



## **WRESTLING WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA IN THE NOVEL *CHALLENGER DEEP (2015)* BY NEAL SHUSTERMAN**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this analysis is to expose the issue about wrestling with schizophrenia which is done by protagonist and to know the contribution of setting, character and plot in revealing the issue about wrestling with schizophrenia. This analysis is related to the medical theory of schizophrenia and the concept of id, ego, and superego by Sigmund Freud. This analysis is supported by the text and context based interpretation. The result of this analysis shows the protagonist succeeds in wrestling with schizophrenia through self-controlling and socializing with others.

**Key words:** wrestling, schizophrenia, symptoms

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Mental illness is a disease which causes disruption in behavior and thought, resulting in inability to manage the emotions and life normally. According to WHO (World Health Organization), mental disorder affected one in four people in the world. About 450 million people currently suffer mental illness, placing mental disorder among the main causes of ill health and disability throughout the world (WHO, 2011). Unfortunately, some people still assume that mental illness as a curse and shame. People with mental illness are deported for their sickness. They often withdraw from the environment and hide their illness. In fact, people who have mental illness should not be left alone and always supported by their surroundings. People with mental disorder still can live their life.

There are many kinds of mental disorder, with different characteristics. They are generally characterized by a combination of perceptions, emotions, abnormal thoughts, behavior and relationship with others. Mental disorder

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includes; depression, bipolar affective disorder, dementia, intellectual disabilities and development disorders including autism, schizophrenia and other psychoses.

Schizophrenia is a mental disorder, affecting about more than 21 million people worldwide (WHO, 2018). People who suffer from schizophrenia cannot differentiate between fantasy and reality. About one in a hundred people at some point in their lives may be diagnosed with *schizophrenia*- usually as young adult (Fiona, 2000). It is more common among males (12 million), than females (9 million) (WHO, 2018). *Schizophrenia* is characterized by disruption in thinking, perception, emotions, language, and behavior. Common psychotic experiences include hallucinations (seeing, hearing, or feeling things that are not real) and delusions (false beliefs or suspicions). People with *schizophrenia* consider their imagination is real. These conditions can make it difficult for people who suffer *schizophrenia* to live normally. However, mental disorder is not the end of the live. People who suffer mental disorder such as *schizophrenia* can actually get better every day.

In real life, many people with schizophrenia achieve their success even in their abnormal condition. Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890) is an artist from Holland who was diagnosed with schizophrenia. His works become a part of mankind's art history in the 19th and 20th century. According to Fescue (2015) Van Gogh produced more than 2.100 artworks, including 860 oil paintings and more than 1.300 watercolors, sketches, prints and drawings. Besides, John Nash who was an American mathematician suffered from schizophrenia. His work provide insight in daily life, his theories are used in computing, economics, evolutionary biology, accounting, computer science, politics, and so on. In 1994, he won the Nobel Memorial Prize in economic science. He was awarded the Abel prize in 2015 for his work on nonlinear partial differential equation. In April 1959, he was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia (Fescue, 2015). The movie, "A Beautiful Mind" is based on John Nash's life and his struggle with schizophrenia. Additionally, Eduard Einstein (1910-1965), the son of Albert Einstein was diagnosed with schizophrenia when he was twenty years old. He was extremely intelligent and successful student throughout his education. Although he had a musical talent, he chose to study about medical and health and decided to be a psychiatrist during his youth. Unfortunately he was begun showing the symptoms of schizophrenia by the age of 20. He died in an asylum at the age 55 (Fescue , 2015). These people have successfully struggled with schizophrenia. They made efforts to wrestle with schizophrenia. They escaped from the deep of their illness. Disability and mental illness are not the reason to give up to live normally.

The struggle in wrestling with *schizophrenia* can also be seen through the character of schizophrenia patient in the novel *challenger deep* (2015) by Neal Shusterman. It shows the actual experience of people with *schizophrenia* which is not easy to go on everyday life. This also emphasizes the struggle of people with schizophrenia to get rid of schizophrenia.

## B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The analysis of novel *Challenger Deep* (2015) by Neal Shusterman is done through text and context based interpretation. It is done by analyze some fictional devices, such as; character, plot (conflict) and setting. Character and plot are used to lead the struggle in wrestling with *schizophrenia* by analyzing character's responses toward conflicts. Furthermore, the settings deal with circumstances and atmosphere. It contributes in analyzing process by helping in revealing the meaning. The role of plot and conflicts is important to reveal the meaning in this novel. Those are analyzed based on how character getting out of his *schizophrenia*. This study deals with the medical theory of schizophrenia and the concept of id, ego and superego by Sigmund Freud (1923)

## C. DISCUSSION

This chapter analyses the fictional devices such as character, setting and plot/conflict to reveal the issue about wrestling with schizophrenia. Wrestling with schizophrenia in this analysis refers to the efforts done by protagonist, 15 years old student to get rid of schizophrenia. He used to be a normal student, but lately he imagines himself on a ship bound for the *Marianas Trench*, the deepest spot in the ocean. He experience psychosis which is loss of contact with reality. He had to be hospitalized for recovering. In the recovering process, he wrestles with *schizophrenia* through self-controlling and socializing with others.

### 1. Self-Controlling

People with schizophrenia will experience the symptoms such as hallucinations (seeing, hearing, or feeling things that are not real), delusions (false beliefs, often based on hallucinations), being unable to speak clearly, acting unusual, being unable to feel emotions normally and losing interest to other people. In order to avoid the symptoms, the patients have to do self-controlling. Self-controlling for people who suffer from schizophrenia is not easy. They tend to have hallucination such as hearing voices and seeing things that are not real. That's why the protagonist wrestles to control himself from those hallucinations. Another way to avoid the symptoms is by controlling himself when he has to take the medicines and attend the therapy. He must control himself from the temptation of not taking the medicines and attend the therapy.

The protagonist often faces hallucination; he sees images or hears voices which are not real. He struggles to do self-controlling when those images or voices appear. The images appear in the term of monsters in disguise that look like people he loves. It can be seen from the following quotation:

There are people around me, only they aren't people, they're monsters in disguise. They have gone into my mind and have ripped images from it, turning the images into masks that look like people I love—but I know it's just a lie.  
(Page 3)

From the quotation above, it can be seen the atmosphere that is represented by the utterance: *"There are people around me, only they aren't people, they're monsters in disguise."* This shows his hallucination, that he thinks people around him are not a real people. He sees them as monsters in disguise. Moreover, from the utterance *"They have gone into my mind and have ripped images from it, turning the images into masks that look like people I love—but I know it's just a lie."* shows the hallucination that really influences the protagonist which makes he sometimes cannot escape from unreal situation. This situation makes the protagonist fall deeply into the hole that seems he cannot get outside.

Fortunately the protagonist realizes that he must do self-controlling in order to get rid of schizophrenia. The self-controlling can be seen from the words *"but I know it's just a lie"*. It means, the protagonist tries to control himself from hallucination that comes to his mind. He tries to state that "this is not a real one, but, it's just a lie".

Another images and voices that come as hallucination for him also appear in the term of whisper that persuades the protagonist to do dangerous action. But, in order to get rid of the symptoms of schizophrenia he immediately does self-controlling. The following statements that support this argument are:

The thought-voices tell me I should do things. "Go rip out the neighbor's sprinkler heads. Kill the snakes." But I won't listen to them. I won't destroy someone else's property. I know they're not really snakes. "You see that plumber who lives down the street," the thought-voices tell me. "He's really a terrorist making pipe bombs. Go get in his truck and drive away. Drive it off a cliff." But I won't do that either. The thought-voices can say a lot of things but they can't make me do anything I don't really want to do. Still, that doesn't stop them from tormenting me by forcing me to think about doing those terrible things. ? (Page 105)

From the quotation above, it can be seen the series of plot which the protagonist is pulled again by his hallucination. He hears voices that ask him to do a lot of things and influence him to believe his hallucination. In the first plot, the voices told him to go to his neighbor and kill the snakes as stated in

this utterance; “*Go rip out the neighbor’s sprinkler heads. Kill the snakes.*” In fact, it isn’t snakes and the protagonist with his power of self-controlling refuses it by saying “*but I won’t listen to them, I won’t destroy someone else’s property.* Besides, the utterance “*I know they’re not really snakes*” emphasizes that he tries to disbelieve the voices and images of his hallucination and he tries to stay in the real world.

Furthermore, that hallucination appear again and tempt him to believe it and give him order by saying “*You see that plumber who lives down the street,*” the thought-voices tell me. “*He’s really a terrorist making pipe bombs. Go get in his truck and drive away. Drive it off a cliff.*” Once again the protagonist with the strength of self-controlling refuse it by saying “*but I won’t do that either*”.

Moreover, from the utterance “*The thought-voices can say a lot of things but they can’t make me do anything I don’t really want to do*” proves that the protagonist has a power to refuse the commands and beliefs from his hallucination. He is the one who can control himself. His wrestling is seen when repeatedly the voices and thought come, and with the strength of self-controlling, he repeatedly refuse it through his action not to listen those voices.

After that, the protagonist control himself from the temptation of not taking the medicines and attending the therapy. Taking the medicine and attending the therapy are not easy because there will always the voices and images which persuade the protagonist to escape from those routines. His struggle to control himself to attend the therapy is stated in the following quotation:

Three times a day, for an hour at a time, they corral you into a circle and force you to listen to things that are so awful you can’t purge them from your mind. A girl describes, in graphic detail, how she was repeatedly raped by her stepbrother, before trying to slit her own throat. A boy explains step by- step what it’s like to shoot up with heroin, and sell yourself on the streets to earn money for more. The demons these kids ride are awful, and you want to turn away, run away, cover your ears, but you’re forced to listen because it’s “therapeutic.” (Page 151)

From the atmosphere that occurs through the utterance “*Three times a day, for an hour at a time, they corral you into a circle and force you to listen to things that are so awful you can’t purge them from your mind*”, it can be seen the struggle of people with schizophrenia to attend the therapy since it must be done three times a day, for an hour at time and force them to listen to others

which bother them. Furthermore, the words “*they corral you into a circle*” proves that in a therapy they must socialize and communicate each other under the therapist monitor. It makes them hate it because they must repeatedly listen to the real stories that are faced by other patients while it is a therapy for them. In spite of the protagonist hates the therapy, he forces himself to attend it regularly in order to get better every day. That’s a kind of controlling himself that he struggles with.

In addition, the struggle to do self-controlling can be seen when he says: “*The demons these kids ride are awful, and you want to turn away, run away, cover your ears, but you’re forced to listen because it’s ‘therapeutic’*”. This shows that the protagonist tries to refuse to turn away from the therapy, and it can be seen from the words “*turn away, run away, cover your ears*” that shows how he hates the therapy. Fortunately, the protagonist does not turn away or run away, but he attends it. The action that is taken by the protagonist not to run away emphasizes his strong commitment to join the therapy. This proves that he wrestles with schizophrenia by doing self-controlling to attend the therapy.

Besides, the protagonist in this analysis also controls himself to take the medicine consistently. Every time when he wants to take the medicines, the voices appear and influence him not to take the medicines, as stated below:

“.. I now take four pills, twice a day. One to shut down my thoughts, another to shut down my actions. A third to address the side effects of the first two. And a fourth so the third doesn’t feel lonely. The result leaves my brain somewhere in orbit beyond Saturn, where it can’t bother anyone, especially me..” (Page 169)

From the atmosphere that occurs through the utterance above, it can be seen the voices that provokes the protagonist for not taking the medicines. At the beginning he is aware and has decided to take the medicines by saying “*I now take four pills, twice a day.*”. Afterward, the voices appear and influence him to say that “*One to shut down my thoughts, another to shut down my actions. A third to address the side effects of the first two.*”. The words “*shut down*” emphasize that the voices provoke the protagonist that the doctor who prescribes the medicines just see him as an object. So, the protagonist does not need to respect the doctor’s order. This is the way the voices persuade him not to take the medicines, but with the great struggle he can control himself to get out of those voices’ influences. This struggle makes him wrestles with schizophrenia.

Another quotation that supports the idea about self-controlling is when the temptation of not taking the medicines occurs. It occurs when the protagonist shows remission because the symptoms already improved or disappear. He is

allowed to go home and gets a new doctor that prescribes his new medicine as seen in the quotation below:

The new guy's okay. He takes more time with me than I thought he would. He prescribes my meds. I take them. I hate them, but I take them. I'm numb, but not as numb as I was. (Page 306)

The atmosphere that occurs through the utterance above indicates his self-controlling to take the medicine. The utterance "*i hate them, but i take them*" represents the influence of the voices for not taking the medicines. Fortunately, with a great struggle he forces himself to take the medicine although he hates them. This shows his self-controlling as wrestling with schizophrenia. The utterance "*I'm numb, but not as numb as I was*" emphasize his strong commitment to consume the medicine, because he is aware of the benefits of it. He believes that when he does not take his medicine, his illness will relapse where the symptoms will worsen.

In summary, from all quotations above, it proves that the protagonist wrestles with schizophrenia through self-controlling. Self-controlling is hard for people who suffer from schizophrenia since its symptom affects their brain's work and their emotion. They experience psychosis which they have lost touch with reality and there will always a voices or images that influence and draw them into unreal world. Self-controlling is reflected by the protagonist when the images and voices come to him. He wrestles with schizophrenia by controlling himself from the influences of images or voices that come to him. After that, the protagonist wrestles with schizophrenia when the temptation of not taking the medicines and attend the therapy occurs. He finally succeeds to get rid of his hallucination.

## 2. Socializing with others

One of the symptoms of schizophrenia is losing interest to others. People with schizophrenia tend to keep away from other people. They usually have problem in socializing and communicating with others since they have problem in emotion and thinking clearly. Its symptoms can make it hard for a person to interact with other people. Thus, one of the treatments of people with schizophrenia is psychosocial treatment. This treatment helps to improve communication and interaction ability. Socializing with others is not an easy thing for people with schizophrenia. There will always a disturbance and obstacle for them when they do socialization. They have to fight with it since socialization is a must. The protagonist in this analysis socializes with others in order to get rid of schizophrenia. First, he makes a friend and interacts with people around him. Second, he builds a good communication. Third, he trust people around him, so he begins to be open hearted and tell his feeling.

The character interacts with people in the mental hospital. It can be seen when he makes a friend and meets new friend. As stated in the quotation below:

Hal speaks of mathematics, Euclidean perfection, and the golden mean. You tell him about the invisible lines of meaning you feel stretching and winding through and around the people in your life. He gets all excited, which excites you, too.  
(Page 157)

From the atmosphere that occurs through the utterance above, it can be seen his struggle to interact with his friend. Indeed, there is a formidable resistance that occurs within the protagonist when he interacts with his friend because one of the symptoms of schizophrenia is losing interest to other people. The utterance "*Hal speaks of mathematics, Euclidean perfection, and the golden mean. You tell him about the invisible lines of meaning you feel stretching and winding through and around the people in your life.*" shows that he tries to chat with his friend even though when he speaks, the conversation is inconvenience. He cannot even follow the conversation. He is still affected by his hallucination. His struggle to try to make a friend and interact with his friend reflects his wrestling with schizophrenia. Additionally, the utterance "*He gets all excited, which excites you, too*" shows that the protagonist succeeds in wrestling with his own illness because he proves that he can socialize with his friend even sometimes he speaks out of the topic. This also shows that he is really excited to have friend in an asylum, and so does his friend, who also excites to have new friend. Having a friend can also help people with schizophrenia to get better and to keep in the real situation.

The second way of protagonist in wrestling with schizophrenia is to build a good communication with others. Communication is one of the problems faced by the patients with schizophrenia because its symptoms affect their thought so they may have trouble organizing their communication normally. It can be seen in the following quotation when the protagonist communicates with his friend:

Raoul plops himself down at a table and I sit across from him. "Is it a tragedy or a comedy?" I ask. He turns his chair away from me but doesn't get up to leave, which means he's just posturing now. He wants to see where this is going. "Shakespeare wrote tragedies and comedies, so which do you feel like you're in when he talks to you?" Actually the bard also wrote love sonnets, but if Shakespeare's reciting sonnets to him, that's a whole other issue.



“I . . . don’t know,” says Raoul.  
“If it’s a tragedy,” I tell him, “remind Shakespeare that he’s got a comic side, too. Challenge him to make you laugh.”  
“Go away!” he says, and when I don’t leave, he joins the dog watchers—but I can tell he’s really not watching, he’s thinking about what I said—which is all I wanted. (Page 209)

The conflict that is represented by the utterance above occurs when his new friend, Raoul has just come into an asylum. He told that he is visited by the famous dead people such as Shakespeare. The protagonist then asks him about it, and his friend told that he will not believe about what he has said. This conflict leads into the tense situation which his friend tries to ignore him as stated in the utterance: “*He turns his chair away from me but doesn’t get up to leave, which means he’s just posturing now.*” The protagonist then tries to communicate with his friend, even though his friend refuses to communicate with him by saying the words such as “*I don’t know,*” and “*Go away*”. This shows the struggle of protagonist to build a good communication with his friend even his friend tries to refuse him. The positive response from the protagonist when he communicates with his friend is not an easy thing because the patients with schizophrenia tend to have paranoia and suspicion. They also usually have trouble with their emotions. Fortunately, the protagonist struggles to build a good communication with others. His struggle reflects his wrestling with schizophrenia.

Another quotation that proves that he builds a good communication occurs when he advises his friend. He says something that he should say to his friend. He speaks wisely to his friend when he found his friend is wrong. It can be seen when he reminds his friend who always talking about how she was repeatedly raped by her stepbrother, as stated in the following quotation:

“Caden,” says Carlyle carefully, like he’s trying to figure out whether to cut the yellow or the blue wire on a bomb. “You’re being a little harsh, man.”  
“No, I’m being honest,” I tell him. “Aren’t we supposed to be honest here?” Then I look back toward Alexa, who stares at me, maybe terrified of what’s coming next. “Every time you relive it, it’s like he’s doing it to you again and again,” I tell her. “But it’s not even him anymore—it’s you. Now *you’re* the one making yourself his victim.”  
“Oh, so I should just forget it?” Tears well in her eyes, but I have no sympathy today.

“No, don’t ever forget it,” I tell her. “But you have to process it and move on. Live your life, otherwise he took your future away from you, too.” (Page 210)

From the atmosphere that is represented by the utterance: *“You’re being a little harsh, man.” “No, I’m being honest,” I tell him. “Aren’t we supposed to be honest here?”*, it can be seen the obstacle that is faced by protagonist when he tries to speak what is right according to him. He tries to remind and advice his friend while his friend is offended by him. The setting leads into external conflict which causes the defense from his friend. This conflict leads into the action of the protagonist to speak wisely to his friend that she should not tell the story every time, because it makes her like the victim again and again. His struggle to build a good communication is seen when he tries to think clearly so that he can communicate well. The utterance *“no, don’t ever forget it, but you have to process it and move on. Live your life, otherwise he took your future away from you, too”* emphasizes that the protagonist advises his friend wisely to forget about the past and move on. This action is not easy for him since schizophrenia causes disturbance in emotion and communication ability.

The third way of protagonist in wrestling with schizophrenia is to trust people and be open hearted. People with schizophrenia usually have inability to trust people. They tend to has paranoia and suspicion to others even with their own family. Besides, it is hard for them to trust people, because of the suspicions that are caused by their hallucination. It can be seen in the following quotation when the protagonist begins to trust people:

“Your parents and I—the entire staff here—we want what’s best for you. We’re here to help you get better. I need to know that you believe that.”  
“Why does it matter what I believe? You’ll do it anyway.” Poirot nods, and offers what I think is an ironic smile, but a squirrely voice in my head tells me it’s sinister. The voices can be muffled by the meds, but they can’t be silenced entirely.  
“I believe you want to help me,” I tell him. “But in five minutes I might not believe it.” He accepts that. “Your honesty will help in your recovery, Caden.” And that pisses me off, because I didn’t realize I was being honest. Back in my room, I ask Hal to weigh in on the subject. Does he believe everything they do here is for our own benefit?  
(Page 177)

From the quotation above, it can be seen how protagonist tries to socialize with other by trusting people. This action is not easy for him due to

the symptom of schizophrenia affects him to have paranoia or suspicion. Besides, his hallucinations also appear in term of voices to provoke something unreal to him, as stated through the utterance *“The voices can be muffled by the meds, but they can’t be silenced entirely.”*. This shows that the voices cannot be demolished completely and it occur to influence him. Then, the utterance *“I believe you want to help me,” I tell him. “But in five minutes I might not believe it.”* shows that he tries to believe people around him, even though the voices appear and provoke him not to believe them. However, at the end he begins to trust people and open hearted so he can tell his feeling as stated in the utterance: *“Your honesty will help in your recovery, Caden.” And that pisses me off, because I didn’t realize I was being honest.* The protagonist’s struggle to trust people is seen when he tries to disbelieve the influence of the voices and begin to tell his feeling honestly. This emphasizes his wrestling with his own mental state.

Another statement that support the idea about wrestling with schizophrenia to trust people in socialization can be seen when he realizes about his parent’s support as stated below:

And suddenly I realize something terrible about my parents. They are not poisoners. They are not the enemy . . . . . but they are helpless. They want to *do* something—anything—to help me. Anything to change my situation. But they are as powerless as I am. The two of them are in a lifeboat, together, but so alone. Miles from shore, yet miles from me. The boat leaks, and they must bail in tandem to keep themselves afloat. It must be exhausting. The terrible truth of their helplessness is almost to much to bear. I wish i could take them on board, but even if they could reach us, the captain would never allow it. (Page 265)

From the atmosphere that is represented by the utterance *“And suddenly I realize something terrible about my parents. They are not poisoners”* shows that the protagonist begins to trust his parent after a lot of suspicious affected by his illness. He realizes that his parent is not enemy or poisoners. He realizes that his parent want to do the best for him, but have no power to help. He realizes his parent’s care and love for him. The awareness of the protagonist leads into his trust to his parent. The utterance *“They want to do something—anything—to help me. Anything to change my situation.”* shows the sacrifice of his parent who give much attention for him. His parent is not like what he used to think about, such as killer, poisoners, enemy, and even monsters. His struggle to trust his parent is seen when the hallucination appears as stated in the utterance: *“The terrible truth of their helplessness is almost to much to bear. I wish i could take them on board, but even if they*

*could reach us, the captain would never allow it*". This shows that he wrestles to trust his parent beside its hallucination's influences.

Briefly, from all quotations above, it proves that protagonist wrestles with schizophrenia by socializing with others. First, he makes a friend and interacts with people in the mental hospital. He keeps in touch with people around him. He socializes with people in an asylum in order to prevent him to have hallucination. Second, He builds a good communication with people around him. He advises his friend and support his friends. He communicates with his friends so he can be focus in his real world rather than his fantasy. Third, He begins to trust people. He disbelieves things that his hallucination made him to believe in them. He refuses the suspicions that his illness makes. He realizes that his family will always support him even in his bad condition. Through the settings, plot and the character, it reveals the protagonist's struggle in wrestling with schizophrenia since socialization is not an easy thing for people with schizophrenia. The various kinds of settings refer to the situation and condition that is faced by the protagonist. The settings then lead into the conflicts which encourage him in wrestling with schizophrenia

#### **D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

The novel *Challenger deep* (2015) written by Neal Shusterman reflects the issue about wrestling with schizophrenia. The analysis of this novel deals with the theory about schizophrenia and the concept of id, ego and superego by Sigmund Freud. Wrestling with schizophrenia refers to the struggle of protagonist, fifteen years old student who suffers from schizophrenia. He wrestles with schizophrenia through self-controlling and socializing with others. Self-controlling is reflected by the protagonist when the images and voices come to him. He refuses the voices or thought that are trying to give him orders and trying to make him believe in them. The protagonist also wrestles with schizophrenia when the temptation of not taking the medicines and attend the therapy occurs. Besides, the protagonist wrestles with schizophrenia through socializing with others. He socializes with people in the mental hospital. He builds a good communication toward others. He also begins to trust people such as his family and his doctor. Those prove that he wrestles with schizophrenia, so that he can get rid of schizophrenia.

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