THE MAIN CHARACTER'S QUARTERLIFE CRISIS

IN SAYAKA MURATA'S *CONVENIENCE STORE WOMAN*

THESIS

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FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM MALANG

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THESIS

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STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I state that the thesis entitled **"The Main Character's Quarterlife Crisis in Sayaka Murata's** *Convenience Store Woman***"** is my original work. I do not include any materials previously written or published by another person, except those cited as references and written in the bibliography. Hereby, if there is any objection or claim, I am the only person who is responsible for that.

Malang, 19 May 2025

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APPROVAL SHEET

This to certify that Fauzan Noer Kurniawan's thesis entitled **The Main Character's Quarterlife Crisis in Sayaka Murata's *Convenience Store Woman*** has been approved for thesis examination at Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, as one of the requirements for the degree of Sarjana Sastra (S.S.).

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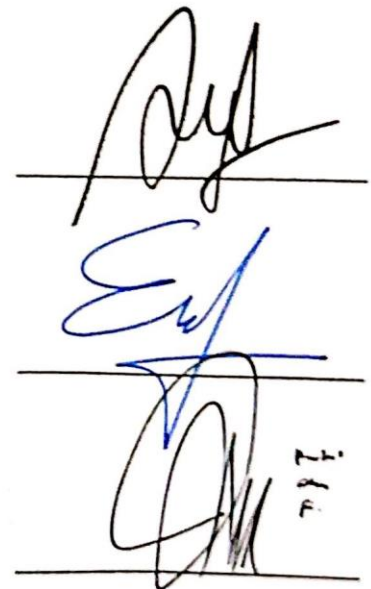
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MOTTO

"When life gives you lemon, make lemonade"

(various)

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my beloved late father, Kurniawan, my beloved mother, Ida Nurmaida, and my dear sister, Alyanoer Kurniawan. A whole of appreciation for myself, Fauzan Noer Kurniawan and all of my family members.

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Praise be to Allah SWT, the most gracious the and the most merciful, for He has blessed myself with His vast knowledge and wisdom, which has allowed me to complete my thesis, titled **The Main Character's Quarterlife Crisis in Sayaka Murata's *Convenience Store Woman***. Peace and salutation may always be bestowed upon the Messenger of Allah, the Prophet Muhammad SAW, who has guided mankind from darkness to light.

Many appreciations for the help and support that I have accepted during the process of this thesis completion. My mother, who patiently supports myself with all her love and affection. My late father, whom prayers I sent for him in every possible chance I have. And my sister who has encouraged me during difficulties in compiling this thesis.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Muhammad Edy Thoyib, M.A., who has guided my journey towards the finalization of this research. The feedback and advise that are given to me has proven to be indispensable throughout the process of this research. Without it, I may find myself in an increasingly difficult situation.

I have to admit that my limitation as a researcher may affect the state of imperfection this thesis has. I wholeheartedly accept any form of criticism or suggestions that may help in improving the quality of my work. My only hope is that this thesis can serve a meaningful contribution for readers and researchers alike

to encourage further research. Another appreciation for everyone who has supported me in this journey.

Malang, May 19th, 2025

Fauzan Noer Kurniawan

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ABSTRACT

Kurniawan, Fauzan Noer (2025). *The Main Character's Quarterlife Crisis in Sayaka Murata's Convenience Store Woman*. Undergraduate Thesis. Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Advisor Muhammad Edy Thoyib, M. A.

Keywords: Psychosocial development, isolation, quarterlife crisis

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This research examines the quarterlife crisis displayed by the main character, Keiko Furukura, in Sayaka Murata's "*Convenience Store Woman*". Keiko Furukura is a convenience store worker who has a peculiar condition which makes her unable to understand social cues. The said condition leads Keiko Furukura into yearning for normalcy in order to fit herself into society, where this desire clashes with her true self resulting in a condition known as quarterlife crisis. The objectives of the study are: (1) to identify the phases of quarterlife crisis experienced by the main character, and (2) to analyze the main character's solution to her quarterlife crisis. This study is a literary criticism using psychological approach based on Erik Erikson's intimacy vs isolation theory referenced in his theory of psychosocial development. The findings of this study indicate that Keiko Furukura experienced through phases of quarterlife crisis which is locked-in, separation/time-out, exploration, and rebuilding. Additionally, the solution to Keiko Furukura's quarterlife crisis is reached through several processes namely, exploration and commitment, supportive relationship and environment, mentorship and guidance, and lastly self-reflection and personal growth. This analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of Keiko Furukura's character development throughout the phase of quarterlife crisis and highlights the conflict happening inside the inner mind of Keiko Furukura.

مستخلص البحث

كورنياوان، فوزان نور. ٢٠٢٥. أزمة ربع العمر لدى الشخصية الرئيسية في رواية "سيدة متجر البقالة" لسياكا موراتا. مشروع تخرج لنيل درجة الإجازة في الأدب الإنجليزي. قسم الأدب الإنجليزي، كلية العلوم الإنسانية، جامعة مولانا مالك إبراهيم الإسلامية الحكومية مالانغ. المشرف: محمد إيدي طيب، ماجستير.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النمو النفس-اجتماعي، العزلة، أزمة ربع العمر

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل أزمة ربع العمر التي تمر بها الشخصية الرئيسية، كييكو فوروكورا، في رواية "سيدة متجر البقالة" لسياكا موراتا. كييكو فوروكورا هي موظفة في متجر بقالة وتعاني من حالة غير عادية تجعلها غير قادرة على فهم الإشارات الاجتماعية. تؤدي هذه الحالة إلى شعورها العميق بالحاجة إلى حياة طبيعية تمكنها من الاندماج في المجتمع، إلا أن هذه الرغبة تصطدم بهويتها الحقيقية، مما يؤدي إلى ما يُعرف بأزمة ربع العمر. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى: (١) تحديد مراحل أزمة ربع العمر التي تمر بها الشخصية الرئيسية، و(٢) تحليل الطريقة التي واجهت بها هذه الأزمة. تعتمد الدراسة على النقد الأدبي باستخدام المنهج النفسي، مستندة إلى نظرية إريك إريكسون "الحميمية مقابل العزلة" ضمن إطار نظريته في التطور النفس-اجتماعي. تشير نتائج الدراسة إلى أن كييكو فوروكورا تمر بعدة مراحل من أزمة ربع العمر، وهي: مرحلة الانغلاق، مرحلة الانفصال أو التوقف المؤقت، مرحلة الاستكشاف، ومرحلة إعادة البناء. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تتوصل كييكو إلى حلول لأزمتها من خلال عدة عمليات، مثل: الاستكشاف والالتزام، بناء علاقات وبيئة داعمة، التوجيه والإرشاد. وأخيرًا، التأمل الذاتي والنمو الشخصي. يوفّر هذا التحليل فهماً عميقاً لتطور شخصية كييكو فوروكورا خلال مراحل أزمة ربع العمر، كما يسلّط الضوء على الصراعات الداخلية التي تواجهها في أعماق نفسها.

ABSTRAK

Kurniawan, Fauzan Noer (2025). *The Main Character's Quarterlife Crisis in Sayaka Murata's Convenience Store Woman.* Skripsi Sarjana. Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Dosen Pembimbing: Muhammad Edy Thoyib, M.A

Kata Kunci: perkembangan psikososial, isolasi, krisis usia seperempat abad

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Penelitian ini membahas krisis usia seperempat abad (quarterlife crisis) yang dialami oleh tokoh utama, Keiko Furukura, dalam novel *Convenience Store Woman* karya Sayaka Murata. Keiko Furukura adalah seorang pekerja di toko serba ada yang memiliki kondisi unik yang membuatnya tidak mampu memahami isyarat sosial. Kondisi tersebut mendorong Keiko untuk merindukan kehidupan yang "normal" demi menyesuaikan diri dengan masyarakat. Namun, keinginan ini bertentangan dengan jati dirinya yang sebenarnya, sehingga menimbulkan krisis identitas yang dikenal sebagai krisis usia seperempat abad. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah: (1) mengidentifikasi tahapan krisis usia seperempat abad yang dialami oleh tokoh utama, dan (2) menganalisis cara tokoh utama mengatasi krisis tersebut. Penelitian ini merupakan kritik sastra dengan pendekatan psikologis, berdasarkan teori Erik Erikson tentang "intimasi vs isolasi" dalam kerangka teori perkembangan psikososial. Temuan dalam penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Keiko Furukura mengalami beberapa fase dalam krisis usia seperempat abad, yaitu: fase terjebak (locked-in), fase pemisahan atau jeda waktu (separation/time-out), fase eksplorasi, dan fase membangun kembali (rebuilding). Selain itu, penyelesaian terhadap krisis ini dicapai melalui beberapa proses, yaitu: eksplorasi dan komitmen, hubungan dan lingkungan yang mendukung, peran mentor dan bimbingan, serta refleksi diri dan pertumbuhan pribadi. Analisis ini memberikan pemahaman yang mendalam mengenai perkembangan karakter Keiko Furukura selama fase krisis usia seperempat abad, serta menyoroti konflik yang terjadi dalam batin tokoh tersebut.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

The term literature is used to refer forms of fictional and imaginative writings such as poetry, drama, and prose fiction. It is a name commonly used as a scientific discipline in regards to the basis for studying and analysing literary works. Using the language in its aesthetic form, literary works produce the reflection of the reality people lives in (Klarer, 2005). It is the term to distinguish literary works from everyday texts such as newspapers, legal documents and scholarly writings. The production behind a literature often brings a wish to leave behind a trace through creative expression, outlasting its own creator.

Literary works can be a medium to express the various aspects of the said reality, such as social community, history, and cultural contexts. A human life can be understood by using the said medium as a response towards some of its elements like, human value, emotion, and conflict experienced, either as a personal, others, or a collective gained through the writer's application of the reality happening around them. Considering how literature can be closely related to human life, readers may aware that it could help them understanding themselves and others by integrating the experience of the characters depicted in a literary work to the reflection of their own life (Rahayu, 2011).

An individual's identity is formed through experiences throughout their past lives. Drawing the earlier self-images of their past, they choose which ones are accepted or rejected which then results in an identity being formed (Feist, 2008). This implies that the forming of identity started from the moment a child reached self-identification where he realizes that he is a unique being different to other children.

This process of self-identification happened before the stage of adolescence. As a child grows older, they take on characteristics and admired features of people around them such as parents. However, as time goes on, the child loses interest in merely copying personalities or attributes of the people around them. This marks the stage self-identification which then follows the forming of identity after (Sokol, 2009). It begins when the said identification stopped and deemed no longer useful for the child.

Individuals who have mature self-preparation in facing changes at each stage of development will develop towards maturity. Meanwhile, individuals who lack the ability to deal with all the changes in this phase will experience worries and feel difficulties about what will happen in early adulthood. This situation is a dilemma where an individual is repeatedly questioning their future such as anxiety towards career, financial situation and social life. If the said dilemma overstays it welcome, it could lead to an unwanted condition called isolation (Erikson, 1968). This unwanted condition may persist throughout the life unless resolved.

Sayaka Murata, the author of the novel being researched, *Convenience Store Woman*, is a Japanese writer who has won multiple recognition such as the Akutagawa Prize and being made into one of Vogue Japan's women of the year in 2016. The novel *Convenience Store Woman* is her first book to be translated in English in 2018 and has been translated into more than 30 languages and sold 1.4 million copies. The author herself was a convenience store worker until an obsessive fan forced her to stop working as one (McNeill, 2020).

The setting of the novel takes place in a certain convenience store in modern day Japan. Erected outside a station named Hiiromachi Station, the convenience store had been established over the years under the name The Smile Mart. Keiko Furukura, the protagonist of this novel, had been working there for 18 years ever since she applied for the job the moment it was open for business.

Because of a certain circumstance, she is struggling to fit in her social group. The said issue made her confused on how to properly function as a woman her age, leading to her inability to form meaningful relationship. Her actions and attitude depend on the people around her which she mimicked to simulate how to act as a person. This major character is the character which will be analysed in this research.

Various studies regarding quarterlife crisis have been established many times. A paper under the title, *The Influence of Self-Esteem, Social Support and Quarter Life Crisis in Early Adults*, by Khailia (2025) how much influence self-esteem and social support have on quarter life crisis in early adulthood. Another is research titled, *The Role of Quarter-Life Crisis Toward Personal Growth Initiative*

in Emerging Adulthood by Yohanes (2024) in which it analyses the impact of the quarter- life crisis towards personal growth initiative.

Next is research titled, *the influence of systemic racism on quarter-life crisis in The Autobiography of Malcolm X (as told to Alex Haley)* written by Nugroho (2021) where it managed to analyse the influence of systemic racism on quarter-life crisis, experienced by Malcolm X. Another one is research by Afandi (2023) named, *Measuring the Difficulties of Early Adulthood: The Development of the Quarter Life Crisis Scale*, in which it attempted to develop a quarter-life crisis scale that can be used as a measurement of early adulthood Indonesian's quarter-life crisis.

Next is research titled, *Factors Contributing to Quarter Life Crisis on Early Adulthood: A Systematic Literature Review*, written by Hasyim (2024) where it tries to evaluate the causes of quarterlife crisis commonly emerges in young adulthood. Another research is titled, *Psychological Well Being and The Tendency of Quarter Life Crisis* written by Rahimah (2022) where it analyses the effect of the psychological health on the tendency of college students in their quarter life crisis.

The novel has also been researched by Galang (2021) under the title, *The Individuation Through Persona and Shadow on Sayaka Murata's Convenience Store Woman* which manages to find the cause and process of individuation of the main character in the novel. Another one is research by Wardah (2023) under the title, *Keiko's Inferiority Complex and Striving for Superiority* where it analyses the issue of inferiority complex experienced by the main character in the novel. Another is research regarding quarterlife crisis titled, *Pengaruh self-compassion dan*

dukungan sosial terhadap quarter-life crisis pada mahasiswa tingkat akhir UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang written by Dai (2024), where it analyses the self-compassion and social support towards final semester college students of UIN Maulana Malik Ibarhim Malang.

B. Problems of the Study

1. What are the main character's phases of quarterlife crisis displayed in Sayaka Murata's *Convenience Store Woman*?

2. How does the main character solve her quarterlife crisis in Sayaka Murata's *Convenience Store Woman*?

C. Significance of the Study

This research offers benefit of both practical and theoretical. Practically, this research may educate people of the quarterlife crisis issue and help other researcher interested in delving into the said issue against similar object of interest. Theoretically, this research contribute in the appliance of Erikson's psychosocial development theory through psychological approach regarding examination of quarterlife crisis occurs in modern fiction such as *Convenience Store Woman* by Murata.

D. Scope and Limitation

The study focuses on the quarterlife crisis analysis of the main character which is specifically taken from the major character who plays the role of a convenience store worker and her character development. The researcher does not

discuss other characters outside the specified scope. The only character taken for the research is Keiko Furukura but the research takes account of other characters influence on her.

E. Definition of the Terms

1. **Psychosocial Development** is the process of how a person's social skills and personality develops throughout their lifetime. Erik Erikson proposed a theory related by describing it through the eight stages of psychosocial development.

2. **Isolation** is a condition of being separated from others. It could be in form of physical (like living alone) or emotional (like feeling misunderstood).

3. **Quarterlife Crisis** is a condition where an adult of their twenties to thirties doubted their future and felt like trapped in their life choices.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

A. Psychology of Literature

Psychology of literature is used to analyze the author, reader and the literary work itself. The said analysis relates to the psychology of the writer as he writes his work, the reader reading the literary work, and the influence of certain psychological condition experienced by the characters existed in the said literary work. There is a strong relation between psychology and literature as both tackles the issue concerning anything human related like their behaviours, cultures, and social concerns (Dar, 2022). For example, Literature consists of carefully selected words to tell a story through narrative, involving characters in conflict, or to express an emotion or idea. Similarly, psychology deals with the behaviour and the mind of a human. It is an attempt of understanding biological influences, environmental factors, and social pressures that affect how one may feel. Both has a reflection of a very human experience.

With the said relation mentioned before, psychology often times serves as a critical tool in literary analysis. Using psychological analysis, an understanding of a character in a literary work can be reached through critical approach regarding the character's actions, relationship and conflicts within stories. Several psychological theories, such as Freud's psychoanalysis theory, Carl Jung's archetype theory, Lacanian theory and Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory are commonly used in

many literary research to analyse the psychology within the aspects of literature including the plot, characters, narrative perspective and its setting (Bressler, 2011).

B. Psychosocial Development

Psychosocial development theory is a theory which proposes how a character is developed through series of stages. These stages vary from ages and conflicts where each conflict may determine the development of a personage (Erikson, 1987).

1. Trust vs Mistrust

In this earliest stage, a person starts to learn how to believe and not to believe the things they encountered. They depend entirely on their caregivers for food, comfort and affection (Erikson, 1987) This stage appears in the age of infancy (1-2 years). The development produced from this stage depends on whether the care of the infant is properly given or not. Failing this stage may result in anxiety and learn to mistrust others (Maree, 2021).

2. Autonomy vs Shame and doubt

The next stage starts in early childhood (2-4 years) where a person starts to learn the sense of will. The learning begins through simple choice making such as what to eat, what to wear, and basic self-care like toilet training (Erikson, 1987). The development produced in this stage depends on whether the child manages to reach independency through their sense as an individual and personal control over

their physical capabilities. Failing this stage may result in lack of confidence and self-worth fragility (Bishop, 2013).

3. **Initiative vs Guilt**

This stage plays a role in producing a person's sense of purpose. They become more socially and physically active expressing curiosity about the world (Erikson, 1987). It starts in preschool age (4-5 years) where the development produced depends on the success of the child's capability in planning and initiative. It builds a feeling of competitiveness which encourages a child to try many things. Failing this stage may result in excessive guilt (Berzoff, 2016).

4. **Industry vs Inferiority**

In this stage, a person starts to become more competent and more capable in doing progressively complex tasks. They are expected to learn more complicated skills either academic capabilities or social interactivity (Erikson, 1987). This stage starts at school age (5-12 years) where the person's conscious attempt in gaining new skills will affect the result of his development. Failing this stage may result in incompetency and growing sense of inferiority (Maree, 2021).

5. **Identity vs Confusion**

This stage plays a role in forming a person's identity. They begin exploring various belief, examining personal values, choosing career paths and seeking relationships (Erikson, 1987). It starts in adolescence (13-19) where the development produced depends on how well a person be able to establish a sense

of self and properly positions himself in the society, he seeks to fit in. Failing this stage may result in identity crisis or confusion (Feist, 2008).

6. **Intimacy vs Isolation**

In this stage, a person starts seeking a form of relationship. They seek a deeper emotional bond whether in romantic relationship or friendship (Erikson, 1987). This stage starts at the age of young adult (20-40) where the person bargains their own identity formed from the previous stages to achieve intimate relationship with others. If the bargain reached an agreement, an identity unity with others will occur resulting in a lifetime commitment partnership. Failing this stage may result in loneliness, isolation and depression (Sufah, 2023).

7. **Generativity vs Stagnation**

This stage expresses the desire of lastingness. The person wants to help the next generation whether through parenting, mentorship, or other professional contribution with the intention of leaving a legacy (Erikson, 1987). Reaching adulthood, a person is then involved in the society which leads to an emergence of wanting to build things that may outlast them, often through offspring or working to pass their culture to the next generation. Failing this stage may result in feeling unproductive and uninvolved resulting in a stagnation (Samsanovich, 2021).

8. **Integrity vs Despair**

In this final stage, a person had a reflection on life. They assess whether the live they had lived is filled with purpose and integrity (Erikson, 1987). As old age

comes, the capability of generativity stops and the end of life is near. In this state, a person looks back and decide whether their life is fulfilled or left a regret. Accomplishing this stage forms an ego integrity and wisdom while failure produces bitterness and despair (Sekowski, 2020).

C. Quarterlife Crisis in the Intimacy vs Isolation Stage

Quarter-life crisis refers to the transitional phase from late adolescence to early adulthood, marked by feelings of confusion and self-doubt experienced by individuals in their twenties. The phenomenon of quarter-life crisis can be described as being characterized by feelings of isolation, uncertainty, and pressure encountered by individuals as they try to meet both personal and societal expectations. Excessive expectations about the future tend to increase the risk of psychological distress when those hopes are not fulfilled (Robbins, 2001).

Facing quarterlife crisis, an individual experiences several phases in the process (Robinsons, 2013). The phases are:

1. Locked-in

It is a phase of crisis that places individuals in a state of being trapped between various choices, accompanied by doubts about their own ability to make the right decision as part of their life choices. This situation causes individuals to feel pressured and powerless. It is triggered by unsatisfying interpersonal relationships, high-pressure jobs, and a social life that does not align with the individual's personal values, all of which simultaneously lead to dissatisfaction. The pressure of the crisis does not only come from within but also from family,

partners, friends, and the work or campus environment. The pressure demands that individuals be courageous in making decisions; however, at the same time, fears about the risks that may arise beyond their expectations trap them in a vague situation without clear decisions, engulfed in uncertainty during their crisis period

2. Separation/Time-out

This phase is an internal response that drives individuals to withdraw from environments perceived as counterproductive and move toward situations they consider more comfortable. In this phase, individuals are compelled to make significant decisions such as leaving their job, changing their social life, or ending a relationship. It represents a climax marked by the emergence of intense negative emotions such as guilt, shame, and sadness, yet these are also accompanied by a sense of relief. However, this situation creates discomfort and a dilemma for the individual where they are caught between making a decision that changes their current circumstances and being pulled back by negative emotions toward their past life.

3. Exploration

In this phase, individuals proactively seek new commitments and goals. They search for paths to develop their life structure that aligns more with their own values. Many important decisions must be made by the individual, such as seeking a new job or pursuing new experiences by leaving behind old relationships. Other decisions may include continuing their education, starting to learn something new or enhancing their skills, or choosing to build a new relationship with someone else.

4. Rebuilding

This is the phase where individuals begin to build a new foundation for their lives, allowing them to determine the direction they want to take. They start to feel a sense of calm and contentment with their surroundings, which helps them reflect on themselves, their goals, and the meaning of life

D. Quarterlife Crises Resolution

In the attempt towards quarterlife crisis resolution, several factors are formed to help reaching the intended conclusion. A successful resolution is vital in fulfilling an individual's psychological well-being (Erikson, 1997). The phases mentioned is as follows:

1. Exploration and Commitment

Through various opportunities and chances, an individual starts their exploration where they actively explore various roles, lifestyles, values, and beliefs. The exploration experience is engaged through various hobbies, social activities, and personal interests. With sufficient exploration, the individual gained enough self-awareness and personal values resulting in a commitment (Marcia, 2002). The dedication in stabilizing the established life commitment will provide help in finding their purpose and navigating through their lives.

2. Supportive Relationship and Environment

A successful quarterlife resolution can be achieved with the help of supportive relationships and encouraging environment. Family members such as

parents contributes in providing inspiration and emotional safety in the process of achieving resolution. Friends and peers may offer validation to assist in easing the quarterlife crisis. A healthy environment may provide enough freedom of expression for an individual to engage in various activities that improve the formation of one's life (Berdibayeva, 2016).

3. Mentorship and Guidance

The presence of a mentor may offer a guide for an individual struggling in their quarterlife resolution. An effective guidance provided by professional or informal helps the individual in building their character and forming moral value in the process of self-discovery and quarterlife resolution. Supportive mentors may lead them towards possible path forward, assisting them in the period of confusion (Kroger, 2007).

4. Self-Reflection and Personal Growth

In the process of quarterlife resolution, the individual should achieve the capability of self-assessment entailing an examination of one's experience, strengths and weaknesses. From reflection, the individual gains a better self-awareness resulting in a personal growth where they develop a solid sense of self that is able to adapt regardless of life changes (Erikson, 1968).

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

A. Research Design

This research is categorized as literary criticism as it analyses a literary work. It is in line with its definition of a disciplined activity that attempts to describe, study, analyse, justify, interpret and evaluate a work of art (Bressler, 2011). This literary criticism is conducted through psychological approach where it analyses the main character of the literary work. This approach is implemented under the assumption of quarterlife crisis theory referenced from Erik Erikson's psychosocial development theory.

The method of the research is analysing the text of the novel by close reading with the purpose of the analysis is to fulfil the objectives of the research questions. Comprehensive reading repetition is needed to provide a concise description of the quarterlife crisis the main character is displaying in accordance to Erikson's quarterlife crisis theory. Following the found description, this research then aims to discover the solution the main character had attempted in order to solve the said quarterlife crisis.

B. Data Source

The data source of this research is the novel entitled *Convenience Store Woman* by Sayaka Murata. The novel is an English translated version published by Grove Press in 2018 which consist of 96 pages. It is printed in United States and

published in Canada. The novel used in this research in particular is an online version in form of pdf.

C. Data Collection

Several steps are conducted in collecting the data needed. First, the researcher reads the novel and pays attention to the main character and her quarterlife crisis struggles. After the reading session, the researcher discovers the quarterlife crisis suffered by the main character and the influence affecting the crisis. Next is gathering the data which relates to the research question followed by highlighting the data related to the main character's quarterlife crisis.

D. Data Analysis

Following the data collection, an analysis is conducted through steps described:

First is doing comprehensive reading in order to understand the main character's struggle in solving their crisis. After an understanding is gained from the comprehensive reading, a study of gathering various materials related to quarterlife crisis is conducted to uncover the data and correlates them in order to find the research question. With the materials related and the data correlated to the quarterlife crisis is gathered, the next step is to summarize the mentioned findings and then thoroughly analyse them in order to achieve the theoretical and practical advantages which are relevant to research question and objective studies.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Data findings taken from the data source; *Convenience Store Woman*, and the result of the analysis is presented in this chapter. The data found are composed of sentences, monologues and dialogues cited within the novel. The outcome of the analysis discussed is used to answer the question regarding the quarterlife crisis displayed by main character. In addition, the researcher also addresses how the main character solves the mentioned quarterlife crisis they experienced.

A. The Phases of Quarterlife Crisis Experienced by the Main Character

This study focuses on the main character whose name is Keiko Furukura, a thirty-six years old woman working in a Convenience Store in modern day Japan named Smile Mart. She was seen as a problem child due to several incident happened throughout her childhood age resulting in her incapability of fitting in with the society before her. Based on the analysis of her monologues and character dialogues, it is evident that she suffered great challenges in finding her sense of self and a coherent identity.

Regarding the condition of Keiko Furukura, based on Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, Robinsons (2013) offers phases of quarterlife crisis to help understanding the nature of her quarterlife crisis. The said quarterlife crisis corelates to the stage of "Intimacy vs isolation" commonly occurs in adulthood

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nearing middle age. The study presented ahead are the analysis in uncovering the phase of quarterlife crisis experienced by Keiko Furukura:

1. Locked-in

Keiko Furukura's locked-in condition is shown by her desire to be validated as a normal person. Due to her incapability of understanding social norms, she decides that she needs to answer what people wishes from her with no regards to her own personal desire. As a result, clash of conflict happens between her true self and the expectation of the people around her.

> *"She might just as well have been saying I was "cured." If it had been that simple all along, I thought, I wish she'd given me clear instructions before, then I wouldn't have had to go to such lengths to find out how to be normal." (p.54)*

This quote shows Keiko's struggle in her desire to be normal. She sees her goal as a necessity and not her personal goal. It is merely to answer the expectation of the society around her. This struggle is in line with the locked-in condition where according to Robinson (2013) the clash between the true self and the outward behaviour in order to answer expectations of others resulting in the feeling of restlessness. This feeling of restlessness then increases the feeling of entrapment mainly seen in the locked-in status.

Keiko's inability to comprehend social cues further complicates her personal obligation in answering the social expectation in her pursue of normality. This mismatch of value between her and the society is evidence of a locked-in condition. One example can be seen in the part of the story. In this moment, Keiko visited her sister to see her newborn nephew. The said monologue is as such:

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"As far as I was concerned, though, there wasn't any difference between Miho's child and my nephew, and I didn't understand the logic of coming out all the way here just to see him. Maybe this particular baby should be more important to me than the others. But so far as I could see, aside from a few minor differences they were all just an animal called a baby and looked much the same…" (p.30)

Keiko expresses the clash between her personal value and the social norm. This expression is evidence of her locked-in condition in which she feels the restriction causes by the expectation of needing to visit her newborn nephew. She sees all baby the same and the concept of visiting a newfound family is alien to her.

Another form of social norm Keiko incapable to apprehend emerges in one section of the story. Keiko participated in the barbeque gathering where the discussion of family life and marriage is domineering the social cue. Keiko manifests the signs of being locked-in by her inability to understand the normative expectation of marriage. Keiko monologues:

"Of the fourteen or fifteen people gathered together, there were only two others apart from me who weren't married. I hadn't thought anything of it since not everyone had come as a couple, but unmarried Miki whispered to me: "We're the only ones here who can't hold our heads up high, aren't we?" (p.42)

This response shows Keiko's genuine bewilderment in regards to the marriage expectation. Marriage for women her age is the society standard as proven by the dominating discussion at the said party. This follows the evidence of a locked-in condition where Keiko's value does not align with the social expectation expected from her. She does not internalize the said standard proving the concept to be foreign to her which causes the feeling of entrapment, the main issue of the locked-in condition.

Another factor of Keiko's locked-in conflict is her status as a convenience store worker. Her job as a convenience store worker has become her whole life structure. Every aspect of her life is bound by the environment of the convenience store. This commitment leads to the locked-in condition of powerlessness. Keiko expresses:

> *"For breakfast I eat convenience store bread, for lunch I eat convenience store rice balls with something from the hot-food cabinet, and after work I'm often so tired I just buy something from the store and take it home for dinner. I drink about half the bottle of water while I'm at work, then put it in my ecobag and take it home with me to finish at night. When I think that my body is entirely made up of food from this store, I feel like I'm as much a part of the store as the magazine racks or the coffee machine"* (p.12)

This expression signals the confirmation of her powerlessness related to her central commitment. According to Robinson (2013) the condition of being locked-in may also occur due to the career path that deemed to be unsatisfying. Keiko shows her over-reliance to her workplace emerging the feeling of being less human and more of a component of a convenience store.

2. Separation/Time Out

In the one part in the novel, when a troublesome newbie worker appears in the convenience store, Keiko Furukura's co-worker mentioned how she is seemingly unfazed by their behaviour. Her co-worker expresses how Keiko does not complain nor even upset at them. This is the start of the crack of her locked-in situation, beginning her separation/timeout phase hinted by the possibility of detaching herself from her current commitment. Keiko in response:

> *I was startled. I had the feeling I was being told I was a fake and hastily rearranged my expression. "That's not true! It's just that I don't let it show."* (p.29)

Keiko's response shows her discomfort towards her uncommon reaction which serves as evidence to separation/timeout phase. This response is in line with the said phase where a feeling of discomfort emerges when the individual begins to detach themselves from their outward identity formed through their roles and commitment. Keiko thought that her unfazed behaviour is a mistake she needs to correct because she thought it was an undesired response for a convenience store worker resulting in the feeling of distress.

This feeling of distress becomes more prevalent as Keiko realized her life structure is not formed from her own aspiration or values but rather an obligation to be an acceptable functional person. The sense of self she has constructed is that of an imitation and simply used to display a false normalcy reassuring the conversational partner she is facing. There is a foreboding feeling haunts Keiko if she ever acts outside her identity as a convenience store worker. This fear is also a part of the timeout/separation phase. Keiko herself stated:

> *"Now, too, I felt reassured by the expression on Mrs. Izumi and Sugawara's faces:*
> *Good, I pulled off being a "person." (p.16)*

Keiko anxiously reassures herself that her behaviour is still within the acceptance of her role as a convenience store worker. The anxiety she felt due to the possibility of not being seen as a person is evidence of the separation/timeout phase where the individual may suffer distress due to their detachment of their current commitment. The possibility of becoming another type of person that is not a convenience store worker may serve as a motivation for a change or escape, the main issue of separation/timeout phase.

In an attempt to break free from her locked-in situation, Keiko Furukura tries to withdraw from her comfort zone hoping to escape the current suffocating situation. The chance appeared when she met Shiraha, a man who was her co-worker in the convenience store she is familiar in. She is willing to marry a man she barely knows about as long as it answers the expectations of the people around her hoping to be free from the strangling situation. This marks the completion of separation/timeout phase where Keiko is actively trying to leave behind her previous commitment. This dialogue between her and the man mentioned named Shiraha, shows as such:

> "Shiraha, if all you want is a marriage of convenience, then how about getting together with me?" I broached as I put my second cup of warm water on the table and took a seat.
>
> "What the—" he exploded.
>
> "If you hate people interfering in your life so much and don't want to be kicked out of the village, then the sooner you get it over and done with the better, surely," I persisted. "I don't know about hunting—I mean, getting a job—but getting married will at least remove the risk of people sticking their noses into your love life and sexual history, won't it?" (p.50)

Keiko's proposal for marriage represents her severance towards her previous life. As stated by Robinson (2013) separation/time out phase starts with the individual's attempt in distancing themselves from the previous commitment. Keiko's reasoning towards Shiraha reflects to the time of the barbeque party where she was being pestered to marry. She hopes that by answering the social expectation, the feeling of entrapment she suffered can be resolved.

3. Exploration

Keiko Furukura suffers an internal conflict where her true self clashes with her desire in finding normalcy in favor of answering social expectation resulting in locked-in condition. In order to resolve the condition that she is suffering through; she attempts to simulate a normative adult life hoping that the social validation she gained will help her solve her internal struggle which begins her separation/timeout phase. The simulation she chooses to undergo in is a commitment to marriage. Thus begins the beginning of exploration phase where Keiko experimenting with the new identity she acquired.

The decision in choosing to simulate a normative adult life through romantic relationship as her choice for her exploration phase comes from Keiko noticing the need of having romance partner when she is participating in a barbeque party at her friend's house where marriage and family life dominates the conversation. At that moment, her value and the social expectation clashes which is a typical sign for a locked-in condition. She does not understand the reason behind the need in having a relationship with her reaction when asked about her relationship status to be:

> I can't go on like this? You mean I shouldn't be living the way I am now? Why do you say that?" (p.44)

This question is evidence of her locked-in situation in accordance to Robinson's theory where the individual faces a mismatch between their personal value and the social expectation. Keiko is incapable to understand why marriage is expected from a woman of her age resulting in the said locked-in phase.

In exchange, Keiko realizes the path she needs to take in order to solve her condition. She has to follow the party attendee of having a relationship as it is seen

as a normal thing to do which aligns with her interest to be normal. In order to achieve such goal, she needs a romantic partner or she would be an outcast who failed at achieving social validation. This decision signals the exploration phase as Keiko begins to actively explore a new commitment that aligns with her interest. Keiko narrated:

> *"The normal world has no room for exceptions and always quietly eliminates foreign objects. Anyone who is lacking is disposed of. So that's why I need to be cured. Unless I'm cured, normal people will expurgate me." (p.44)*

The narration shows Keiko has discovered the reason behind her desire to be normal. She wants to be a part of the normal world and does not be considered as foreign objects. This reasoning is evidence of the exploration phase where the participant trying out new kinds of commitment that aligns with their desire. In this case, Keiko decides that marriage is the path she wants to take in order to achieve her desire to be normal.

In the exploration phase, motivation to approach is common to be found. Contrary to the locked-in and separation/timeout phase, exploration phase having the individual to actively approach their interest. Keiko displays such interest for marriage as she sees it as a top priority in order to become normal. Keiko narrated:

> *"You eliminate the parts of your life that others find strange—maybe that's what everyone means when they say they want to "cure" me. These past two weeks I'd been asked fourteen times why I wasn't married. And twelve times why I was still working part-time. So for now I'd decide what to eliminate from my life according to what I was asked about most often I thought" (p.51)*

The narration is evidence of Keiko's motivation in approaching her interest. Robinson stated that in the exploration phase, an individual enthusiastically looks for ways to develop their life structure that is more aligned with their own aspiration.

Keiko decides to dedicate herself to be normal by eliminating the parts of her life that is seen strange by others. She chooses the erasing of her single status as her top priority due to the high frequency of the question she has accepted.

4. Rebuilding

After the exploring phase, Keiko realizes that answering social expectations does not solve her feeling of entrapment which signals the beginning into what Robinson (2013) describes as the "rebuilding" phase of the quarterlife crisis. This phase starts when the individual begins to reconstruct their lives by reflecting through their experience of the previous phases of a locked-in, separation/timeout, and exploration. In her attempt to simulate a normative adult life by entering marriage status, Keiko, discovers that this path worsens her feeling of alienation. Keiko narrated:

> *"It was as though everyone was saying that for the first time I was part of their circle. I had the feeling they were all welcoming me on board. Painfully aware that until now they'd evidently thought of me as an outsider, I listened to them carry on excitedly, merely nodding brightly and occasionally muttering "I see" in the same tone Sugawara always used." (p.62)*

The moment her relationship is acknowledged by her co-workers, she experiences a painful revelation, her value persists to mismatch with the society around her. The path of normalcy does not solve her locked-in issue and she finds out that her condition was not caused by her peculiar lifestyle, but by the societal pressure to follow conventional norms that never fit her from the very beginning. This revelation is evidence of rebuilding phase where the individual gained an enhanced personal value expressed towards their outward self. Keiko starts to

express herself beyond external validation and accepting the fact that the normative adult

Additional evidence of the exploration phase is shown in the moment of Keiko's progress of attempting to simulate a conventional adult life through marriage of convenience with her former co-worker Shiraha. Keiko experiences an extreme feeling of alienation as her coworkers begin treating her differently due to her new relationship status. This is in line with the rebuilding phase stated by Robinson (2013) where the individual begins to build a new sense of self based on the experience in the earlier phases. Instead of the feeling of freedom and comfort, Keiko found uneasiness due to her simulation attempt resulting in the disruption of her previously stable environment which is the convenience store. She narrates:

> "*Only the customers remained unchanged and continued to need me to be a perfect store worker for them. I'd thought the rest of the staff was made up of the same cells as me, but in the current strange atmosphere a village mentality was taking over and they were fast reverting to ordinary males and females. Now only the customers still allowed me to be just a convenience store worker*" (p.70)

The narration shows a moment of reflection as Keiko realized the desire she sought for was incompatible with her true self. The social validation she briefly acquires makes her uncomfortable. It seemingly threatens the atmosphere of the environment she used to into something else entirely. Keiko begins to rebuild her understanding of the commitment she truly desires and finds that she does not want to pursue normalcy through answering social expectation. She prefers her status as a convenience worker. This realization follows the rebuilding phase of the quarterlife crisis where Keiko discovers a clearer sense of purpose which is her previous life as a convenience store worker.

More evidence can be found when Keiko decides to leave the convenience store following Shiraha's suggestion. She does not feel an emotionally lifting experience, but a bewildering discomfort. This is a part of the progress of the rebuilding phase where Keiko finds out her detachment of what should be a progress shown by her co-workers congratulating Keiko for graduating from being a convenience worker. Keiko expressed:

> *"I was taking on the form of a person that their brains all imagined as normal. Being congratulated by them felt strange, but I merely said, 'Thank you.' I said goodbye to the girls on the evening shift and went outside. It was still light out, but the convenience store was lit up more brightly than the sky. It looked like a shining white aquarium. I couldn't imagine what would become of me now I was no longer a store worker. I bowed once to the store and started walking to the metro station." (p.79)*

Keiko's expression shows the emptiness she experiences in her effort to fulfil the commitment designed by the social expectation. No sense of fulfilment can be found and she finds herself in loss and uncertainty instead. Despite she has aligned herself with the normalcy she desired, her inner self remains disconnected. This realization lays evidence of her rebuilding phase where Robinson (2013) stated how the individual inner values is being outwardly expressed leading to more authentic self. Keiko discovers that her path of freedom is not found from the need to answer social norm but rather found in the meaning originated within herself.

According to Robinson (2013), the rebuilding phase of the quarterlife crisis mainly circled around the increase of internal motivation where the individual begins to construct their life which reflects their authentic self by learning through the experiences they have digested from the previous phases. After Keiko realizing that her pursuit of normalcy worsens her sense of uneasiness from the entrapment

she felt at the locked-in situation prior, she decides to reject the social norms and embraces her peculiar self she always has been. This marks Keiko's rebuilding phase where her life as a convenience worker shifted from the source of restriction into sanctuary she always needed.

> *"And then the store's voice began streaming into me. All its sounds quivered with meaning, the vibrations speaking directly to my cells, like music to my ears. I knew instinctively what this store needed without even having to think about it. I was startled to see the open refrigerated display case with an ad announcing 30¥ OFF ALL PASTA! The pasta dishes were all jumbled in with the yakisoba and okonomiyaki and didn't stand out at all. This wouldn't do I thought, and I moved them to a more conspicuous spot next to the Korean-style cold noodles. A customer stared at me warily, but when I looked up and said "Irasshaimasé!" she appeared satisfied that I was a store employee and took one of the packs of spicy cod roe pasta I had just neatly laid out" (p.86)*

This narration expresses how Keiko no longer performs her commitment as a mere obligation, but as an alignment towards her sense of purpose. She discovers that the convenience store provides her the fulfilment in a way that the society's expectations can never do. Keiko's return to the convenience store marks the completion of her quarterlife crisis. In accordance to Robinson's rebuilding phase of the quarterlife crisis where the individual finds a renewed participation towards long-term commitment, Keiko discovers that she does not desire normalcy anymore and decides to rebuild her life that resonates with her true self.

B. The Solution of the Main Character's Quarterlife Crisis

In order to achieve the solution of quarterlife crisis, several processes are needed to reach a stable life structure. Keiko Furukura, the main character of the novel *Convenience Store Woman* has gone through the mentioned process and progressed towards completion. Through the completion of the processes, Keiko

Furukura is expected to find the solution of the quarterlife crisis she is experiencing. The said processes are as follows:

1. Exploration and Commitment

The process of exploration and commitment plays a vital role in identity construction and psychological growth. In the condition of quarterlife crisis, the individual commonly seek out a new identity as part of the progress. Exploration refers to the process where the individual experiments with new kinds of roles, values and life paths in order to discover a way of life closer to their true self. Commitment follows exploration and signals the stage where the individual makes a conscious decision to their life choices through self-awareness. It is expected that this phase may allow the individual to escape the sense of entrapment by constructing a meaningful life closer to their ideal.

In the case of Keiko Furukura, her method of exploration is severely limited. She actively avoids the traditional form of exploration such as building relationships or expressing personal aspirations rather than engaging it. Her denial to participate in the mentioned experimentation is less of a result of an isolation but rather an act of distance on purpose. Keiko is willing to lie to justify her refusal in expanding her exploration territory. Keiko narrated:

> *"I've made it known among old friends that I have certain health issues that make it more convenient for me to have a part-time job. At my workplace, I tell them it's because my parents are ill and I need to care for them. I have my sister to thank for thinking up these excuses for me" (p.19)*

This narration shows Keiko's reliance towards her lies. As a result, she evades the discomfort and uncertainty typically experienced in a genuine

exploration. Her decision prevents her in discovering more in depth meaning behind her commitment. It is evident that her lack of exploration not only delays personal growth but prove to be a hurdle in solving her quarterlife crisis.

Although Keiko Furukura deliberately avoids direct engagement in traditional forms of social exploration, she replaces these experiences with her own method of observation. Instead of using her own experiences as a means of exploration, she studies the behaviors and emotional actions of others to help her interactions in her social environment. Keiko narrated:

> *"I'd noticed soon after starting the job that whenever I got angry at the same things as everyone else, they all seemed happy. If I went along with the manager when he was annoyed or joined in the general irritation at someone skiving off the night shift, there was a strange sense of solidarity as everyone seemed pleased that I was angry too". (p.16)*

In this narration, Keiko is demonstrating her own method of observation. By aligning her outward reactions with her coworkers, she is able to socially integrate without the need of emotional connection. This method allows her to explore the social experimentation on ways of socially accepted behavior without the risk of having herself be criticized. Unfortunately, this type of exploration lacks any emotional depth usually found in the common method of exploration. As a result, her disconnect regarding understanding social expectation remains causing a limitation in her attempt of exploration during her quarterlife crisis. This limitation may affect her attempt in finding genuine commitment due to her emotional detachment against the commitment that she chooses to simulate.

In an attempt to escape from the sensation of being trapped due to quarterlife crisis, Keiko decides to answer the social expectation. She concludes that pursuing

normalcy may resolve the inner conflict she is currently in. Due to her method of exploration, she is unable to find deeper emotional meaning in her experiment. The reason remains superficial with Keiko seeing it as a logical choice and less emotional. This is evident in her false marriage with Shiraha; her former co-worker, where it truly stops at the concept of 'marriage of conveniece' and does not lead to any emotional nor personal growth. Keiko narrates:

> *"I was considering whether there was any benefit to me in having him here. My mother and sister, and even I myself, were beginning to tire of me never being cured. I was beginning to feel that any change, good or bad, would be better than my situation now" (p.59)*

This narration shows her desire of normalcy stops at the mere possibility of escaping the entrapment sensation she is suffering with no effects towards her own personal value typically gained from exploration. Her simulation in attempting a normative adult life is simply an outward appearance and has no emotional integration towards her inner self. As a result, she does not experience any new emotional revelation despite exploring a new kind of commitment.

Keiko Furukura's exploration may be very limiting, but she manages to complete the phase using her method. In spite of no change in her inner value nor produces any emotional meaning, she discovers an understanding of a commitment she can truly dedicates herself in which is being a convenience store worker. Her monologue provides evidence of such:

> *"I no longer knew what standard to live by. Until now, my body had belonged to the convenience store, even when I wasn't working. Sleeping, keeping in good physical shape, and eating nutritiously were all part of my job. I had to stay healthy for work" (p.82)*

The narration is evidence on how her commitment as a convenience store worker evolves beyond a mere part-time work. It plays a vital role in forming principle of her life, shaping her habits, routines, and even her need of physical self-care. This evolution provides a resolution towards the sense of entrapment she previously faced in her quarterlife crisis. She has discovered that the structure of the convenience store resonates with her peculiar self, more than the social expectation she has attempted to answer.

Keiko may find her peaceful solution of her quarterlife crisis, but the process towards it leaves a lot to be desired. The limitation of her exploration does not express her own value enough to be considered a healthy conclusion. As a result, the conclusion seems superficial due to the lack of emotional nor physical challenge that she faces and prevails.

2. Supportive Relationship and Environment

The process of supportive relationship and environment plays a vital role in nurturing the emotional security needed for identity development and personal growth. Parents, siblings or friends usually offer a form of encouragement and space for the individual in their progress of finding the solution of their quarterlife crisis. This support may help the individual in their time of worry and uncertainty and lead them towards a better intrinsic motivation.

However, in the case of Keiko Furukura, her environment actively antagonizes the peculiar condition she suffered. With no attempt at understanding her life perception, her family such as her sister react to Keiko's alienation towards

social norm as a sickness that needs to be cured. This lack of emotional support is most evident when Keiko reflects:

> *"So that was it: now that she thinks he's "one of us" she can lecture him. She's far happier thinking her sister is normal, even if she has a lot of problems, than she is having an abnormal sister for whom everything is fine. For her, normality— however messy—is far more comprehensible." (p.73)*

The quote describes how Keiko discovers that her sister's perception of her is dominated by the social norm. The sister is more comfortable seeing Keiko facing ordinary romantic difficulty such as her problematic relationship with Shiraha rather than being an abnormal human being who is content living the life of outside societal standard. There is no space for Keiko to safely explore during her quarterlife crisis period and her family imposes the restrictive ideals of normalcy instead which worsens the sense of entrapment she already had. The absence of a supportive environment forces Keiko to manage her quarterlife crisis in isolation.

With the absence of a traditional support system typically consists of encouraging family and friends, Keiko decides to choose an unconventional support for her emotional security in form of the convenience store. The component of supportive relationships and environment of the quarterlife crisis resolution does not necessarily need to be gained from people. The environment which provides the sense of belonging can be a replacement in helping the solution of the individual's quarterlife crisis. For Keiko, the store functions as a substitute for the nurturing relationships she lacks. Its repetitive routines, clearly defined roles, and familiar sounds turned into a support system she can rely on. Keiko narrated:

> *"I felt depressed. I looked at the clock: 7:00 p.m. My body had always been connected to the convenience store even when I wasn't working. Now it was time*

for the store's stock of carton drinks to be replenished; now the store's nighttime delivery would be arriving and the night shift would start checking it; now it was time for the store to have its floor mopped. Every time I looked at the clock, I would think about what was happening in the convenience store." (p.80)

The narration is evidence on Keiko's deep attachment towards the store which becomes her emotional support in her isolation. Her workplace provides a sense of security with its predictability and simple routine. Unlike her family who imposes normalcy, the store allows Keiko to live the way she is. Thus, the convenience store has become a unique supportive element and a safe environment for Keiko to stabilize her emotional turmoil due to the ongoing phase of quarterlife crisis.

Although Keiko receives some form of support and a safe environment, the system is not entirely optimal. The lack of external input making the support system less of an emotional security, but more of a form of coping mechanism. This may result in the emotional acceptance of isolation rather than freedom from its restriction. The result speaks that Keiko manages to go through the supportive relationship and environment process, but it cannot be defined as a good and healthy result.

3. Mentorship and Guidance

The process of mentorship and guidance in quarterlife crisis resolution has an important role in aiding individuals facing the confusion and instability they experience during quarterlife crisis. A mentor can provide insight and direction that can act as a model for behavior or offering advice which may help the individual in understanding their circumstances.

For Keiko Furukura, the character of Shiraha initially emerges as a potential guide during her quarterlife crisis. His cynical interpretation of societal norms resonates with Keiko's own experience of alienation. She temporarily entertains the idea that his worldview might offer a path to resolution. Keiko's interest is shown by her proposal for marriage of convenience. Shiraha's interpretation is as follows:

> *"And so I realized. This society hasn't changed one bit. People who don't fit into the village are expelled: men who don't hunt, women who don't give birth to children. For all we talk about modern society and individualism, anyone who doesn't try to fit in can expect to be meddled with, coerced, and ultimately banished from the village". (p.49)*

Based on Shiraha's words, Keiko concludes that the reason behind her mismatch value with the social expectation is due to her status deemed unfit for the unchanging society. His views offer a solution that reducing the constant evaluation from others may reduce the sense of entrapment during Keiko's quarterlife crisis hence the proposal for marriage of convenience. Shiraha manages to fill in the role of mentor needed in the mentorship and guidance process.

However, Shiraha's position does not last long. Keiko experiences a failed mentorship due to his unreliable position. He does not provide encouragement towards Keiko's growth, but rather projecting his own issues on her. He uses Keiko for his own attempt to reintegrate to society, disregarding the need of Keiko's opinion. As a result, Keiko loses her mentor during her on-going quarterlife crisis. The moment happens as such:

> *"I've told her to leave the convenience store right away and focus on looking for a proper job. We already made that decision ourselves." (p.76)*

This quote shows Shiraha's neglect towards Keiko's opinion. Keiko entertains the idea of marriage of convenience, but there is no agreement between

them that Keiko has to leave her role as a convenience store worker. Keiko unwillingly accepts his decision shows that Shiraha is still seen as her mentor, but this one-sided decision proves that he is no longer an adequate mentor for Keiko in her process of mentorship and guidance during quarterlife crisis.

Keiko Furukura unfortunately experiences failure in her mentorship and guidance process. What would have been an aid during her quarterlife crisis process becomes a hurdle that affects Keiko's quarterlife crisis journey. The aimless path she has seen because of this failure may influence her towards a less positive decision at the end of her quarterlife crisis phase.

4. Self-Reflection and Personal Growth

The final process of self-reflection and personal growth in the quarterlife crisis signals the point where the individual starts to organize the lessons they gathered from previous experiences to re-evaluate their life structure. In this process, the individual faces uncomfortable truths in order to arrive at a more authentic sense of self. The result is a renewed motivation in engagement towards long-term plans and commitment.

Keiko Furukura begins the self-reflection and personal growth process after her failure attempt in normalcy through false relationship with Shiraha and the personal cost of abandoning her bond with the convenience store. By facing the sense of loss resulted from her choices, she starts to evaluate her connection with the store. Keiko narrated:

"Until now, the convenience store had always been ringing in my ears. But now those sounds were gone." (p.77)

This narration shows the mental void Keiko experiences in her attempt to pursue normalcy and leaving her convenience store life behind. The absence of the store sounds reflects the loss in direction and how her new commitment is unable to fill the newly formed emptiness. The pursue of normalcy is seen as futile as it only disrupts the peaceful life she has exhaustingly built. She reflects on how much of importance the convenience store is in her life structure.

Continuing, Keiko reaches her climax of self-reflection when she comes to fully understand what being a convenience store worker truly means to her. The store has become more than a place of employment, but her source of identity and worldview. Through her reflection, she discovers how deeply the store has become her inner compass. Keiko reflects:

"I had judged everything on the basis of whether it was the sensible thing to do for the convenience store, but now I'd lost that standard. There was nothing to guide me over whether an action was rational or not. Before I became a store worker, I must have been following some kind of logic in my judgments, but I'd forgotten whatever guiding principles I'd followed back then." (p.82)

The reflection reveals how Keiko manages to learn on how to interpret the world and operate within it because of her transformation into a convenience store worker. She no longer relates to her fragmented self before entering the convenience store world. This revelation is important due to the loss of this commitment resulting in her losing her mental anchor. Keiko understands that she needs to reclaim her current self instead of reverting to a former self that no longer exist. This realization leads closer towards quarterlife crisis completion by reembracing the commitment that truly supports her life.

Keiko's self-reflection and personal growth process concludes when she decides to return to her life as a convenience store worker. This decision is a result of reflection which then leads to her rejecting the social norm and accepting her peculiar identity. She declares that the commitment she perceives the closest to her true self is her life as a convenience store worker. Keiko stated:

> *"I realize now," I went on relentlessly. "More than a person, I'm a convenience store worker. Even if that means I'm abnormal and can't make a living and drop down dead, I can't escape that fact. My very cells exist for the convenience store. (p.88)*

This statement is evidence of how Keiko chooses her existing self rather than embracing a new socially accepted commitment. This result of self-reflection marks the completion of her quarterlife crisis where she gained a renewed motivation to engage in a long-term commitment. Keiko's expression regarding the long-term commitment can be seen with her determination on how she will keep being a convenience store worker regardless the economical sustainability or die trying.

Continuing, Keiko reflects that her desire to be normal does not lead to a more comfortable life. Between her human side that reflects social expectation and her animal side that reflect her inner value, Keiko chooses her instinctual authentic self. This choice is a result of facing uncomfortable truth in order to arrive at a more authentic self. Keiko preached:

> *"It's what I am. For the human me, it probably is convenient to have you around, Shiraha, to keep my family and friends off my back. But the animal me, the convenience store worker, has absolutely no use for you whatsoever." (p.89)*

This statement is evidence on the completion of self-reflection and personal growth process. She resolves the quarterlife crisis through self-acceptance rather

than social integration. She recognizes that she discovers a sense of purpose and comfort in store. The restrictive feeling is gone and she is free to be a convenience store "animal".

Keiko Furukura manages to complete the process of self-reflection and personal growth. She is able to find a satisfying result where she gains a renewed motivation expected from quarterlife crisis completion by reflection through her previous experience during the quarterlife crisis. However, the result does not necessarily lead to a personal growth. Instead of gaining fresh value and integrates them into the inner self, Keiko simply walks back towards the commitment she is already familiar with. This familiarity can be mistaken as an alignment towards her inner value, rather than a familiarity due to experience born from habitual practice which potentially could lead to a loop back towards the beginning quarterlife crisis.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This chapter provides a summary of the key findings from the analysis of the main character's quarterlife crisis in Sayaka Murata's *Convenience Store Woman.* The researcher has successfully undertaken the entire research problems displayed at the beginning of the study. Beyond the conclusion section is suggestion provided to readers, particularly future researchers interested in the subject analyzed and the appliance of psychosocial theory.

A. Conclusion

In *Convenience Store Woman* by Sayaka Murata, the main character who is a woman named Keiko Furukura suffers from quarterlife crisis, where the issue is analyzed using Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development. According to Erikson, the conflict of quarterlife crisis emerges at the stage of "Intimacy vs isolation", in which the individual struggles in forming a meaningful bond. Keiko Furukura suffers a condition where she is incapable of comprehending social cues which pressures her into pursuing normalcy. The quarterlife crisis is marked by an internal conflict where her desire to be normal and get accepted by society clashes with her current life condition. Using the psychosocial development theory, the research determines the phases of quarterlife crisis Keiko Furukura experience through and how the solution she reaches regarding the said quarterlife crisis.

Keiko Furukura experiences the phases of quarterlife crisis described by Oliver Robinson based on Erik Erikson's theory, they are: locked-in,

separation/timeout, exploration and rebuilding. Her locked in condition is evident in how her obsession to be normal dominates her true self resulting in her the desire to free from the life suffocation she had felt. The separation/timeout period is seen through her attempt in simulating normative adult life through marriage. Keiko's exploration phase is shown when she realizes that her attempt in answering socal expectation does not resolve the suffocation she suffered, but rather worsens it. And then the rebuilding phase happens when she tries to reclaim the life she tries to leave behind and make peace with it. These phases highlight the quarterlife crisis the main character had been through.

In order to solve the quarterlife crisis, Keiko Furukura has gone through the processes of quarterlife crisis resolution. The first process is exploration and commitment where Keiko discovers the importance of convenience store to her life and commits herself in her attachment towards the store turning the commitment into her own life structure. Next is the need of supportive relationship and environment where Keiko experiences a unique process where her support comes in form of convenience store rather than her family and friends which helps her move towards her desired life. Another process is in form of mentorship and guidance where Keiko fails the process due to the unreliability of the mentor. Finally, Keiko goes through self-reflection and gains personal growth where she embraces the life as a convenience store worker and accepts her abnormality as her own identity, solving the internal conflict by rejecting her desire to be normal and prioritizing her authentic self where she no longer wishes for social validation.

B. Suggestion

Further studies can be conducted in regards to the analysis of the novel, *Convenience Store Woman*. It is recommended that future researchers explore this literary work through other lenses of theory such as feminism theory. The novel is worth a discussion regarding social expectations burdened upon the female characters in the novel. Cultural studies may offer corelation as well due to the specific Japanese setting.

Lastly, an awareness regarding quarterlife crisis needs to continuously expand and grow. While the nature of quarterlife crisis is mostly individualistic, friends and family may play a crucial role in helping the individual in their self-discovery. Isolation and loneliness could lead to self-sabotage that disturb a person's growth which is the reason why external assistance is needed to avoid the worst-case scenario of depression. This research may provide encouragement to those that are struggling with their own crisis or inform readers who notices their close peers struggles with their internal mind.

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