

THE EXISTENCE OF CHARLIE DAVIS'S IN KATHLEEN GLASGOW'S *GIRL IN PIECES*

Aldiza Saniya Afifah Priyono¹, Muizzu Nurhadi²

¹Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya, Indonesia

²Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya, Indonesia

Pos-el: aldiza.saniya04@gmail.com

Abstract: This study is entitled “The Meaning of Charlie Davis's Existence in Kathleen Glasgow’s *Girl in Pieces*”. The objectives of this study are to explain the existence of Charlie Davis. In this research, the writer uses Jean-Paul Sartre's theory to find the meaning of existence that consists of the novel. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method by using a philosophical approach. The results show that seeking connection and love, overcoming trauma and self-discovery anguish, and hope for the future is a struggle in search of existence. From the results of this research, the findings show that Charlie's experience underscores the importance of making conscious choices and taking responsibility for his actions to shape his identity and find a purpose in life. Charlie's journey is marked by a transition from merely surviving to becoming active in seeking a fulfilling and meaningful life. So positive activities and a good environment can provide therapeutic benefits for Charlie and can serve as a way for Charlie to gain control over his life and build resilience.

Keywords: Existentialism, Existence, Overcoming Trauma, Self-discovery

INTRODUCTION

The theory of existentialism emerged in response to existing uncertainty, offering the perspective that the meaning of life is not given externally, but must be created from within the individual (Newall, 2021). Existentialist philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Viktor Frankl stressed the importance of freedom, responsibility, and self-awareness in the search for the meaning of life. Philosophers argue that humans first exist without a predetermined purpose or essence, and through their actions and choices, humans form their own identities and values (Chukwuokolo & Jeko, 2020). In this view, everyone has the potential to find a unique meaning in life through their struggles and experiences, making each challenge an opportunity for growth and self-discovery. A man is utterly free - he makes his own values, he believes in his own subjective morality, and no other external factors may influence his existence. But before anything else, a man first exists. He encounters himself and presents reality within himself. Only later, he determines his own nature freely, and he will be what he makes of himself (Karima, 2023). This is the foundation of human existence itself: the theory of existentialism, “existence precedes essence”.

Struggles in one's life are seemingly related to one's meaning of existence, as shown by Kathleen Glasgow in her novel, *Girl in Pieces*. It tells the story of Charlie Davis, a seventeen-year-old teenage girl facing the worst life has to offer. After losing her father, mother, and best friend, she becomes a ‘damaged’ young woman who experiences more destruction in her life than most people. Charlie experiences depression and trauma so severe that she has to be hospitalized. However, Charlie's desire to recover is also very great so Charlie can get through all situations that are difficult to accept. When Charlie is discharged from the hospital, she looks for purpose in life. When she starts working at a restaurant, she meets a lover who thinks may be able to help Charlie get well. Riley, Charlie's partner, is a drunk and a drug addict, so their love story is not all that great either, leading them into a toxic relationship. Charlie learns that Riley is unable to assist him in recovering. Charlie decides to end this toxic relationship, and she starts to meet individuals who have similar aspirations in life to

find the real meaning of life. Charlie eventually discovered who she was after gaining a lot of life experience, self-awareness, and a supportive environment.

The reasons above become the thesis writer's interest in conducting research entitled "The Meaning of Charlie Davis's Existence in Kathleen Glasgow's *Girl in Pieces*" because this novel depicts the search for meaning in life through struggles. To analyze it, the writer uses Jean-Paul Sartre's theory of existentialism to find Charlie Davis's existence in the novel *Girl in Pieces* by Kathleen Glasgow. The theory of existentialism is expanded in the novel through the basis of the mood, the character's inner and physical struggles, and through the inner spirit of the characters.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Existentialism Theory

According to Sartre (1996), existentialism revolves around the notion of subjectivity, highlighting the subjective experience and interpretation of reality by everyone. In this framework, human existence is characterized by autonomy, self-awareness, and the constant struggle to define oneself in a world devoid of inherent meaning or purpose. The word "existentialism" was first introduced by Marcel in 1943. The word has a broad and diverse range of incarnations; therefore, it is difficult to explain what that word refers to. Out of the major contributors to this movement, only Sartre and Beauvoir self-identified as "existentialist" (Aho, 2022). Existentialism encompasses a wide range of perspectives and ideas, reflecting the complexity of human experience and the diverse ways individuals grapple with questions of meaning and purpose in life.

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) was an atheist existentialist in the mid-20th century - at a time where the theory was strongly contested and was believed to be founded on the wrong perspective (Wardle, 2016). Sartre presented his speech titled "Existentialism is a Humanism" at a newly established club called Club Maintenant. He famously proposed that existence precedes essence, in which an existing man must create his values for himself. Sartre rejects objective morality in which he believes there is no God, thus no system of values and no essence, except for subjective morality that man creates for himself (Akinbode, 2023). The concept that existence precedes essence, that humans must create their own values, emphasizes the importance of individual freedom and full responsibility for their lives. This challenges ideas that base moral values on external authorities such as God and leads to thoughts that liberate and enable us to take control of our own destiny.

Concept of Existence

Existence Precedes Essence

The concept of "Existence Precedes Essence" by Jean-Paul Sartre aims to affirm the freedom of individuals to determine their identity. Sartre & Sartre (1995) emphasized that everyone has absolute freedom to shape himself through the actions and choices he takes, in the absence of a predetermined essence or goal. With that freedom comes responsibility, in which human beings are responsible for what they do and, therefore, for what they become (Sartre & Mairret, 1965). In Sartre's works, Sartre often uses examples to illustrate this idea. One notable example is the waiter in a café, described in "Being and Nothingness." Sartre observes how the waiter performs his duties with exaggerated attentiveness, almost becoming a caricature of what a waiter should be (Warnock & Warnock, 1967). This behavior, according to Sartre, demonstrates the waiter's attempt to conform to an externally imposed role rather than embracing his freedom to define himself. Another example is the student's dilemma in Sartre's essay "Existentialism is a Humanism," where the student must choose between staying with his ailing mother or joining the French Resistance during World War II (Sartre & Mairret, 1965). Priest (2001) highlights that there are no predetermined guidelines or essence dictating the right choice; the student must create his own essence through his decision and bear the responsibility for it. These examples underline Sartre's belief that individuals must navigate their own path and create their essence through the freedom of their choices and actions.

Freedom and Responsibility

Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of radical freedom aims to emphasize that human beings have absolute freedom to choose their own path of life and shape their own destiny (Poellner, 2015). Sartre emphasized that with this freedom comes responsibility, where individuals must take responsibility for their actions and their impact on themselves as well as others. This freedom and responsibility are at the core of human existence, requiring individuals to live their lives with ethical awareness

and consideration. Humans argue that since there is no predetermined essence or purpose, humans must create their own meaning through their choices and actions. This process involves accepting the uncertainty and absurdity of life, which can lead to feelings of restlessness or existential fear. This concept aims to encourage individuals to face their freedom with courage and take responsibility for their decisions, so that they can live an authentic and meaningful life (Sartre & Mairat, 1965). Sartre uses several examples to illustrate this concept of freedom and responsibility. One famous example is the waitress in a café depicted in "Being and Nothingness." Sartre depicts a servant who carries out his duties with great care and attentiveness, almost like a caricature of what a servant should do (Reynolds & Renaudie, 2022). This behavior indicates the servant's attempt to conform to externally imposed roles, rather than embracing her freedom to define herself. Another example is a college student who has to choose between pursuing a desired career or following in the family business footsteps (Detmer, 1998). The student has a great interest in the arts and wants to become an artist, but his family expects him to take over the established family business. Sartre would emphasize that there is no predetermined essence that leads to the right choice. The student must create his own essence through his decision, whether it is choosing to pursue his passion for art or fulfill his family's expectations. In both cases, the student must bear responsibility for the consequences of his choice. This example confirms Sartre's belief that individuals must navigate their own path and create their essence through their freedom of choice and action.

Anguish

The concept of existential anxiety or angst by Jean-Paul Sartre aims to highlight a deep awareness of individual freedom and the responsibilities that come with it (Flynn, 1984). This anxiety arises from the realization that humans are not bound to a predetermined path but must face uncertainty and anxiety in making choices and defining their own existence. This realization emphasizes the burden of human freedom and the existential challenge of self-definition, making it both empowering and frightening. In Sartre's philosophy, existential anxiety is an integral part that emphasizes authenticity and ethical considerations. This anxiety drives individuals to live intentionally, making conscious choices that reflect their true selves rather than succumbing to social pressures or self-deception. By embracing anxiety, individuals confront the absurdity of existence and the absence of inherent meaning in life, prompting them to create their own meaning and purpose (Sartre & Sebille, 2019). Sartre uses several examples to illustrate this concept of anxiety or "anguish". One example in social life can be seen in the experience of a student presenting a project in front of the class (Sartre & Sebille, 2019). The student becomes acutely aware of the gaze of their peers and teachers, which brings about anxiety. This anxiety stems from the realization that they are being evaluated and judged, compelling them to reflect on how they present themselves and the content of their presentation. The student must navigate this situation with the freedom to express their ideas and the responsibility of representing themselves authentically. Another example from daily life is the experience of someone posting on social media. When an individual shares a personal post, they become conscious of how friends, family, and even strangers perceive and judge their content (Leak, 2006). This awareness can trigger anxiety, as the individual must consider the potential reactions and judgments from others. This scenario highlights the responsibility of presenting oneself truthfully and the freedom to express personal beliefs and experiences, despite the anxiety of external judgment. These examples demonstrate how existential anxiety, or anguish, permeates everyday situations, compelling individuals to live with authenticity and ethical awareness while facing the uncertainty and absurdity of life with courage.

Authenticity

The concept of authenticity by Jean-Paul Sartre aims to encourage individuals to fully embrace their freedom and take ownership of their existence. Living authentically means being true to yourself, making choices that align with your beliefs, values, and personal truths, rather than simply conforming to societal norms or external expectations. Authenticity demands that individuals reject conformity and social pressures, choosing genuine self-expression and meaningful engagement with the world. It includes understanding desires and values through introspection, having the courage to act according to one's true self, taking full responsibility for actions and their consequences, maintaining consistency between beliefs and actions, and seeking personal meaning and purpose in life. By committing to these principles, individuals can live a more authentic life, characterized by

genuine self-expression, ethical responsibility, and a deep sense of fulfillment (Baggini, 2002). An everyday example of authenticity in social life could be a teacher who chooses to teach because of a genuine passion for education and a desire to impact students' lives positively (Detmer, 2008). Despite the challenges and pressures of the job, the teacher remains committed to their values and finds personal meaning in their work. This teacher doesn't simply follow the curriculum but engages creatively and sincerely with their students, demonstrating authenticity by staying true to their personal beliefs and motivations. Another example is a young entrepreneur starting a small business based on their personal interests and values. Instead of pursuing a career solely for financial gain or societal approval, entrepreneurs decide to follow their passion for sustainable fashion (Baert, 2015). They dedicate themselves to creating environmentally friendly clothing and run their business in a way that reflects their ethical values. By doing so, the entrepreneur lives authentically, making choices that align with their true self and taking full responsibility for those choices.

"Being-for-itself" and "Being-in-itself"

The concepts of "being-for-itself" (*être-pour-soi*) and "being-in-itself" (*être-en-soi*) by Jean-Paul Sartre aim to explain two distinct and fundamental modes of existence. "Being-for-itself" describes existence characterized by awareness, self-awareness, and the ability to project oneself into the future. It is a mode of human existence, in which individuals have a sense of self and the ability to make choices that shape their future. In contrast, "being-in-itself" is a mode of existence of things, which is complete and independent without consciousness. These objects exist in a fixed and unchanging state, without the ability for self-reflection or change (Sartre & Sartre, 1994). The concept of "being-for-itself" can be illustrated by a person who is actively engaged in self-reflection and making conscious choices about their life (Brunner, 1997). For example, imagine a young professional who decides to change careers because they realize their current job does not align with their personal values and aspirations. This individual is aware of their freedom to choose and is actively shaping their own identity and future. They are not just following a predetermined path or societal expectations but are making decisions based on their own understanding of themselves and their desires. On the other hand, the concept of "being-in-itself" can be illustrated by someone who performs actions out of habit or societal pressure without reflecting on their personal beliefs or desires (Webber, 2009). For example, consider an office worker who stays in a monotonous job simply because it provides financial stability, and they fear change. This person might go through the motions of daily tasks without questioning or reflecting on whether this job truly fulfills them or aligns with their deeper aspirations. They are not exercising their freedom to choose and are instead living in a state of passive acceptance. These examples from everyday life show how individuals can either live authentically by embracing their freedom and making conscious choices (being-for-itself) or live passively by conforming to external expectations and routines without self-reflection (being-in-itself). Sartre's philosophy emphasizes the importance of self-awareness and the active creation of one's identity through free and responsible choices (Lamola, 2022).

METHOD

In analyzing "The Meaning of Charlie Davis's Existence in Kathleen Glasgow's *Girl in Pieces*", the writer applies the descriptive qualitative method. Lambert & Lambert (2012), suggest that this method is well-suited for characterizing aspects relevant to the study issue, whether they are explicitly stated or implied. In the context of this research on Kathleen Glasgow's novel *Girl in Pieces*, the method allows for a thorough exploration of various elements such as characterization, storyline, setting, themes, messages, and points of view that contribute to the depiction of class conflict. To analyze the data, this research uses an extrinsic approach. Wellek & Warren (1949) state that the extrinsic approach encompasses a wide range of topics outside of literary works, such as sociology, psychology, ideology, morality, and society. The approach used is a philosophical approach with the theory of existence by Jean-Paul Sartre to look at the various existentialisms that were faced by Charlie Davis as well as the elements that influence the main character's existence. The source data of this study is a PDF version of a novel entitled *Girl in Pieces* by Kathleen Glasgow. This version was published in 2016, has 359 pages, and is divided into 3 parts. The data then will be taken from the narration, phrases, and sentences. The supporting data are from books, journals, and articles that relate to the topic of cultural identity conflict. Several steps are carried out in the data collection

process. The first one involves the writer thoroughly reading entire chapters of *Kathleen Glasgow's Girl in Pieces*. The researcher then classifies the data that is needed and is relevant to the study and the ones that are not. Finally, the researcher classifies the collected data based on research questions.

RESULT

Charlie Davis's Desire to Exist

Charlie Davis's desire to exist in Kathleen Glasgow's *Girl in Pieces* is a multifaceted and deeply rooted struggle. This section delves into the various dimensions of her desire to live, shaped by her need for human connection, her journey through trauma, and her quest for a better future. Each aspect of her existence is closely examined through specific events and relationships in the novel.

Seeking Connection and Love

Charlie's profound need for human connection and love is a driving force behind her desire to continue living. Throughout *Girl in Pieces*, this need manifests in various relationships and interactions that offer her moments of solace, understanding, and belonging. Basically, the search for relationships and love is a human effort to find meaning and purpose in their lives. In the context of existentialism, it means reflecting the freedom of human beings to determine the meaning of their own lives through social interaction and intimate relationships.

Friendships at the Creeley Center

At the Creeley Center, Charlie forms deep and meaningful connections with other patients, providing her with a much-needed sense of community and shared understanding. Her bond with Louisa is particularly significant. In Part One, Chapter 2, Charlie describes her initial interaction with Louisa: "My first night here, when she lifted her blouse to change for bed, in the moment before that crazy hair fell over her body like a protective cape, I saw them, all of them, and I sucked my breath in hard. She said, 'Don't be scared, little one.' I wasn't scared. I'd just never seen a girl with skin like mine." (Glasgow, 2016:15)

This encounter highlights the immediate connection between Charlie and Louisa, whose shared experiences of self-harm create a silent understanding and mutual comfort. Louisa's presence is a beacon of solidarity for Charlie, showing her that she is not alone in her pain. In this context, Charlie's experience with Louisa at the Creeley Center can be related to authenticity, namely in Acceptance of Self and others, Sartre proposes that authenticity involves being fully aware of our freedom to choose and accept responsibility for our actions. When Charlie meets Louisa and sees that Louisa has injuries similar to her own, that's when Charlie creates a moment where Charlie not only accepts himself but also accepts Louisa as someone who has had similar experiences. This is the first step towards authenticity, where they both understand and accept their condition without hiding or denying it.

Complex Relationship with Riley

Charlie's relationship with Riley is another critical component of her desire to exist. Despite its complications and the often-turbulent nature of their interactions, Riley provides Charlie with moments of intimacy and validation that she desperately craves. In Part One, Chapter 10, Charlie reflects on the comfort she finds in Riley's touch: "His touch is light, hesitant, but I like it. I like that someone is touching me without hurting me. Riley looks at me, really looks at me, and for a moment, I feel like maybe, just maybe, I matter." (Glasgow, 2016:19)

Riley's touch and attention offer Charlie a glimpse of the connection and affection she yearns for, reinforcing her desire to exist and be valued. These moments are crucial for her as they provide a temporary escape from her pervasive feelings of worthlessness. In the context of the relationship between Charlie and Riley, Charlie's experience can be attributed to Existence Precedes Essence, the experience being shown through Charlie sensing Riley's touch as a direct experience of his existence. Riley's light and hesitant touch gave her a different experience from the hurtful experiences she often had. It reflects how Charlie, as an existing individual, responds to and interprets the world through direct interaction with others, in this case, Riley.

Searching for Familial Bonds

Charlie's longing for familial love is another powerful motivator behind her desire to continue living. Her reflections on her mother, despite the abandonment and emotional void it created, underscore

her deep-seated need for maternal love and approval. In Part One, Chapter 7, Charlie recalls a painful memory of her mother's absence:

"My mother didn't come to claim me. But: I remember the stars that night. They're like salt against the sky, like someone spilled the shaker against very dark cloth. That mattered to me, their accidental beauty. The last thing I thought I might see before I died on the cold, t grass." (Glasgow, 2016:15)

These memories highlight Charlie's yearning for a motherly figure and the profound impact of her mother's absence on her sense of self-worth and emotional stability. This search for familial bonds and the hope of rebuilding them is a recurring theme that shapes her interactions and relationships throughout the novel. In the context of Charlie's desire to seek family love, especially from a mother, his experiences and reflections can be attributed to Existence Precedes Essence, the search for meaning and value shown through Charlie longing for a harmonious mother-daughter relationship and a warm experience of family love. His mother's absence created a deep emotional void within him, prompting him to continue to seek and long for healthy and fulfilling family relationships. This reflects Charlie's efforts to find meaning in his existence, not only as an existing individual, but also as a child seeking love and family approval.

Blue's Encouragement and Sense of Worth

Blue, another patient at the Creeley Center, plays a pivotal role in helping Charlie recognize her own worth and potential. Blue's supportive and affirming words provide Charlie with a new perspective on herself. In Part Two, Chapter 18, Blue's encouragement resonates deeply with Charlie: "Blue says, 'You're not nobody. You're somebody, Charlie Davis. You have to start believing that.'" (Glasgow, 2016:202)

These words challenge Charlie's self-perception and inspire her to start believing in her potential and value. Blue's affirmation is crucial for Charlie as it helps her begin to see herself as worthy and capable of building a better life. This moment can be seen as Charlie beginning to embrace her freedom and responsibility to define her own essence. She starts to understand that her value and potential are not dictated by her past or by external validation, but by her own choices and actions. This shift in perspective is crucial for her journey towards self-acceptance and personal growth, reflecting the core existentialist belief that individuals must create their own meaning in life.

Interactions with Newfound Friends

As Charlie's journey continues, she begins to build new friendships that offer her additional layers of connection and support. In Part Three, Chapter 15, her interactions with other residents at the group home where she stays illustrate her growing capacity for forming meaningful relationships: "The girls at the house are all older than me, but they treat me like I'm just one of them. For the first time in a long while, I don't feel like an outsider." (Glasgow, 2016:292)

These new friendships provide Charlie with a sense of normalcy and community, helping her navigate the transition from the structured environment of the Creeley Center to a more independent life. The support and acceptance she finds in these relationships reinforces her desire to exist and belong. In conclusion, Charlie's evolving capacity for forming meaningful relationships and the acceptance she experiences in the group home illustrate her journey toward authenticity. These relationships provide her with a sense of community and support, reinforcing her desire to exist and belong authentically. By feeling accepted and valued, Charlie begins to embrace her true self, moving away from the isolation and self-doubt that previously defined her existence. This shift towards authenticity is essential for her ongoing personal growth and empowerment.

Reconnecting with the Idea of Family

As Charlie progresses on her journey, she also contemplates reconnecting with her estranged family members. This challenging yet hopeful endeavor adds another dimension to her quest for connection. In Part Three, Chapter 21, she reflects on the possibility of reaching out to her mother: "I decided to write a letter to my mom. It's hard, and I don't know if she'll respond, but I need to try. I need to know if there's a chance for us to heal." (Glasgow, 2016:315).

The act of considering reconciliation with her family signifies Charlie's hope for rebuilding these bonds and finding a place where she belongs. This hope plays a critical role in sustaining her desire to live and move forward. In conclusion, Charlie's contemplation of reconnecting with her estranged family through writing a letter to her mother is a profound example of her journey towards authenticity. This decision embodies her acknowledgment of true feelings, taking responsibility for

her life, pursuing meaningful relationships, embracing vulnerability, and maintaining hope. By engaging in this authentic endeavor, Charlie continues to shape her identity and build a life that is true to her values and desires, demonstrating her commitment to living authentically.

Support from Online Communities

In addition to her immediate relationships, Charlie finds support and a sense of connection in online communities. These virtual spaces provide her with additional avenues to share her experiences and receive empathy from people who understand her struggles. In Part Three, Chapter 17, she describes the comfort she finds in an online support group: "I found a forum where people talk about their struggles and support each other. Reading their stories, sharing my own, it makes me feel less alone. It's like a lifeline." (Glasgow, 2016:315)

These online connections extend Charlie's support network and offer her a broader community of understanding and empathy. They reinforce her sense of belonging and provide her with additional resources for coping and healing. In conclusion, Charlie's involvement in online support communities is a critical aspect of her journey towards authenticity. These virtual spaces provide her with genuine connections, a platform for expressing her true self, validation, and an extended support network. By embracing vulnerability and actively engaging in these communities, Charlie strengthens her sense of belonging and self-worth, reinforcing her commitment to living an authentic life. These online connections serve as a vital lifeline, supporting her ongoing process of coping, healing, and self-discovery.

Overcoming Trauma and Self-Discovery

Charlie's journey through self-discovery and her efforts to overcome her traumatic past are central to her desire to exist. The process of confronting and healing from her trauma is depicted through her interactions with others and her inner reflections.

Therapy and Confrontation of Trauma

Charlie's therapy sessions with Casper are instrumental in helping her confront her deep-seated trauma and begin the healing process. In Part Two, Chapter 3, during a session with Casper, Charlie articulates her intense internal struggles and her reliance on self-harm as a coping mechanism:

"My body is on fire all the time, burning me away day and night. I have to cut the black heat out. When I clean myself, wash and mend, I feel better. Cooler inside and calm. Like moss feels, when you get far back in the woods." (Glasglow, 2016:314).

This vivid description of her internal turmoil and her method of managing pain through self-harm illustrates the depth of her struggle. The therapy sessions with Casper provide a safe space for Charlie to explore these emotions and start the journey towards healing. In conclusion, Charlie's therapy sessions with Casper are instrumental in helping her confront and understand her deep-seated trauma and existential anguish. These sessions provide a crucial space for her to explore her intense internal struggles, recognize the depth of her suffering, and begin the journey towards healing and authenticity. By facing her anguish head-on and taking responsibility for her healing, Charlie embodies the existentialist pursuit of finding meaning and authenticity in the midst of profound suffering.

Creative Expression as a Path to Self-Discovery

Charlie's passion for drawing becomes a crucial outlet for her self-expression and healing. Through her art, she finds a way to process her emotions and regain a sense of control over her life. In Part Two, Chapter 14, the act of drawing reconnects her with herself and provides a sense of continuity and identity: "Drawing Blue, even just a little, brings me back to myself. It's like my fingers never forgot what to do. Like they've been waiting for me to come back." (Glasglow, 2016:43).

Art becomes a therapeutic tool for Charlie, allowing her to navigate her complex emotions and find a path to self-discovery. It serves as a medium through which she can explore her identity and express her pain, facilitating her journey towards self-acceptance and resilience. In conclusion, Charlie's passion for drawing is intricately connected to the existentialist themes of freedom and responsibility. Through creative expression, she exercises her autonomy, reclaims control over her life, and takes responsibility for her self-expression and healing. Art provides her with a therapeutic tool to navigate her complex emotions, explore her identity, and build resilience, facilitating her

journey toward self-discovery and self-acceptance. This interplay of freedom and responsibility underscores the transformative power of creative expression in Charlie's life.

Reflection and Growth through Writing

In addition to drawing, Charlie's engagement with writing also plays a significant role in her self-discovery and healing. Her reflections in her journal and her conversations with others about her experiences contribute to her understanding of herself and her journey. In Part Three, Chapter 10, Charlie reflects on her progress and her hopes for the future: "I write about Ellis, about the things used to do, the places used to go. I write about what I want for my future, about the things I hope for, the people I want to meet. Writing it down makes it feel more real, more possible." (Glasgow, 2016:275)

Writing allows Charlie to process her past and envision a future beyond her trauma. This reflective practice helps her consolidate her experiences and aspirations, reinforcing her commitment to continue living and growing. In conclusion, Charlie's practice of writing and reflection is deeply connected to the existentialist themes of freedom and responsibility. Through writing, she exercises her freedom to interpret her life and envision her future, while taking responsibility for her past and its impact on her identity. This reflective practice helps her process trauma, foster self-discovery, and commit to living authentically, reinforcing her journey toward healing and personal growth. Writing becomes a vital tool for Charlie to navigate her experiences, consolidate her aspirations, and empower herself to shape her own destiny.

Exploring New Forms of Artistic Expression

As Charlie continues her journey, she begins to explore new forms of artistic expression beyond drawing and writing. These explorations help her to expand her creative horizons and discover new ways of coping and healing. In Part Three, Chapter 18, she experiments with painting, finding joy and freedom in the process: "I try my hand at painting, mixing colors and watching them blend into new shades. It's messy, but there's something freeing about it. Each stroke feels like a step towards something new." (Glasgow, 2016:319)

These new creative pursuits provide Charlie with additional outlets for self-expression and contribute to her ongoing process of self-discovery and healing. They represent her willingness to explore new dimensions of her creativity and to find meaning and solace in the act of creation. In conclusion, Charlie's exploration of painting and other new forms of artistic expression is deeply connected to the existentialist themes of freedom and responsibility. Through these creative pursuits, she exercises her autonomy, embraces new possibilities, and finds joy in the process of creation. This experimentation allows her to navigate the complexities of life, contribute to her self-discovery, and take responsibility for her healing journey. By engaging in new artistic endeavours, Charlie demonstrates her commitment to living authentically and shaping her own path toward a fulfilling and meaningful existence.

The Role of Music in Healing

Music becomes another vital medium for Charlie's self-expression and healing. Through music, she finds a way to connect with her emotions and experience a sense of release. In Part Three, Chapter 12, Charlie's involvement in a music therapy session highlights the therapeutic power of music: "I pick up the guitar, unsure at first, but as I strum the strings, something inside me shifts. The music flows through me, each note a release of the tension I've been carrying." (Glasgow, 2016:319)

Music therapy offers Charlie a new avenue for expressing her emotions and finding peace. This exploration of music as a form of therapy adds another dimension to her creative journey and supports her overall healing process. In conclusion, Charlie's engagement with music therapy is deeply connected to the existentialist concept of anguish. Through music, she confronts her emotional turmoil, experiences a sense of release, and finds a way to express inexpressible feelings. Music therapy provides her with a sense of freedom and moments of peace, supporting her overall healing process. This exploration of music as a form of therapy adds another dimension to her creative journey, highlighting her resilience and commitment to navigating and alleviating her anguish.

Reclaiming Control and Building Resilience

Charlie's journey of self-discovery also involves reclaiming control over her life and building resilience in the face of adversity. Her decision to engage in educational programs and pursue

personal goals reflects her growing sense of agency and determination. In Part Three, Chapter 2, she contemplates her decision to return to school: "If I do school, it will make Casper happy with me. The last time I was in school, I was kicked out the middle of junior year. That feels like a lifetime ago." (Glasgow, 2016:232)

This step towards education signifies Charlie's aspiration for stability and personal growth. It marks a shift from mere survival to actively seeking a fulfilling and meaningful life. In conclusion, Charlie's decision to return to school is intricately connected to the existentialist themes of freedom and responsibility. By choosing to pursue education, she exercises her autonomy and takes responsibility for shaping her future. This decision highlights her commitment to self-improvement, resilience, and personal growth, reflecting a shift from survival to actively seeking a fulfilling life. Through education, Charlie reclaims control over her life, demonstrating her freedom to make empowering choices and her responsibility to herself and those who support her.

Hope for the Future

Despite her many struggles, Charlie occasionally glimpses a hopeful future. These moments of optimism, though often fleeting, represent her belief in the possibility of a life beyond her current circumstances.

Educational Aspirations and Personal Growth

Charlie's decision to participate in the school's online program symbolizes her hope for a future filled with stability and personal growth. In Part Three, Chapter 2, she reflects on her desire to make Casper proud and to reclaim a sense of normalcy through education: "If I do school, it will make Casper happy with me. The last time I was in school, I was kicked out the middle of junior year. That feels like a lifetime ago." (Glasgow, 2016:232)

This decision reflects her aspiration for self-improvement and her belief in the potential for a better future. It marks a significant shift in her mindset from merely surviving to actively seeking a fulfilling life. In conclusion, Charlie's decision to enrol in the school's online program reflects her engagement with existentialist themes of freedom and responsibility. By exercising her freedom to pursue education despite past setbacks, she takes responsibility for her academic journey and strives for personal growth and stability. This decision marks a significant shift in her mindset towards actively shaping her future and seeking a more fulfilling life, demonstrating her autonomy and commitment to self-improvement.

Blue's Encouragement and the Vision of Possibility

Blue's encouragement and her belief in Charlie's potential play a crucial role in fostering Charlie's hope for the future. In Part Two, Chapter 18, Blue's supportive words challenge Charlie to envision a life beyond her current struggles: "Blue says, 'You're not nobody. You're somebody, Charlie Davis. You have to start believing that.'" (Glasgow, 2016:202)

Blue's words inspire Charlie to believe in her own worth and to envision a future where she can thrive. Blue's support enables Charlie to see the possibility of a life where she is valued and capable of achieving her dreams. One of the central concepts in Sartre's philosophy is the idea that humans are free subjects responsible for creating meaning in their lives. Choice and Responsibility: In Blue's words, there is an implication that Charlie must begin to believe in herself. This refers to Charlie's responsibility to make decisions about how she sees herself and how she will live her life. Sartre emphasizes that every human action carries moral responsibility, and Blue's encouragement pushes Charlie to take responsibility for her self-belief and future aspirations

Moments of Joy and Future Planning

Throughout the novel, Charlie experiences moments of joy and peace that fuel her hope for a better future. These instances, though often brief, provide her with a sense of purpose and direction. In Part Three, Chapter 20, she reflects on the potential of a new beginning and the excitement it brings:

"I think about the future, about what it might hold. It's scary, but it's also exciting. For the first time in a long time, I feel like I have a chance at something better. I'm not sure what it is yet, but I'm willing to find out." (Glasgow, 2016:324)

In this reflection on the future, Charlie contemplates with a mixture of fear and excitement. This emotional blend resonates deeply with Sartre's concept of freedom and responsibility, where each action carries a moral responsibility. As Charlie considers her future and remains open to various

possibilities, she embraces the responsibility of the choices ahead. The feelings of fear and excitement she experiences are integral to her decision-making process, highlighting her awareness of moral responsibility as a free individual. This introspection underscores Charlie's evolving mindset and her growing belief in the potential for a positive and fulfilling life, shaped by her willingness to navigate uncertainty with courage and optimism.

Building a New Life and Embracing Independence

As Charlie continues to heal, she begins to explore the possibility of building a new life and embracing independence. This journey involves finding a place of her own, pursuing her interests, and establishing new routines that reflect her growing autonomy. In Part Three, Chapter 22, she considers the steps she needs to take to move forward:

"It's time to go. I know it, even though I'm terrified of leaving the safety of Creeley. But I also know that I can't stay here forever. I have to take what I've learned and try to live my life out there. I have to believe that I can do it." (Glasgow, 2016:334)

This decision to leave the Creeley Center and start anew signifies Charlie's readiness to embrace a new chapter in her life. It represents her willingness to confront the challenges of independence and to build a future on her own terms. In conclusion, Charlie's decision to leave Creeley Center and pursue independence aligns with the existentialist themes of freedom and responsibility. It reflects her autonomy in making life choices, her acceptance of responsibility for her own development, and her courage to confront the uncertainties of life. This decision embodies her quest for authenticity and personal growth, highlighting her determination to live a life that is true to herself and meaningful in her own eyes.

Exploring New Opportunities and Pursuing Dreams

Charlie's hope for the future also involves exploring new opportunities and pursuing her dreams. As she continues to heal, she becomes more open to the possibilities that lie ahead and begins to consider new paths and ambitions. In Part Three, Chapter 23, she reflects on the excitement and uncertainty of pursuing her dreams: "I think about all the things I want to do, all the places I want to see. It's overwhelming, but it's also exhilarating. For the first time, I feel like I have a future worth looking forward to."

This sense of anticipation and excitement about the future is a testament to Charlie's growing resilience and hope. It reflects her belief in the possibility of a fulfilling and meaningful life beyond her past traumas. By contemplating her future with a sense of exhilaration and anticipation, Charlie exemplifies the existentialist notion of creating one's own meaning in life. Instead of being defined by her past traumas or external circumstances, she looks forward to a future that she envisions as fulfilling and worth living. This proactive stance aligns with Sartre's idea that individuals have the power to create their own essence through their actions and choices. In conclusion, Charlie's contemplation of exploring new opportunities and pursuing her dreams in Part Three, Chapter 23, resonates with the existentialist concept of "existence precedes essence." It highlights her embrace of freedom, her creation of meaningful existence through her aspirations, and her resilience in the face of existential challenges. This reflection underscores her belief in a future shaped by her choices and actions, emphasizing her journey towards self-realization and fulfillment.

Reconnecting with Old Passions and Discovering New Interests

As Charlie looks towards the future, she also begins to reconnect with old passions and discover new interests. This process of exploring her hobbies and interests helps her to build a sense of identity and purpose. In Part Three, Chapter 24, she revisits her love for drawing and considers how it might shape her future: "Drawing has always been a part of me, something that makes me feel alive. Maybe I can find a way to make it more than just a hobby, something that can be a part of my future." (Glasgow, 2016:345)

Reconnecting with her passion for drawing provides Charlie with a sense of continuity and identity. It helps her to envision a future where her interests and talents can play a central role in her life. In summary, Charlie's journey of reconnecting with old passions like drawing and exploring new interests exemplifies the existentialist concept of authenticity. Through this process, she seeks to live a life that is true to herself, integrating her passions into her future plans and fostering a sense of identity and purpose. This exploration of authenticity underscores her commitment to self-discovery and personal growth, emphasizing her quest for a fulfilling and meaningful existence.

Strengthening Relationships and Building Community

Charlie's hope for the future also involves strengthening her relationships and building a sense of community. Whether through reconnecting with family, making new friends, or engaging with support groups, these connections provide her with a foundation of support and belonging. In Part Three, Chapter 25, she reflects on the importance of these relationships in her life: "Being part of this community, feeling connected to others, it's like finding a family I never knew I had. It gives me strength and hope, knowing I'm not alone." (Glasgow, 2016:350)

Charlie's reflection on the significance of relationships and community in Part Three, Chapter 25, resonates deeply with the existentialist notion of authenticity. Authenticity, in this context, involves embracing relationships that align with one's true self, fostering personal development, emotional well-being, and resilience. For Charlie, the expanding sense of community and belonging is not just crucial for her emotional well-being but also provides the resilience and support necessary to sustain her journey. Her experience of finding a "family" within her community signifies her progression towards realizing her authentic self in a nurturing environment. This journey underscores Charlie's commitment to living authentically, where meaningful interactions contribute to her sense of identity and fulfillment. Through these relationships, she discovers the value of genuine connections that support her growth and nurture her aspirations, reflecting her deepening understanding of herself and her place in the world.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion of research data, it can be concluded that the existential journey of Charlie Davis in Kathleen Glasgow's *Girl in Pieces*, is analyzed through the lens of Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism. The analysis reveals that Charlie's has a lot of determination to make it through the darkness. She's also a girl who is seeking to discover all of the pieces that make her who she is, both the good and the bad so that she can fit them all together and better understand who she is so that she can make peace with it and move forward. Charlie is an artist and ultimately it is through her drawings that she finally begins to find her sense of self and to feel more whole. The therapeutic sessions with Casper, in particular, offer her a safe space to explore her emotions and begin her healing process. Her relationships at the Creeley Centre and within online communities provide her with essential support, highlighting the existential notion that individuals find meaning through their interactions and connections with others. Charlie's passion for drawing emerges as a significant outlet for self-expression and healing, allowing her to process emotions and regain control over her life. Her creative pursuits exemplify the transformative power of art in building resilience and reclaiming autonomy. This aspect of her journey underscores the existential theme of finding meaning and identity through authentic actions and self-expression.

REFERENCE

- Aho, K. (2022). *One Beat More: Existentialism and the Gift of Mortality*. New: New Jersey.
- Akinbode, E. (2023). Jean-Paul Sartre's Existential Freedom: A Critical Analysis. *International Journal of European Studies*, 7(1), 15–18. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijes.20230701.13>
- Baert, P. (2015). *The Existentialist Moment: The Rise of Sartre as a Public Intellectual*. London: John Wiley & Sons.
- Baggini, J. (2002). Jean-Paul Sartre: Existentialism and Humanism (1947). In *Philosophy: Key Texts* (Vol. 115, pp. 115–133). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4039-1370-8_6
- Brunner, E. (1997). Socioeconomic Determinants of Health: Stress and the Biology of Inequality. *BMJ*, 314(7092), 1472–1472. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.314.7092.1472>

- Chukwuokolo, J. C., & Jeko, V. O. (2020). Existentialism, Man and Society: A Philosophical Appraisal. *Oracle of Wisdom Journal of Philosophy and Public Affairs (OWIJOPPA)*, 4(4), 43–60.
- Detmer, D. (1998). *Freedom As a Value: A Critique of the Ethical Theory of Jean-Paul Sartre*. Chicago: Open Court.
- Detmer, D. (2008). *Sartre Explained: From Bad Faith to Authenticity*. Chicago: Open Court Publishing.
- Flynn, T. R. (1984). *Sartre and Marxist Existentialism: The Test Case of Collective Responsibility*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Karima, D. S. (2023). Exploring The Meaning of Existence in The Thought of Jean Paul Sartre with Abd Al-Rahman Badawi. *MIMBAR Agama Budaya*, 40(2), 79–86.
- Lambert, V. A., & Lambert, C. E. (2012). Editorial: Qualitative Descriptive Research: An Acceptable Design. *Journal of Nursing Research*, 16(4), 255–256.
- Lamola, M. J. (2022). On the Robosphere: A Philosophical Explication of the Socio-technical Status of Social Robots. *International Journal of Social Robotics*, 14(5), 1199–1209. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12369-021-00840-3>
- Leak, A. (2006). *Jean-Paul Sartre*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Newall, E. (2021). *Evolution and the Controversy: Existential and Psychoanalytic perspectives*. UCL (University College London).
- Poellner, P. (2015). Early Sartre on Freedom and Ethics. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 23(2), 221–247. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0378.2012.00532.x>
- Priest, S. (2001). *Jean-Paul Sartre : Basic Writings*. London: Routledge.
- Sartre, J.-P. (1996). Existentialism. In *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*. Hoboken: Wiley.
- Sartre, J.-P., & Mairé, P. (1965). *Existentialism and Humanism*. London: Methuen.
- Sartre, J.-P., & Sartre, A. E. (1994). *L'être et le néant [Texte imprimé]: Essai d'ontologie Phénoménologique*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Sartre, J.-P., & Sartre, A. E. (1995). *Truth and Existence*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sartre, J.-P., & Sebille, J. (2019). 4. Jean-Paul Sartre. In *Generation Existential* (pp. 111–154). Ithaca: Cornell University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501731648-007>
- Wardle, D. (2016). A Contemporary Sense of Existentialism. *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 35(3), 336–344.
- Webber, J. (2009). *The Existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre*. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203883174>
- Wellek, R., & Warren, A. (1949). *Theory of Literature*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.