The author states that the book is truly touching, even bringing her to tears during certain parts of the story. She praises LaCour's concise yet powerful writing style, which effectively conveys the characters' emotions in a compelling manner. Narrative techniques such as flashbacks and gradually revealed secrets add to the story's dramatic power. The author also highlights the choice of setting Marin's first year of college as a crucial element in depicting the protagonist's inner conflict. Despite its sadness, the novel offers a glimmer of hope toward the end, making it a beautiful and hopeful tale of grief.

The ninth one is an undergraduate thesis entitled "*Navigating Loss: Analyzing Marin's Stage of Grief and Journey Toward Healing in Nina LaCour's We Are Okay*" written by Salina Charma Devi published in 2025. This thesis analyses grief and the healing process of Marin using Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler's stages of grief theory and James William Worden's task of mourning theory.

The tenth previous study is a book review by Joao Nsita published in 2025 entitled "*We Are Okay by Nina LaCour Book Review: A Quiet Queer Anthem of Grief and Grace*". The author describes the novel as quite but powerful, calling it

a “queer anthem of grief and grace.” The author highlights how LaCour’s writing is emotional, soft, and deeply moving. The story deals with grief, loneliness, friendship, and queer love in a very subtle way. Joao praises how the novel captures silence, winter atmosphere, and the heaviness of unspoken feelings, making it a touching and graceful read.

These previous studies use the same object of literature, *We Are Okay* (2017) by Nina LaCour, whether in the form of book reviews, blog, and thesis, emphasize issues such as sadness, loneliness, anxiety, queerness, self-defence, and the process of grief. Although some previous studies have talked about Marin’s psychological aspects, like anxiety, self-defence mechanism, and the grieving process she went through after the traumatic event, this study focuses on Marin’s experience through the PTSD framework. This study not only describes Marin’s emotions or stages of grief but also analyzes how her traumatic experience led to the PTSD symptoms she experienced.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on analyzing the trauma experienced by the main character, Marin in Nina LaCour’s *We Are Okay*, its symptoms, causes, and impact. The author analyzes the intrinsic elements of the novel in the form of narrative elements in this research, including characters and characterization, conflict and setting. Secondly, PTSD theory includes the main character Marin's trauma, its symptoms, causes, and the impact of Marin Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

1.6 Writing Organization

CHAPTER I

This chapter describes the background of this analysis study; the research problems, the objectives of the study; the previous studies used as a reference in completing this study; the scope of the study; and the writing organization.

CHAPTER II

Chapter II explains the theories about intrinsic elements, theory of PTSD, and research methods that are used to analyze Nina LaCour's *We Are Okay*.

CHAPTER III

Chapter III analyzes literary works using methods and theories like intrinsic elements, covering character and characterization, conflict, and setting. For the theory of PTSD, the writer analyzes the symptoms, cause, and effect of PTSD experienced by the main character in her life.

CHAPTER IV

Based on the analysis, the main points of the study are summed up in this chapter.

REFERENCES