

**AN ANALYSIS OF MENTAL WELL-BEING IN *WE'LL PRESCRIBE
YOU A CAT* THROUGH CARL ROGERS' SELF-CONCEPT**

THESIS

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK
IBRAHIM MALANG**

2025

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THESIS

Presented to
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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of *Sarjana Sastra (S.S.)*

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2025

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I state that the thesis entitled *“An Analysis of Mental Well-Being in We’ll Prescribe You a Cat Through Carl Rogers’ Self-Concept”* 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, 22th December 2025

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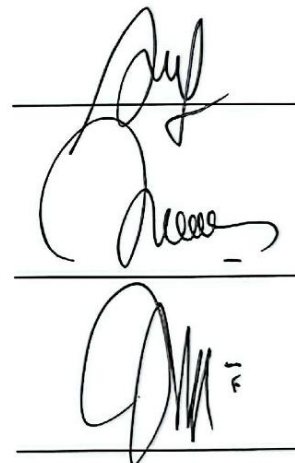
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MOTTO

“Being afraid isn’t a bad thing. It’s my fear that’s brought me this far.”

–Eisen–

DEDICATION

I proudly dedicate this thesis to:

My beloved mother, Yenny, whose love has kept me going all this time.

My beloved father, Waluyo, whose sacrifices have brought me to the finish line.

My excellent guidance Advisor, Agung Wiranata Kusuma, M.A.

All my friends, who always give me encouragement and motivation

And to myself, Roudhotul Jannah

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Bismillahirrahmanirrahim, alhamdulillah hirobbil ‘alamin, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, all praise is due to Allah SWT. The researcher expresses gratitude for His blessing that enabled this thesis completion.

Salawat and salam were continuously poured out on prophet Muhammad SAW, and peace and blessings be upon him, along with his family, friends, and followers, until the end of time. The thesis entitled *An Analysis of Mental Well-Being in We'll Prescribe You a Cat Through Carl Rogers' Self-Concept* was made to meet one of the requirements for achieving a degree of *Sarjana Sastra* (S.S.) in the Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanity, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang.

Completing the thesis is with the participation of those who have provided endless motivation, counsel, and support. Therefore, with deep gratitude and appreciation, the researcher would like to extend thanks to all who have contributed to the drafting of this thesis:

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seemed impossible. Thank you for having the courage to get through difficult times and choosing to continue this journey. To my past self, thank you for your unwavering belief that has brought me to where I am today.

The researcher realized that there are still many shortcomings that need to be corrected and improved in preparing this thesis. For that, the researcher hopes that there will be input for this thesis, as well as further research that is appropriate to the issue or object of this thesis. The researcher hope this thesis may benefit the researcher, family, and the wider community.

ABSTRACT

Jannah, Roudhotul (2025). An Analysis of Mental Well-Being in *We'll Prescribe You a Cat* Through Carl Rogers' Self-Concept. Undergraduate Thesis, Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Advisor: Agung Wiranata Kusuma, M.A.

Keyword: Self-Concept, Self-Image, Ideal Self, Congruence, Incongruence, Mental Well-Being

Self-concept is an organized structure consisting of an individual's perception of themselves (self-image), the version of themselves they aspire to be (ideal-self), and the value they place on themselves (self-esteem). The quality of this self-concept is measured through congruence or incongruence, which determines an individual's mental health. Carl Rogers' theory of self-concept is used to analyze the five main characters in Syou Ishida's novel *We'll Prescribe You a Cat*. This novel was chosen as the object of research because it explicitly shows the correlation between a dysfunctional self-concept and the need for unconditional positive regard in overcoming a character crisis. This study uses a qualitative method with a literary-critical and narrative case-study approach. Data were collected through quotations and narratives that describe the self-concepts of the five main characters. The results show that the characters' adverse mental conditions are caused by high incongruence arising from a rigid mismatch between their self-image and ideal self. The recovery of incongruence facilitated by unconditional positive regard allows the characters to lower their defenses, accept rejected aspects of themselves, and revise their ideal self to be more realistic. With the reduction of the incongruence gap, the five characters achieve mental well-being characterized by improved psychological functioning and positive emotions.

ثحبلا صلختس

الجنة، روضة (٢٠٢٥). تحليل للصحة العقلية في "سنصف لك قطة" من خلال مفهوم كارل روجرز للذات أطروحة جامعية، قسم الأدب الإنجليزي، كلية العلوم الإنسانية، جامعة مولانا مالك إبراهيم الإسلامية الحكومية في مالانج. المشرف: أغونغ ويراناتا كوسوما، ماجستير .

الكلمات المفتاحية: مفهوم الذات، صورة الذات، الذات المثالية، التوافق، عدم التوافق، الصحة العقلية

مفهوم الذات هو بنية منظمة تتكون من تصور الفرد لنفسه (صورة الذات)، والصورة التي يطمح أن يكون عليها (الذات المثالية)، والقيمة التي يضعها على نفسه (احترام الذات) تقاس جودة مفهوم الذات هذا من خلال التوافق أو عدم التوافق، وهو ما يحدد الصحة العقلية للفرد. تُستخدم نظرية كارل روجرز عن مفهوم الذات لتحليل الشخصيات الخمس الرئيسية في رواية شيو إيشيدا "سنصف لك قطة". تم اختيار هذه الرواية كموضوع للبحث لأنها تظهر بوضوح العلاقة بين مفهوم الذات غير السليم والحاجة إلى التقدير الإيجابي غير المشروط للتغلب على أزمة الشخصية. تستخدم هذه الدراسة طريقة نوعية مع نهج دراسة حالة أدبية نقدية وسردية. تم جمع البيانات من خلال الاقتباسات والروايات التي تصف مفاهيم الذات للشخصيات الخمس الرئيسية. تظهر النتائج أن الحالات النفسية السلبية للشخصيات ناتجة عن عدم التوافق الشديد الناشئ عن التباين الصارم بين صورتهم الذاتية والذات المثالية. إن استعادة التوافق التي يسهلها، التقدير الإيجابي غير المشروط تسمح للشخصيات بخفض دفاعاتهم، وقبول الجوانب المرفوضة من أنفسهم ومراجعة ذواتهم المثالية لتكون أكثر واقعية. مع تقليل فجوة عدم التوافق، تحقق الشخصيات الخمس الرفاهية النفسية التي تتميز بتحسين الأداء النفسي والمشاعر الإيجابية.

ABSTRAK

Jannah, Roudhotul (2025). An Analysis of Mental Well-Being in *We'll Prescribe You a Cat* Through Carl Rogers' Self-Concept. Undergraduate Thesis, Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Advisor: Agung Wiranata Kusuma, M.A.

Kata Kunci: Konsep Diri, Citra Diri, Diri Ideal, Kongruen, Inkongruen, Kesejahteraan Mental

Konsep diri adalah struktur terorganisir yang terdiri dari persepsi individu tentang diri mereka sendiri (citra diri), versi diri yang mereka harapkan menjadi (diri ideal), dan nilai yang mereka berikan pada diri mereka sendiri (harga diri). Kualitas konsep diri ini diukur melalui kesesuaian atau ketidaksesuaian, yang menentukan kesehatan mental individu. Teori konsep diri Carl Rogers digunakan untuk menganalisis lima karakter utama dalam novel *We'll Prescribe You a Cat* karya Syou Ishida. Novel ini dipilih sebagai objek penelitian karena secara eksplisit menunjukkan korelasi antara konsep diri yang disfungsi dan kebutuhan akan penerimaan positif tanpa syarat dalam mengatasi krisis karakter. Studi ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan kritik sastra dan studi kasus naratif. Data dikumpulkan melalui kutipan dan narasi yang menggambarkan konsep diri kelima karakter utama. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kondisi mental yang buruk pada karakter disebabkan oleh ketidakcocokan yang tinggi akibat ketidakcocokan yang kaku antara citra diri dan diri ideal mereka. Pemulihan ketidakcocokan yang difasilitasi oleh penerimaan positif tanpa syarat memungkinkan karakter untuk menurunkan pertahanan diri, menerima aspek-aspek diri yang ditolak, dan merevisi diri ideal mereka agar lebih realistis. Dengan berkurangnya celah ketidakcocokan, kelima karakter mencapai kesejahteraan mental yang ditandai dengan fungsi psikologis yang lebih baik dan emosi positif.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the various aspects related to this research. This chapter contains several sections: the background of the study, the problems of the study, the significance of the study, the scope and limitations, and the definition of key terms.

A. Background of the Study

Nowadays, many people strive to improve their mental health awareness. Mental health, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), is a state of well-being in which the individual recognizes their own abilities, can manage the ordinary stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is capable of contributing to their community (Fusar-Poli et al., 2020). Maintaining mental health is essential because it directly affects a person's ability to function optimally in their daily life. When individuals do not care for their mental health, they are more likely to develop inner conflict (Nopi, Munandar, Irawan, & Lubis, 2022). Ultimately, mental well-being is a state in which a person not only functions technically but also feels good mentally, emotionally, and spiritually as they carry out their social roles (Fusar-Poli et al., 2020). It is the ongoing movement where a person is increasingly proactive in navigating life's complexities with authenticity.

Therefore, it is essential to look at mental well-being in literature because literary works often show how people deal with psychological problems. Literature significantly influences an individual's worldview, offering guidance on confronting challenges, transforming mindsets, and comprehending moral values in

contemporary society (Simaremare, Asbari, Santoso, & Rantina, 2023). Readers can learn more about how characters deal with mental health issues and how they try to understand and accept themselves by examining how well-being is portrayed in literary works. In addition, this approach can also enrich the understanding of the role of mental well-being in the recovery journey of individuals with inner conflict. By examining literature from this perspective, readers can broaden their horizons on how mental well-being is constructed in society through literary works.

This research uses self-concept theory to analyze the main characters' development toward mental well-being. According to Rogers (1959), self-concept is a person's overall view of himself, formed from life experiences, interactions with others, and self-reflection. Self-concept has several components, including self-image and ideal self. A mismatch between the two can hurt a person's mental well-being, which is referred to as incongruence. Rogers, in a study written by Curry-Tuthill (2024), emphasized that self-acceptance and positive experiences from the environment can help an individual reduce incongruence. In addition, another component of self-concept is self-esteem, which is how much a person values themselves. A person with low self-esteem may tend to avoid challenges in life and find it difficult to accept that life can sometimes be difficult and exhausting (Rogers, 1959).

The relationship between self-concept and mental well-being is explained through Carl Rogers' theoretical framework. Based on the perspective of Maurer and Daukantaitė (2020), self-concept serves as a foundational catalyst for mental well-being, as a flexible self-perception creates a positive cycle that fosters

psychological growth and resilience. Achieving well-being depends heavily on creating congruence, in which self-image aligns with the ideal self, enabling individuals to live with complete authenticity. This process is reinforced by unconditional positive self-regard, which is the ability of individuals to give themselves positive recognition unconditionally, which serves as the foundation for psychological resilience and complete self-acceptance. When harmony between self-perception and experience is established, individuals move towards the status of a fully functioning person, becoming highly open to experiences and able to perform their psychological functions optimally. Thus, developing a healthy self-concept is key to achieving meaningful mental well-being.

The application of self-concept theory is evident in Syou Ishida's *We'll Prescribe You a Cat* (2024), in which five distinct characters navigate the tension between their ideal self and their real experiences. Though from different walks of life, these individuals are united by a shared sense of inner conflict stemming from rigid societal expectations. Their paths eventually lead them to the mysterious Nakagyō Kokoro Clinic for the Soul, a hidden sanctuary where the treatment for their distress is not conventional therapy, but the temporary care of a cat. This novel is particularly relevant to study, as it portrays mental well-being as a gradual process of discovery and reflection. Within the clinic's walls, the characters confront the fragility of their self-concept under modern social pressures. The narrative provides a rich basis for analysis, focusing on how these characters begin to recalibrate their ideal self to achieve a more congruent and authentic sense of self.

Furthermore, the researcher had examined previous studies to strengthen the understanding of how Carl Rogers' self-concept theory has been applied in literary analysis before. Since the novel *We'll Prescribe You a Cat* has not yet been explored in academic research, this study draws upon previous journals and theses that employ Carl Rogers' self-concept theory and well-being frameworks in the analysis of various literary works. These references serve as a foundational guide for examining the psychological dynamics of the characters.

The first previous study was a thesis written by Haikal Rosyada (2020), who analyzed Carl Rogers' self-concept and the factors that influence it in the character of Arya Stark. This study uses a psychological approach with descriptive data analysis. The study shows that Arya Stark's self-concept is influenced by personal feelings and experiences, as well as by the environment and people who motivate her. Second, Hendrawan (2023) analyzed the development of Catherine Morland in his thesis using Carl Rogers' self-concept. The study used a psychological literary criticism. Data was collected through note-taking, focusing on relevant quotes from the novel. The results show the evolution of Catherine Morland's self-concept from negative to positive. The third previous study was a journal written by Yazdani and Ross (2019), which analyzed the protagonist's personality using Carl Rogers' self-concept and self-actualization. The method used in this research is literature analysis with a literary psychology approach. The results show that the main character's self-conflict, caused by a discrepancy between his self-image and his ideal self, leads to a loss of self-identity.

Fourth, a journal written by Wulandari and Samanik (2022), analyzed the impact of Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) on Nina's personality development using a qualitative descriptive method through Rogers' theory of personality. The results show that Nina's DID has an impact on changes in self-worth, self-image, and ideal self. Fifth, Maulidiyah and Yurisa (2025) analyzed Sarah's self-concept in their journal using descriptive qualitative methods with Carl Rogers' humanistic psychology approach. The findings showed that, through her mother's positive regard, Sarah harmonized her real self and ideal self to achieve self-actualization. Sixth, Permatasari and Rosyidi (2020), in their journal, used Carl Rogers' self-concept to examine how Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) affects an individual's self-concept in the novel *Norwegian Wood* by Haruki Murakami, using a qualitative descriptive method. Seventh, a journal by Warung and Roli (2023) describes adolescents' self-concept in the novel using qualitative descriptive methods. The results showed that the novel's self-concept emerged through its characterization and setting.

Furthermore, several previous studies have used Carl Rogers' self-concept theory to analyze developments in achieving well-being. The eighth study was a journal by Giovando and Handayani (2025) that uses descriptive qualitative methods to analyze the character Mikami's efforts to change her negative self-concept into well-being through Carl Rogers' personality theory and the concept of *ganbare*. The results of the study show that, with the support of positive self-esteem and appreciation from others, Mikami succeeded in overcoming despair and achieving the state of well-being she expected of herself and society. Ninth, Sasty

(2025) examines the development of Willowdean's self-concept using qualitative methods and textual data analysis in her thesis. The results show that Willowdean undergoes a transformation from an incongruent to a congruent state after successfully accepting her true self and improving her relationship with her social environment. Finally, there is a journal by Li (2024) that used textual analysis within the framework of Carl Rogers' self-concept theory to examine the portrayal of marginalized children. The findings show that the main character's growth stems from the process of discovering and accepting one's true self.

Previous studies have extensively applied Carl Rogers' self-concept theory to literature, highlighting how characters navigate the discrepancies between self-image and the ideal self. While these works provide valuable insights into psychological character development, they often overlook the specific transition from acute inner conflict to the actualization of mental well-being. This study aims to fill that gap by examining the narrative dynamics in *We'll Prescribe You a Cat*, specifically focusing on how the main characters resolve their psychological tension. The core issue addressed is the struggle to reconcile a fragmented self-concept under social pressure. Thus, this research investigates the process of achieving mental well-being through the lens of self-concept by analyzing how the movement toward congruence serves as the primary mechanism. Consequently, this study explores whether reducing the gap between the perceived and ideal self can serve as a definitive indicator of a character's recovery from inner conflict.

B. Problems of the Study

After discussing the previous theoretical study, the researcher put forward two problem formulations as follows:

1. How is the self-concept of the main characters represented in Syou Ishida's *We'll Prescribe You a Cat* based on Carl Rogers' theory?
2. How is the process of achieving mental well-being portrayed through self-concept congruence in the main characters of *We'll Prescribe You a Cat* by Syou Ishida?

C. Significance of the Study

This research contributes to the theoretical expansion of Carl Rogers' self-concept framework by providing a systematic analysis of mental well-being within narrative structures. While existing scholarship identifies self-concept components in literature, this study specifically examines the transition from incongruence to congruence following acute inner conflict. By identifying the narrative mechanisms that facilitate the integration of self-image and the ideal self, the findings offer a foundational framework for future comparative studies on psychological development in contemporary literature.

For the academic community, this study provides a structural analysis of how fiction represents internal conflict and the subsequent recovery process. By detailing the narrative reduction of conditions of worth, the research offers a precise method for interpreting symbolic portrayals of psychological resilience. This approach bridges psychological theory and literary criticism, establishing a

framework for researchers to examine the representation of complex psychological states and social pressures within a literary context.

D. Scope and Limitation

This research focuses on the systematic application of Carl Rogers' self-concept theory to analyze the psychological development of the five main characters in Syou Ishida's *We'll Prescribe You a Cat* (2024). The scope is strictly delimited to the examination of self-image, ideal self, and the resulting state of incongruence as portrayed in the narrative. Furthermore, the study analyzes the transition toward mental well-being by identifying narrative markers of congruence and the characters' progression toward becoming fully functioning persons.

The analysis is limited to a single theoretical framework, utilizing Rogers' humanistic psychology without comparison to other personality theories or psychological models. This study does not examine the author's biography, sociological contexts, or the novel's intrinsic literary structures, such as plot or setting, unless they directly influence the characters' self-concept. Additionally, the research is restricted to the primary text of *We'll Prescribe You a Cat* and does not incorporate reader-response data or comparative literary analysis.

E. Definition of Key Terms

Researcher provide key terms to make it easier for readers to understand the research and avoid experiencing misunderstandings about this research. The following is a detailed explanation of the key terms:

1. *Self-concept* is a person's overall view of himself that is formed from life experiences, interactions with others, and reflection on oneself (Rogers, 1959).
2. *Self-image* is the subjective perception an individual holds about their own characteristics, abilities, and social roles (Rogers, 1959).
3. *Ideal self* is the state a person most desires and considers the highest value to themselves. (Rogers, 1959).
4. *Congruence* is a condition in which there is harmony between real experience and inner perception (Rogers, 1961).
5. *Incongruence* is when there is a gap between a person's experiences and how they consciously perceive themselves (Rogers, 1959).
6. *Mental well-being* is an optimal psychological state in which individuals can cope with life's pressures and realize their potential (Shanafelt, 2021).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter presents the theoretical studies relevant to the topic of the study. The researcher reviewed the literature on psychology and discussed the theories used in the study. This section is used by the researcher as a guide to conducting the research.

A. Psychological Approach in Literary Criticism

Literature generally refers to creative and intellectual works expressed through writing, which includes various forms such as short stories, poetry, drama, and novels. Bennett and Royle (2023) say that literature is a way for people to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, often through creative writing or art. Literature reflects the cultural and social milieu of its time, providing insights into historical, philosophical, and ethical questions. Literature can be humorous, teach one something, and make one think. It can also be a mirror of society and a critique of its norms. By looking at many points of view and experiences, literature helps people understand each other better and feel more empathy.

This study examines literature through a psychological lens. Psychology derives from the Greek terms “psyche,” signifying soul or breath of life, and “logos,” denoting science or study. So, the word “psychology” literally means “the study of the soul.” Psychology examines not only the soul in an abstract framework but also human behavior, cognitive processes, and the interplay between the two, alongside the advancement of science. Gilovich, Keltner, Chen, and Nisbett (2018), propose

that psychology encompasses the examination of human cognition, emotions, and behaviors across diverse contexts.

This study utilizes literary psychology to analyze the psychological aspects of literary works by associating literary elements with psychological theories. This approach examines the characters' thoughts, emotions, and motives, alongside the psychological elements that permeate the narrative. Santos, Santos, and Silva (2018) assert that the psychology of literature examines literary works from a psychological standpoint, emphasizing the interplay between psychological principles and the literary domain. This method sheds light on how literature mirrors human behavior, thoughts, and emotions, along with how readers engage with these aspects. Literary psychology analyzes how authors depict human nature, conflict, and developmental processes through psychological theories and methodologies. This gives readers a better understanding of both literary works and psychological phenomena.

Psychology must emphasize the distinctive inner world of each individual, acknowledging their intrinsic capacity for self-development, self-awareness, and self-actualization (Curry-Tuthill, 2024). In psychotherapy, this approach is operationalized through client-centered therapy, where clients are encouraged to reclaim their internal resources for personal growth. Therefore, Rogers (1959) emphasized the importance of creating a supportive atmosphere, characterized by empathy, unconditional positive regard, and authenticity. When these variables are present, individuals can more effectively connect their actual self with their ideal self, facilitating psychological growth and diminishing internal conflict.

B. Carl Rogers' Theory of Self-Concept

According to Carl Rogers (1959), self-concept is a psychological construct that encompasses how people see and understand themselves. Self-concept is shaped by personal experiences, social interactions, and introspective considerations regarding one's significance and role in the world. Self-concept is a way for people to understand their behaviors and experiences. It affects how they feel about themselves, their motivation, and their relationships. This understanding evolves gradually, influenced by human development, challenges, and the pursuit of self-actualization. Psychologists consider self-concept a crucial element in comprehending human behavior, as it significantly influences individuals' interactions with their environment and their goal attainment (Crone, Green, van de Groep, & van der Cruisen, 2022).

For instance, a high school student who does well in academics but not in sports. This student sees himself as intelligent and hardworking. This student's view of himself is part of his self-concept. However, he also perceives himself as unathletic, which may affect his confidence in engaging in physical activity. This student's self-concept developed when his friends encouraged him to try running. Over time, with practice and positive feedback, he began to see himself as capable of exercising and reshaped his self-concept. This example illustrates that self-concept is dynamic rather than static. Self-concept is influenced by experiences, achievements, and perceptions of others (Curry-Tuthill, 2024). This shows how self-concept serves as a foundation for personal growth and interaction with the world.

Carl Rogers (1959) posited a theory of self-concept within humanistic psychology, emphasizing how individuals perceive themselves and their experiences in relation to their personal development. The primary emphasis of Rogers' methodology is the congruence between the self-image and the ideal self, which he contends is crucial for attaining psychological equilibrium and well-being. People feel happy and at peace when their ideas about who they are align with who they want to be.

1. Self-Concept Components

Carl Rogers' theory of self-concept includes three main components: self-image, ideal self, and self-esteem. Each component plays a critical role in understanding how individuals perceive themselves and navigate their psychological development.

a. Self-Image

Self-image is how an individual sees themselves, including their looks, personality, social roles, and skills. It is influenced by individual experiences, social relationships, and societal norms (Curry-Tuthill, 2024). However, this idea may not always align with the real self, which refers to the individual's actual overall experience. According to Rogers (1959), self-actualization is achieved when a person's self-image is able to accurately reflect the real self without distortion or denial. Someone can think they are less capable than they really are because of bad feedback or a lack of confidence. Self-image is dynamic and can change over time as individuals acquire new experiences and information about themselves.

b. Ideal self

The ideal self is the person one wants to be. It includes objectives, ideals, and dreams, often shaped by cultural norms, personal aims, and societal expectations. This part shows how the person sees their best self, including the attributes, actions, and accomplishments they want (Curry-Tuthill, 2024). When the self-image and the ideal self do not align, it will be incongruence that can make one feel frustrated or unhappy. For instance, if someone wants to be very successful but thinks they are not doing enough, they may feel conflicted or lose motivation.

c. Self-esteem

Self-esteem is the part of self-concept that shows how much value a person places on themselves. Self-esteem acts as a barometer that measures the level of internal congruence or incongruence. High self-esteem arises when there is congruence between self-image and ideal self, reflecting healthy unconditional self-regard. Conversely, low self-esteem is a direct consequence of high incongruence, where the self-image is judged to have failed to achieve a rigid ideal self (Curry-Tuthill, 2024). To restore low self-esteem, individuals need unconditional positive regard from external parties to serve as a catalyst for suspending internal conditions of worth and facilitating true self-acceptance.

2. Self-Concept Alignment

This section discusses the balance that determines the quality of self-concept with congruence and incongruence. This discussion is essential because congruence and incongruence serve as the main benchmarks in Carl Rogers' theory (1959) for assessing the degree of psychological harmony in individuals. These

benchmarks then become the basis for analyzing the mental state of characters in the novel.

a. Incongruence

According to Carl Rogers (1959), Incongruence is a central psychological condition that arises when there is a significant mismatch between a person's self-image and their real self or rigid ideal self. This incongruence stems from experiences in which individuals receive conditional positive regard from their environment. This acceptance teaches individuals that they will only be accepted and loved if they meet certain standards, which are then internalized as conditions of worth in their self-concept structure. This rigid internal condition leads individuals to try to protect their self-concept from threats posed by conflicting experiences, a process Rogers refers to as denial and distortion. All of these conflicting experiences directly inhibit the actualizing tendency, which is the natural drive to grow (Stephen, 2023). This maintained incongruence creates low self-esteem, as individuals constantly judge themselves as failing to meet the unrealistic demands of their ideal self.

b. Congruence

Carl Rogers (1959) stated that congruence is the best mental condition, as it means a person's self-image is very similar to their real self and their ideal self. When congruence is attained, persons exist authentically with their self-image and ideal self harmonized rather than in conflict. Being free of this internal conflict means people do not have to deny or distort scary experiences, allowing them to be

entirely receptive to new ones. This openness lets the actualizing tendency work without any problems.

Internally, congruence fosters high self-esteem as individuals accept and respect themselves wholly, despite their shortcomings. The healing journey toward congruence is often initiated by the unconditional positive regard received from external sources. This unconditional positive regard catalyzes establishing a threat-free atmosphere, enabling individuals to relinquish internalized conditions of worth. With unconditional positive regard, individuals dare to face experiences they previously rejected, assimilate those experiences into their self-concept, and ultimately achieve stable congruence (Stephen, 2023).

3. Result of Self-Concept

Self-concept leads to two potential outcomes: positive self-concept and negative self-concept. Each of these concepts significantly impacts one's mental health, behavior, and interpersonal relationships.

a. Positive Self-Concept

Positive self-concept is an ideal psychological condition achieved when individuals are in a state of congruence, characterized by a high degree of harmony between their self-image and their realistic ideal self. According to Rogers (1959), achieving this condition begins with accepting unconditional positive regard from others, which effectively eliminates rigid internal conditions of worth. This threat-free environment allows individuals to reduce conditions of worth and authentically accept all experiences, including their shortcomings. As a result, high self-esteem develops when individuals grant themselves unconditional self-regard. Individuals

with a positive self-concept have high openness to experience, meaning they can face challenges and new experiences without denial or distortion. Rogers (1961) emphasizes that this openness frees the actualizing tendency to function fully.

People with a positive self-concept are more likely to build and maintain healthy relationships because they are usually open and understanding. They can converse better and form strong, supportive relationships with others when they have a positive self-image. For instance, a person who has faith in their talents is more likely to take the lead, seek new opportunities, and get back up after a setback, seeing it as a chance to progress rather than a failure.

b. Negative Self-Concept

Negative self-concept is a psychological condition that arises when individuals experience incongruence, a significant mismatch between their self-image and their rigid ideal self. According to Rogers (1959), this condition has its roots in the past when individuals received conditional positive regard from their environment, which they then internalized as conditions of worth. These rigid demands cause low self-esteem and create feelings of vulnerability and anxiety. If individuals experience something that does not align with their fragile self-concept, they will defend themselves by engaging in denial and distortion (Rogers, 1959). This negative self-concept directly inhibits the actualizing tendency, because the individual's psychic energy is diverted entirely to self-defense rather than growth.

Additionally, having a negative self-concept might make partnerships harder. People who do not like themselves may have trouble trusting others or being honest with them because they fear being judged or rejected. They may show their

fears by being defensive, withdrawing, or relying too much on others for approval. As a result, the person's social life may worsen, leading to a cycle of loneliness and emotional pain. People with negative self-concept might turn down employment offers or stay away from social situations because they think they are not good enough.

C. Self-Concept Role in Achieving Mental Well-being

The definition of mental health varies across systems, cultures, and clinical practices. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as a state of well-being in which people can reach their full potential, manage everyday stressors, work effectively and meaningfully, and contribute to their community (Fusar-Poli et al., 2020). This definition is one of the most popular. On the other hand, a person with well-being tends to feel satisfied with their life, which helps them manage stress. In contrast to wellness, which focuses more on a healthy lifestyle, well-being encompasses broader aspects of a person's life (Shanafelt, 2021). Therefore, mental well-being is a condition in which a person feels comfortable with themselves and has the emotional resilience to live a meaningful and productive life.

The key to achieving mental well-being is the formation of congruence, a condition in which a person's ideal self is in harmony with their real self (Maurer & Daukantaitė, 2020). Individuals with a flexible self-concept and an openness to experiences will find it easier to listen to their bodies' internal signals and emotions, which then builds trust in the self. When someone develops unconditional positive self-regard, they will accept all aspects of themselves, including negative emotions,

without fear or judgment (Rogers, 1959). This complete self-acceptance allows the mental energy previously used for denial and distortion to be allocated to developing potential. Ultimately, good mental health will lead individuals to become fully functioning persons who are autonomous, responsible for their own well-being, and able to contribute positively to society.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter contains information about the methods used by the researcher and how the researcher obtained and analyzed the data to answer the research questions. This chapter includes the research design, data source, data collection, and data analysis.

A. Research Design

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative descriptive approach that refers to literary criticism to analyze objects in the form of literary works. Literary criticism is a critical theory that analyzes literary works and their authors from various perspectives, including ethics, psychology, and social (Zhenzao, 2021). The researcher analyzes how Carl Rogers' self-concept theory can describe the mental state of the main characters in the novel *We'll Prescribe You a Cat* and how aspects of self-concept affect their well-being. This method allows the researcher to explore the characters' identity development and psychology through text analysis, including dialog and narration.

B. Data Source

The primary data source for this analysis is the narrative text of the novel *We'll Prescribe You a Cat* by Syou Ishida (2024). It originated in Japanese and was translated into English by E. Madison Shimoda. The novel was first published in Japan in 2023, and then translated into English in 2024 by Penguin Publishing Group. This novel consists of five chapters, each featuring a different main character. The printed version of this novel is 297 pages long.

C. Data Collection

The researcher used several steps to collect data in this study. First, the researcher read the novel *We'll Prescribe You a Cat* thoroughly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the story and its characters. Second, the researcher identified and marked sections of the text that were important to the characters' self-concept. Third, the researcher organized the data according to the self-concept framework. Finally, researcher compiled these findings to analyze how the mechanism of incongruence recovery led each character to achieve well-being.

D. Data Analysis

After collecting the data, the researcher continued to the analytical phase. This study employed Carl Rogers' self-concept theory for the analysis. The researcher followed multiple steps in the analytical process. First, the researcher examined the data to identify how the main characters' self-image, ideal self, and self-esteem were represented in the novel. Second, the researcher examined situations that demonstrated unconditional positive regard and how this situation influenced self-concept. Third, the researcher analyzed how these factors affected the transition from incongruence to congruence and how this transformation contributed to the characters' mental well-being.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents an in-depth discussion of the main characters' self-concepts in the novel *We'll Prescribe You a Cat*. The discussion is structured in several stages. This chapter begins by presenting data from the novel and analyzes in detail the self-image and ideal self of each main character. Then, this evidence is utilized to interpret the characters' incongruence. The chapter concludes by analyzing the process through which incongruence is resolved, ultimately leading to mental well-being through the attainment of congruence.

A. Representation of Self-Concept

This section answers the first research question by analyzing in depth the self-concept components of the five main characters in the novel *We'll Prescribe You a Cat*. The researcher presents empirical evidence from the novel by describing the discrepancy between each character's self-image and their ideal self. The data analysis is presented separately for each character so that the manifestation of their incongruence can be fully understood.

1. Self-Image of the Main Characters

To begin with, this study is essential for analyzing the main characters' self-image, which serves as the foundational perception of who they believe they are. As explained in the previous chapter, self-image acts as a personal perception that may or may not align with objective reality. This section focuses on dissecting how each main character perceives their current existence.

The first main character is Shuta Kagawa, a twenty-five-year-old man employed at a major brokerage firm. However, his self-image is heavily shaped by the pressures of a demanding work environment. Rather than possessing a stable sense of self, Kagawa's perceived self is characterized by vulnerability and a sense of inadequacy. This fragile self-image becomes evident when he witnesses his colleague being targeted by their superior's hostility. Kagawa internalizes this external conflict, reflecting a self-perception rooted in weakness and fear. The following excerpt illustrates how these workplace dynamics compromise his self-image:

"Yeah, that guy's been a target lately. It's uncomfortable to watch," said Shuta, but deep down, he knew it was better to watch than to be attacked. He was grateful for Mamiya. Without him, Shuta would be the one forced to stand before everyone. (p.30).

This quote illustrates that Shuta's self-image is primarily shaped through external evaluation and social comparison. His perception of himself is not based on his own attributes, but rather defined by his position relative to others in a hostile environment. By stating that it is *"better to watch than to be attacked,"* Shuta reinforces a self-image characterized by powerlessness and a lack of agency. His sense of relief at Mamiya's presence reveals a fundamentally defensive self-image. He views himself as a potential victim who is only spared by the presence of a more convenient target. This reliance on Mamiya to act as a shield indicates that Shuta's self-esteem is highly fragile, as it depends entirely on situational luck rather than his own effectiveness. In Rogers' framework, this reflects a self-image limited by fear, in which the individual views himself as too weak to face the environment, so that his self-concept is maintained only through avoidance of conflict.

The second main character is a fifty-year-old father who works for an outsourced call center named Yusaku Koga. His primary problem was a deteriorating self-image, characterized by deep insecurity about his profession and a perception of himself as being entirely alone at home. Yusaku Koga experienced an inner conflict because a younger colleague threatened his professional identity, while he perceived himself as a neglected figure within his own family. Koga's self-image was reinforced because he could not obtain value in these two vital areas of his life. This negative self-image is reinforced during his visit to the clinic as shown by this quote:

*"I-I'm Yusaku Koga. I turn fifty-two next month."
 "What brings you in today?"
 He's been a bit uppity, but I guess he's agreed to see me. Koga scowled. Even if I share my feelings, no one will understand what I'm going through. Not the doctor, not my family, not my coworkers. I'm an outcast.
 (p.102).*

In the context of Carl Rogers' self-concept theory, Koga's perception of himself as "*an outcast*" illustrates a profoundly negative, distorted self-image. Koga perceives his own identity as someone fundamentally disconnected from his environment. His belief that no one will understand him reflects a defensive stance against his unmet need for positive regard, a requirement Rogers defines as the essential human need for acceptance and warmth from others. This perceived isolation from his family, coworkers, and physician further solidifies this self-image.

The next main character is a mother who experiences a profound discrepancy within her self-image while performing her role as a parent. At the beginning of the story, Megumi Minamida's self-image is defined by a significant tension between the identity she perceives herself to have and her actual organismic

experience. Megumi's self-image is that of a competent, calm, and modern mother who successfully navigates the stringent social expectations placed upon her. However, this self-image is inconsistent with her real self, as it reflects underlying feelings of tension and frustration. Megumi's self-image can be clearly seen when she takes her daughter to find the Nakagyō Kokoro Clinic for the Soul:

When she turned around, she saw her daughter, Aoba, standing on the other side of the street, gazing down at her feet. Irritation started to bubble up. She breathed out slowly and reminded herself to stay calm...(p.151).

These quotes illustrate Megumi's rigid self-image. She identifies herself as someone who should be composed and controlled, as evidenced by her conscious effort to remain calm. However, this self-image is inconsistent with her real self, where irritation and frustration are actively surfacing. The act of "*reminding herself*" to maintain a specific demeanor indicates that her perceived self is not a direct reflection of her immediate feelings but rather an effortful construction used to shield her from the reality of her internal state. The decrease of her self-image can be viewed in the following quote:

"We were just there, and it was a different hospital, wasn't it?" Megumi couldn't hide the frustration in her tone even though she knew it was also her fault for not looking up the details ahead of their visit. (p.152).

The breakdown of this self-image occurs when her internal sensations can no longer be suppressed, causing her frustration to become visible in her tone. In this moment, her real self is revealed in her acknowledgment that the situation is her fault. This reveals a fragile self-concept that is maintained through the denial of unpleasant sensations. When those sensations inevitably break through, her view of herself as a capable mother is momentarily shattered. Her inability to "*hide the*

frustration” marks a point where her real self overwhelms her self-image, exposing the lack of unity in how she perceives herself.

The next main character is Tomoka Takamine, a thirty-one-year-old designer who owns a bag shop with her friend. Her perception of herself defines her self-image as an absolute order person who must constantly correct the surrounding failures and imperfections. Her self-image is anchored in the rigid belief that she is the only one who consistently performs every task in the right way. This perfectionistic background creates an intense inner conflict for Tomoka, who must maintain a self-image that is perpetually positive and blameless. When external experiences threaten this rigid self-image, Tomoka employs denial and distortion to protect her self-image and firmly rejects any perception that her actions may be incorrect.

There are no problems. Plus, even with a cat around, our home stays clean, and he always looks put-together. Everything is perfect. But what did that doctor say? That I'm doing everything wrong? I do everything the right way. I've always been this way and always will be. (p.208).

This quote defines Tomoka's self-image as an individual who perceives herself as absolutely correct and immutable. Rogers (1959) suggests that a healthy self-image is open to new experiences and possesses fluidity. However, Tomoka maintains a rigid self-image which prevents her from adapting to internal or external changes. Her rejection of external feedback indicates that her self-image is tied to specific conditions of worth, where she only perceives herself as valid if she remains perfect. Consequently, she utilizes denial and distortion to filter out opposing information, such as the doctor's critique, to protect this immaculate self-image.

The last main character is a geisha named Abino. Abino's self-image is defined by her perception of herself as a loyal owner whose identity is inextricably tied to her bond with her lost cat, Chitose. Following the cat's disappearance, she maintains a self-image characterized by perpetual grief and a sense of failure in her protective role. When a new cat, Mimita, is introduced, Abino's self-image resists the change, as she perceives accepting a new companion as a betrayal of her previous identity. This rigid self-image leads her to utilize distortion, where she perceives acts of affection toward a new cat as evidence of her own moral inadequacy. This creates an inner conflict, in which any experience of happiness is filtered through a self-image that feels it must remain static and sorrowful to stay valid.

If things were different, the sight would have made Abino smile. But the more she watched Mimita make adorable gestures, the more her guilt increased. Whenever she thought of doting on Mimita, she felt like she was abandoning Chitose. She felt Chitose was watching her from somewhere. (p.278).

This quote effectively defines Abino's self-image as an identity defined by grief and a commitment to mournful devotion. Abino maintains a self-image of an individual who is unworthy of positive experiences. She perceives her own natural impulse to smile in the sentence, "*If things were different, the sight would have made Abino smile,*" as a threat to her self-image, which she believes must remain bound to sadness to stay authentic. The perception that she is a traitor for feeling affection toward Mimita indicates that her self-image is built upon strict conditions of worth that prohibit moving on. By perceiving herself as being watched by Chitose, she reinforces a self-image externally judged by the past, resulting in an

inner conflict in which she denies herself the capacity to integrate present happiness into her current identity.

2. Ideal Self of the Main Characters

After analyzing the characters' self image, it is equally vital to examine their ideal self, the versions of themselves they aspire to become. Within Rogers' framework, the ideal self comprises the goals and attributes an individual wants to possess. This section focuses on dissecting the idealized standards and expectations each main character sets for their own life. By isolating the ideal self, the analysis identifies the internal benchmarks the characters strive toward, offering a clear view of the identities they aim to achieve within the narrative.

For the first main character, Shuta Kagawa's ideal self is the antithesis of his self-image. The ideal self demands that Shuta be a successful and competent child, which unfortunately is difficult for him to achieve in a toxic work environment. To cope with this painful reality, Shuta is forced to create a false reality in front of those closest to him, as shown in his telephone conversation with his mother:

"It's okay. Don't worry. My current workplace is different from my old one. It's a big-name company. Whole different league." He gave a small, dry laugh. "They're expecting a lot from me. Today, at the morning meeting, my supervisor said I was within striking distance of the top spot...Hmm? ...No, it's not great. Everyone else is also close to the top. Everyone's doing their best." (p.37).

The deception Shuta offers his mother is a manifestation of his rigid ideal self, a version of himself that he has constructed to be flawlessly successful. This ideal self is heavily influenced by conditions of worth, demanding that he internalize and project external norms of success, such as working for a big-name company and being *"within striking distance of the top spot."* He feels an

overwhelming necessity to inhabit this idealized representation to feel worthy of acceptance and to justify his existence within his social and family hierarchy.

However, Shuta is acutely aware that this ideal self is vastly different from his real self, as seen in his attempt to downplay the competition. His belief that he must maintain a facade of perfection to be recognized as a person of value indicates a profound distance between his expectations and his reality. By placing his ideal self so far beyond his current reach, he creates an unattainable standard of perfection that leaves no room for vulnerability or growth. This fixed ideal self becomes an internal threat, as any admission of struggle would mean failing to meet the strict criteria he believes are necessary to be considered good enough.

The second main character is Yusaku Koga. From Koga's perspective on his ideal self, it is evident that he is fixated on a rigid internal standard that defines his sense of identity. Koga's frustration grows as he strives to uphold an ideal self as a respected authority figure at work and an honored patriarch at home. He depends on this strict idea of who he should be, rooted in conventional duties and dominant positions in his household, to maintain his sense of purpose. However, this ideal self does not reflect his actual experiences, making it challenging to reconcile his internalized expectations with the reality of his life. Koga's behavior when he gets home shows exactly who he wants to be:

*Still, he considered himself the king of his castle. His wife was a homemaker. His only daughter was in college. The addition of a cat to the household was nothing to him.
And yet, he couldn't help glancing around cautiously as he entered his house.
(p.106).*

This quote precisely describes Koga's rigid, status-based ideal self. The phrase "*king of his castle*" represents Koga's highest internal standard, an ideal self

that demands he remain in total charge of his family's roles. However, the last sentence, "*he couldn't help glancing around cautiously,*" reveals that this ideal self is a mental construct that remains unattainable in his current experience. While his ideal self dictates that he should have complete control over everything, including the domestic environment, his cautious physical behavior suggests a lack of the strength and security required to inhabit this internalized role. Koga's ideal self strives for total dominance, yet his immediate experience indicates a state of vulnerability that contradicts this desired identity.

The next main character is Megumi. The formation of Megumi's ideal self cannot be separated from the social pressure that comes from her environment. The ideal self is a figure that Megumi believes she must achieve in order to feel valuable. This ideal self is closely tied to the standards of her social group, as shown in the following excerpt:

At first, Megumi dismissed the idea of psychiatric care for elementary school students, but when she casually brought up the topic with her neighborhood mom friends, to her surprise they insisted that these days, mental health care was considered normal even for preschoolers... (p.152).

The quote explicitly defines Megumi's ideal self. External conditions of worth shape her ideal self. Megumi's surprised reaction shows that she views the perceptions of her social environment as a standard that must be internalized. This standard is the expectation that mental health care is a necessary norm, even for preschoolers. This social expectation then becomes the blueprint for her ideal self: a modern mother who is aware and responsive to children's mental health issues in order to align with contemporary social trends. This ideal self does not originate from her authentic valuing process but is adopted in response to external pressures

to obtain conditional positive regard from her environment. Thus, Megumi's ideal self is a figure constructed to ensure social acceptance and perceived adequacy.

The fourth analysis is Tomoka. As explained in the previous part, her self-image is defined by a higher level of perfection. Instead, her ideal self represents a desire to escape inner conflict caused by her own rigid standards. She envisions an ideal self capable of breaking the cycle of tension and judgment that currently characterizes her experience.

"I want to know how I can be more tolerant of other people's sloppiness. I don't want to be constantly infuriated by careless, indifferent people—for instance, doctors who don't pay attention to their patients. Oh, I'm not referring to you, doctor. What can I do to stop caring about those kinds of people? I know that I should only care that I'm doing things the right way." (p.194-195).

The quote makes it clear that Tomoka's ideal self is a state of emotional freedom and calm, serving as a desired shift toward a more flexible identity. Her question to the doctor reflects an ideal self that seeks a sense of tranquility and a move toward congruence. This ideal self is an identity that experiences unconditional self-regard, free from the need to evaluate and criticize external imperfections constantly. While she mentions the need to do things the right way, the focus on *"What can I do to stop caring?"* suggests that the most significant aspiration of her ideal self is to relinquish the burden of rigid conditions of worth. Furthermore, Tomoka's ideal self is characterized by a state of calm acceptance and openness to experience.

For the last main character, when Abino lost Chitose, her ideal self seemed to take over her professional priorities. This strong desire shows that Abino defines her ideal self as someone capable of making sacrifices and of loyalty to her emotional bonds. Abino's ideal self can be seen in the following quote:

Tomorrow. Tomorrow, she would give back Mimita and finally be free from this strange confusion she'd been feeling. She wanted to focus on Chitose, but having Mimita around was distracting her. Yes, she had to think only of Chitose. Chitose had no one else but her. It was too convenient to try to fill the gaping hole in her heart with something else. She couldn't allow herself to be happy when Chitose was still missing (p.281-282).

The quote directly defines Abino's ideal self, which is the desire to be a dedicated owner and refuse replacement. Abino sees her ideal self as someone who is forbidden to be happy and must prioritize absolute loyalty to the memory of Chitose, as seen in the statement, "*She couldn't allow herself to be happy when Chitose was still missing.*" This ideal self demands unwavering focus and loyalty, creating an internal expectation where happiness is viewed as a distraction that must be eliminated to maintain her personal standards. By considering returning Mimita to the clinic, Abino attempts to align her current experiences with her ideal self as a loyal and suffering owner. This ideal self functions as a rigid benchmark of who she feels she should be, placing a higher value on her commitment to her lost companion than on her own emotional recovery.

3. Incongruence Between Self-Image and Ideal Self

Previously, the researcher noted that each main character's self-image and ideal self were in conflict. Therefore, this section analyzes the discrepancy between these two components to gain a deeper understanding of the initial state of incongruence within the characters' self-concept. The analysis focuses on how the lack of alignment between the perceived self and the idealized standards gives rise to internal tension that underpins the characters' behavior and decisions. Each main character is described as having a different background, thus exhibiting various

forms of incongruence that characterize their subjective experience before moving toward psychological consistency.

Shuta Kagawa's inner conflict stems from severe incongruence, namely the gap between his self-image, which he perceives as weak, passive, and incompetent, and his ideal self, which he idealizes as a brave, successful, and recognized person. This incongruence forces Shuta to constantly maintain his defensive barriers, as he must compulsively deny any experiences that contradict the idealized version of himself he presents to the world. The process of distorting his reality to bridge this gap ultimately drains his mental and physical energy, leaving him in a state of constant tension.

Whenever work crossed his mind, his chest constricted, his breathing turned shallow, and sleep eluded him. His symptoms were so common that the doctors never thought anything of them. This time, he was determined to explain his condition properly and overcome it once and for all. But before he knew it, his true feelings slipped out.
"I want to quit my job." (p.8-9).

This quote shows that incongruence has caused Shuta to experience heightened tension when he perceives a threat to his self-concept. The physical manifestations, such as chest tightness and shallow breathing, are direct results of the subception process, where Shuta's organismic experience senses a contradiction that his conscious mind is not yet ready to admit. This incongruence creates an internal danger because he cannot reconcile his actual self-image with the rigid demands of his ideal self.

The peak of this state is momentarily resolved when his real self breaks through his barrier with the words, *"I want to quit my job."* This utterance represents a spontaneous attempt to achieve congruence, as it aligns his conscious

awareness with his true feelings for the first time. By allowing this denied experience to surface, Shuta briefly bypasses his usual distortions, enabling his true feelings to become part of his conscious self-concept. This act of honesty marks the beginning of a shift away from a state of threat toward a more integrated and congruent way of being, as he finally acknowledges the reality of his experience over the expectations of his ideal self.

Furthermore, Koga's inner conflict is a direct result of incongruence, where there is an acute conflict between his self-image as an outcast and his ideal self, which is powerful and demands recognition. Koga's inability to bridge the gap between his perceived reality and the version of himself he feels he must be ultimately exhausts all of his psychological energy, which manifests as a state of deep personal distress and insomnia. The psychological tension generated by this incongruence is clearly recorded in the constant, intrusive thoughts that dominate his experience in this quote:

"I like it, I like it, I like it!" Koga clenched his fists in his lap. "I can't get those words out of my head. They keep ringing in my ears, especially in the middle of the night. When I'm trying to sleep, I hear, 'I like it, I like it, I like it!' like an incantation." (p.103).

"I can't sleep! That woman's voice haunts my dreams. I haven't slept properly in weeks! I find myself zoning out at work more and more. If this carries on, I'm going to lose my mind." (p.104).

This quote shows that Koga is in an extreme state of psychological tension, a direct result of incongruence. Hinako's repeated *"I like it!"* reflects an experience that conflicts with Koga's established self-concept. Hinako poses a threat to his identity because she has achieved positive regard through means that Koga's current self-image cannot accept or integrate. The distress triggered by this threat to Koga's self-concept manifests physically as a lack of rest and mentally as

intrusive thoughts. In Rogers' view, this state is a warning sign that his actual experiences do not align with the self-image he holds. His thought shows that Koga's psychological energy is drained by the struggle to maintain his self-concept in the face of this incongruence. The peak of this suffering is seen in Koga's concern about losing his mind which reflects a state where his self-image is no longer able to defend itself against contradictory experiences.

The state of incongruence also shown between Megumi Minamida's self-image and ideal self, as analyzed previously, indicates that she constantly lives under intense pressure. Megumi maintains an ideal self as a mother who is always calm, patient, and free from negative judgment, especially in front of authority figures who are her mom friends. When her behavior inadvertently violates these rigid ideal standards, she experiences incongruence. This incongruence between who she should appear to be and how she actually acts creates psychological distress, which is evident in her emotional reactions.

"Aoba, shhh, don't be rude." It came out more coldly than Megumi had intended, and Aoba once again looked down at her feet and sulked. She was a mother who scolded her child in front of the psychiatrist. She felt uneasy. In today's world, people made a fuss about the smallest things and labeled it abuse. She glanced over at the doctor. (p.156).

This quote explicitly shows Megumi's state being dominated by incongruence. When Megumi scolds Aoba in a tone that is colder than she had intended, her actions directly contradict her ideal self. This failure to align her behavior with her internalized standards triggers psychological tension characterized by feelings of uneasiness and threat. What Megumi feels is an emotional manifestation of painful incongruence stemming from a mismatch

between her self-image, which reflects a sense of loss of control, and her ideal self as a calm and attentive modern mother.

Perceptions of the environment exacerbate her psychological tension, as in the phrase *“people made a fuss...and labeled it abuse,”* which suggests that Megumi perceives the world as a threat, ready to judge and destabilize her self-concept. According to Rogers (1959), individuals in a state of incongruence will experience tension like that felt by Megumi because the perceived reality threatens the integrity of their self-concept, forcing them to exist in a state of denial and distortion.

The next main character, Tomoka Takamine, also experiences severe psychological incongruence between her rigid self-image as a perfectionist and her ideal self that craves peace and flexibility. This incongruence creates intense internal pressure as she constantly rejects conflicting realities in order to maintain her perfectionist self-image. When her cognitive barrier begins to crumble under external pressure, this conflict manifests itself as clear symptoms in her body and behavior.

“I’m not asking for perfection,” Tomoka snapped. “I just want things done the right way. Within the realm of common sense, of course. What’s wrong with being particular about materials and processes? After all, it’s their job to minimize costs and source materials efficiently. Anyone can understand that...” She felt a pain in the pit of her stomach from getting worked up. (p.191-192).

The quote explicitly shows a severe incongruence, in which Tomoka’s self-image is not in line with her organismic experience. Tomoka tries to maintain a self-concept of a logical and reasonable person, as in the phrase *“Within the realm of common sense, of course,”* which demands absolute correctness. However, the use of denial and distortion to maintain this perception proves psychologically futile.

This triggers an affective response in the form of tension and a pain in the pit of her stomach. According to Rogers (1959), these physical symptoms signify that her rigid self-concept conflicts with her organismic valuing process and the natural needs of the individual. This pain is evidence of incongruence, as she must expend tremendous energy to filter her experiences to fit the belief that she is always right.

Incongruence also occurs in the last main character. Based on the previous analysis, Abino's self-image is someone who feels deserving of her misery because she betrayed her first cat by taking care of another cat, and her ideal self is a loyal cat owner who does everything she can to find her first cat. This incongruence is intensified because her entire value system urges her to abandon her role as a professional geisha to search for Chitose, and the conflict between her perceived self and her internal standards triggers obvious tension and psychological maladjustment.

*"Here, hold him." Shizue brought Mimita closer to her.
Abino turned her face away. "I don't want to. Chitose will be sad when she comes back."
Then she hurried to her room on the second floor and sobbed into her pillow.
"My dear, I won't forget you. I won't ever get another cat." (p.278).*

This quote clearly shows symptoms of severe tension due to incongruence in Abino. The conflict arises because her fragile self-image clashes with her ideal self, the owner who must show absolute loyalty by rejecting a replacement. Abino's rejection of Mimita in the sentence *"I don't want to. Chitose will be sad when she comes back"* is a manifest of denial. She refuses a new experience because it contradicts her self-concept, which is built on the belief that she must grieve. The tension resulting from maintaining an unrealistic ideal self is then released through

crying, revealing the energy released by her strenuous efforts to maintain a self-image that is not in harmony with her actual experience.

B. Establishing Mental Well-being Through Congruence

This section is the final synthesis of the research that aims to answer the second research question regarding how mental well-being is achieved by the main characters. After previously diagnosing the root of the main characters' psychological problems as incongruence, this section discusses the mechanisms of change that occur in the novel's narrative. The analysis focuses on the role of recovery agents, particularly unconditional positive regard, in facilitating the characters' reduction of incongruence. Ultimately, this section will prove causally that the successful recovery from Incongruence is the main process that leads the five characters towards the formation of a more stable mental well-being.

1. Reduction of Incongruence in the Main Characters

Incongruence recovery is the transition toward mental well-being facilitated by unconditional positive regard. This support weakens the conditions of worth that sustain psychological tension, allowing individuals to acknowledge experiences they previously rejected. The process succeeds through two primary shifts: recalibrating the ideal self to be more realistic and integrating the true self-image into the self-concept. By closing the gap between these two components, congruence is reestablished.

This decrease of incongruence can be seen in Shuta's experience. After prescribed a cat named Bee, he finally decided to escape from the toxic brokerage firm. However, Shuta found himself trapped in a new and unique situation. He was

forced to work under his new boss at a construction company as compensation for the damage to a luxury car caused by Bee. The beginning of this healing process was evident when Shuta's body broke down on his second day of work due to the heavy physical labor, a failure that was met with concern.

*"All right, all right. You were locked in, you poor thing," said Jinnai, turning to leave the room with the cat in his arms.
 "Please help me, too," Shuta pleaded. "I can't move."
 "What? Don't be a brat."
 "Boss," said Kōsuke. He peered down at Shuta in bed and laughed. "Didn't I tell you that I also couldn't get out of bed after the first day because my muscles were sore?" (p.67-68)*

These quotes provide clear evidence of Shuta's decreasing incongruence, facilitated by unconditional positive regard. While his new role appears to be the antithesis of his high-status ideal self, which demanded a prestigious position, this environment initiates a shift toward congruence. Although his new colleagues suffer, they provide a level of acceptance that challenges Shuta's long-held conditions of worth, which previously dictated that he must remain perfect to possess value. In his former environment, Shuta's inability to perform would have triggered external criticism, reinforcing his internal tension.

However, Boss Jinnai's concern for his well-being separates Shuta's professional performance from his intrinsic value as an individual. Kōsuke further diminishes Shuta's defensive self-image by validating his vulnerability, which directly counters Shuta's belief that acceptance is contingent upon strength. This narrative shift shows Shuta beginning to self-reflect and integrate these supportive experiences into his sense of self, allowing him to acknowledge his vulnerability without rejecting it. This initial acceptance reduces the influence of rigid conditions

of worth, narrowing the gap between his self-image and his actual experience, thereby moving him toward greater congruence.

Furthermore, a decrease in incongruence also occurred in other main characters. Koga's recovery from incongruence began after the arrival of Margot the cat. Although initially causing new problems, such as Koga's wife's allergies and his worsening insomnia, the cat became a bridge for communication that had been lost in Koga's family.

It had been years since the three had laughed together about the same thing. Finding common ground in what they found cute, Koga felt he had regained something.
"A fart in a windstorm," he muttered. The cat, which he'd thought would be of no use whatsoever, seemed to have brought about some change.
Natsue frowned. "Jeez, did you fart? Go away." (p.131-132)

This quote marks the pivotal moment when Koga's incongruence begins to subside as his self-concept becomes more flexible. Interacting with Margot allowed his wife and daughter to interact and laugh together again, something Koga had not experienced in years. This moment began to soften Koga's cynical self-image. The shared laughter among the family represents a rare instance of positive regard that is not dependent on Koga's status as a "king," allowing him to experience a moment of congruence between his social reality and his need for connection. His self-reflection is evident in his admission that the cat which he had previously dismissed has catalyzed change, signaling a newfound openness to experience. Rather than defending his rigid ideal self, he participates in a humble, lighthearted exchange, suggesting that his self-image is beginning to integrate the reality of shared domestic joy.

The next main character also experiences a significant reduction in incongruence. Initially, Megumi maintains a rigid self-concept to align her self-image with external social norms. This shift occurs as she reintegrates previously distorted organismic experiences when her childhood regret regarding her cat, into her current awareness. Consequently, she moves toward congruence, allowing her actions to stem from an internal valuing process rather than the defensive standards of her ideal self, as shown in this quote:

Aoba's smile surprised Megumi. When was the last time she had seen an expression like that on her daughter's face? It wasn't just the smile but how confidently she held the kitten that amazed her. Aoba was actually much better at holding the cat than she was. The kitten could sense this, too, which was why it remained calm. It wasn't Megumi the cat relied on. It was Aoba. (p.175)

This quote captures a pivotal moment when Megumi's incongruence begins to subside through increased self-awareness and openness to experience. By noticing Aoba's confidence and competence with the kitten, Megumi stops distorting reality to protect her previous self-image as the only capable figure in the relationship. This shift indicates a movement toward congruence, as she allows her actual organismic experience as the observation of Aoba's true nature to enter her awareness without defensive filtering. This increase is not an instantaneous change but rather a gradual process of self-reflection in which she acknowledges a reality that contradicts her rigid ideal self. Her realization that the cat relies on Aoba rather than herself shows a softening of her self-concept, marking the initial stage of aligning her perceptions with the objective facts of her environment.

This reduction in incongruence is also evident in Tomoka Takamine. A cognitive turning point occurred after a visit to the Clinic for the Soul, where the

doctor advised her to interact with a cat named Tangerine, who was mistakenly exchanged for Tank due to the doctor's negligence, as a way to find flexibility in her life. The decrease in Tomoka's incongruence can be seen in this quote:

"Oh, Daigo, you're here today, too?"

"I guess. Hey, don't do that. You should wash your hands before touching Tank."

With a huff, Tomoka went to the bathroom to wash her hands. Usually, she didn't need to be reminded to do what was right. It had just slipped her mind today because Tank was so adorable. (p.203)

The quote indicates a subtle yet significant moment where Tomoka's incongruence begins to subside. This shift is characterized by a temporary suspension of her rigid self-image, which previously demanded that she always act correctly without external guidance. The narrative event in which she forgets to wash her hands because the cat is too adorable reflects an emerging self-awareness of her organismic experience. This genuine emotional reaction momentarily overrides her strict conditions of worth. Rather than reacting with her typical denial or distortion when Daigo points out her lapse, she experiences a "huff," a mild reaction that suggests a budding initial acceptance of her own fallibility. This transition highlights the gradual, non-instantaneous nature of her psychological movement, as her self-concept slowly expands to include spontaneous, non-perfectionist experiences.

The last main character also experiences a decrease in Incongruence. The recovery process began when Abino was confronted with her greatest fear when she saw Mimita approaching the open window, just like the incident before Chitose disappeared. This dramatic event forced Abino to overcome her ideal self so that she reduced her Incongruence by accepting Mimita and her emotional reality. This can be seen in the following excerpt:

"I'm sorry, Mimita. You came to my home, but I've been acting coldly. The truth is, I didn't want to start liking you too much. It felt like if I started liking you, I was forgetting Chitose. I felt bad about Chitose and couldn't properly cherish you. I'm so sorry."

Tears streamed down her face. She had been so wrapped up in guilt that she had been unable to see what was right in front of her.

"Mimita, don't go. Don't leave me." Abino closed her eyes and prayed. Come back. Come back, my little cat. (p.284).

This quote represents a pivotal moment where Abino's internal tension begins to subside as she initiates the process of reducing incongruence. The narrative identifies a profound shift in self-awareness when Abino verbalizes her denial behavior, admitting, *"The truth is, I didn't want to start liking you too much."* This act of self-reflection indicates that she is no longer denying her experience of affection for Mimita to protect her rigid ideal self. Instead, she begins to acknowledge the distortions caused by her guilt, which previously prevented her from perceiving reality clearly. The event of her plea, *"Mimita, don't go,"* serves as an initial acceptance of her current emotional needs, allowing her self-image to move toward a more congruent state gradually. By recognizing that her perceived betrayal of Chitose was an internal barrier, she begins to lower her denial and distortion, marking a transition from fragmentation toward a more integrated alignment between her feelings and her actions.

2. Emerging Congruence and Self-Acceptance

Self-acceptance is the pivotal manifestation of reestablished congruence, occurring when an individual fully embraces their perceived self without denial or distortion. This shift is characterized by the internalization of unconditional positive self-regard, where the individual no longer relies on external conditions of worth to validate their personal value. The process unfolds as the characters stop rejecting

parts of their experience, allowing their self-image to align naturally with their actual lived reality.

As Shuta begins to move away from the rigid structures that defined his life in a toxic workplace, his journey toward congruence unfolds gradually, not as a sudden transformation but as a softening of his internal resistance. Before exploring the development of his self-acceptance, it is important to note that this transition involves a non-instantaneous recalibration of his self-concept, moving from a state of constant guardedness toward a more open and fluid way of experiencing his daily life.

“Stop it, Kōsuke!” Shuta’s shoulders shook with mirth. He had been holding back his laughter. Kōsuke grinned wickedly.

“It should be illegal for anyone with a face like our boss’s to speak that way. And what did he mean by ‘being such a good girl’? She was just sitting on Satsuki’s lap.”

No, I can’t laugh. Everyone in the office will hear, thought Shuta. But neither he nor Kōsuke could hold it in anymore, and they both exploded with laughter. It had been months since Shuta had laughed like that. No, years. (p.83)

In this excerpt, Shuta’s laugh serves as a significant indicator of emerging self-acceptance, occurring as his internal defenses against his own feelings begin to soften. By finally allowing himself to laugh, Shuta demonstrates a shift toward congruence, where his outward behavior aligns with his internal state. This act of laughing “*like that*” for the first time in years signifies that he is beginning to accept a part of himself that he had long denied, which is his capacity for spontaneous joy and connection. This acceptance is not a static or final state of achievement, but rather a moment where Shuta values his own authentic experience over the conditions of worth that previously dictated his silence. In this literary moment, the laughter is an act of self-acceptance as he integrates a previously suppressed

emotional reality into his awareness, moving away from a fragmented self toward a more unified and authentic presence.

This emerging self-acceptance also occurred in other main characters. Following the gradual reduction of his internal conflict, Koga enters a phase of emerging self-acceptance, serving as a bridge between his past state of distress and a more integrated sense of self. This transition is not an instantaneous transformation but rather a subtle, step-by-step shift in how he perceives his own value within his environment.

Emiri shrugged. "Well, I guess it goes both ways. Everyone wants to show off the things they love and receive compliments for them. If both parties can find happiness in that exchange, even cheap compliments and likes have value. Dad, why don't you show pictures of Margot to the ladies at work? Cats are powerful." Emiri was smiling. Koga, while amazed by his daughter's mature insight, felt like he had received a light slap on the wrist. (p.135)

This excerpt illustrates a critical shift in Koga's self-acceptance as he begins to process his daughter's perspective, signaling a move toward a more flexible self-concept. His reaction of amazement indicates a moment of profound self-reflection in which he acknowledges the limitations of his former ideal self. By internalizing Emiri's insight, Koga demonstrates an emerging openness to experience, allowing himself to consider a self-image that is not based on patriarchal dominance but on everyday social exchanges. This receptivity suggests that his self-concept is becoming more accepting. Instead of rejecting her mature insight as a threat to his authority, he accepts the correction with a degree of humility. This interaction serves as a narrative marker for increasing congruence, as Koga begins to align his internal need for connection with a realistic, external strategy for obtaining positive regard.

Furthermore, Megumi also enters a phase of emerging self-acceptance as the state of incongruence begins to diminish. By loosening her rigid self-concept, she can replace the harsh conditions of worth she previously imposed on herself with a more compassionate internal perspective. This transition is marked by a shift from seeking conditional positive regard from her social environment toward developing unconditional positive self-regard.

Megumi's throat tightened. Taking care of a kitten was no small task. What she didn't know when she was a child, she knew now. Perhaps her mother's decision had been correct. She, an elementary school kid, probably couldn't have managed the responsibility of caring for a cat.

Am I making too abrupt a decision? If she didn't make an effort to listen to her daughter, they would again be swept away by the busyness of everyday life. Just because she couldn't care for a cat, she shouldn't assume Aoba couldn't either. (p.178)

This quote illustrates an emerging state of self-acceptance as Megumi begins to integrate her past organismic experiences into a more flexible self-concept. She demonstrates unconditional positive self-regard by forgiving her younger self for a perceived failure that had long been a source of internal tension. She accepts her past limitations as a valid part of her experience. This shift allows her to replace her rigid conditions of worth with a more authentic evaluation of the present. Her realization that she shouldn't assume Aoba was incapable of taking care of a cat, even though she failed to do so, signifies a softening of the boundaries between her own identity and her daughter's. Megumi's self-acceptance creates the psychological space to trust Aoba's unique capabilities rather than defensively projecting her past onto Aoba. This process shows a movement toward congruence, where a judgmental ideal self no longer traps her. However, it is instead beginning to perceive both herself and her daughter with greater clarity and less distortion.

The next main character to experience emerging self-acceptance is Tomoka as the incongruence gradually reduces. This transition occurs as she begins to integrate her organismic experiences into her professional self-concept. Rather than maintaining a rigid boundary between her work-appropriate standards and her personal joy, she allows her self-image to become more fluid. This shift indicates a loosening of her prior conditions of worth, enabling her to value her own creative impulses without the immediate interference of distortion.

Envisioning life with the two cats, she'd continued to draw more and more cat illustrations. What she'd ended up with was a picture of a cat that was both sweet and sharp. The dark coloring around its ears mimicked Tangerine's features. The evenly spaced stripes on the forehead and cheeks resembled Tank's. She combined the two cats' features and drew eyes that were clear like marbles. She added these illustrations to Kozue's favorite designs, and Tomoka was pleased with the result. (p.237-238)

This quote illustrates a significant development in Tomoka's self-acceptance as she begins to exhibit unconditional self-regard for her creative output. By incorporating illustrations inspired by Tangerine and Tank into her professional designs, she demonstrates how she integrates her personal reality into her previously inflexible self-image. The fact that she is "*pleased with the result*" suggests that her internal evaluation is no longer strictly dictated by the cutesy stigma she once used to judge herself. This state of congruence is not a static destination but a visible process where she aligns her artistic actions with her genuine interests. Consequently, her self-concept expands to accommodate both the sweet and sharp aspects of her experience, reflecting a newfound openness to her own multifaceted nature.

For the last main character, Abino also moves toward a phase of self-acceptance as the state of incongruence begins to subside. She starts to integrate her

previously denied experiences into a more coherent self-concept. By loosening the rigid conditions of worth that demanded perpetual grief, she allows herself to experience unconditional positive self-regard. Her state of self-acceptance can be seen in the following quote:

“Hi, Yuriha. Mimita’s apparently going to be at a shopping mall in Kusatsu. I thought I’d head there now...Do you want to come with me? ...But what about work? ...Oh, you’re asking Mother? ...Yes, sure. Let’s fetch him together.” (p.294-295)

This excerpt illustrates a significant emergence of self-acceptance as Abino’s self-image becomes more aligned with her actual experiences. Her proactive decision to pick him up with Yuriha indicates that she is no longer using denial or distortion to suppress her affection for Mimita. Instead, she is moving toward a state of congruence where her actions reflect her internal desires. By engaging with others to bring Mimita home, she demonstrates an openness to experience that was previously blocked by her rigid ideal self. This behavior suggests that she has begun to accept herself as a person who can simultaneously cherish the memory of Chitose and embrace a new bond. While this is not a final or static achievement, it marks a transition where she is less governed by internal tension and more guided by an authentic sense of self that is becoming increasingly integrated.

3. Mental Well-Being as a Process

Mental well-being in this narrative is framed as an ongoing process of becoming rather than a static or perfect resolution. Within this literary context, well-being emerges as characters move toward their actualizing tendency, gradually increasing the alignment between their experiences and their self-concept. The

analysis reflects a newfound capacity for congruence and openness to experience. Ultimately, the narrative highlights a shift toward greater fullness, where the self-concept remains fluid and receptive to life's continuous changes.

As Shuta begins to integrate his authentic feelings through self-acceptance, he moves into a more fluid stage of his development where his self-concept increasingly aligns with his daily lived experiences. This transition marks the process of well-being, characterized by a gradual reduction in the tension between his self-image and his ideal self. Rather than a sudden shift, this movement reflects an increasing openness to his own organismic needs, allowing him to function with less internal resistance as he navigates his new environment.

Shuta felt a bit self-conscious about how noticeable the improvement was. It wasn't because of any treatment he'd received at this clinic. Thanks to the physical demands of his new job, he'd begun sleeping well every night, and his appetite had returned. He'd even gain some weight. (p.75-76)

The improvement described in this excerpt signifies the emergence of congruence as a lived physical reality. Shuta's awareness about his recovery suggests that his self-image is still in the process of catching up to his healthy functioning reality. The restoration of his appetite and sleep indicates that his organismic self is no longer in a state of constant threat. His inner conflict caused by his former incongruence has dissipated as his new environment provides the space for his actual needs to be met. This development illustrates that mental well-being is an ongoing process, not a final or perfect resolution. Shuta is not cured in a clinical sense, but is instead becoming a fully functioning person who is more attuned to his body and his experiences. He is physically manifesting a more unified self-concept by gaining weight and sleeping well. This alignment shows that

congruence is being maintained through a continuous interaction with a supportive environment.

The next main character, Koga, also begins to integrate his experiences with his self-concept. He moves toward a state of a fully functioning person, where his internal feelings and external actions achieve greater congruence. This process of achieving mental well-being is not a static endpoint but a continuous active movement toward self-actualization. By lowering his defensive barriers, he allows his actualizing tendency to guide his interactions, shifting from a rigid focus on status to an appreciation of authentic interpersonal connection.

“Everyone is delighted by your reactions.” Before he knew it, the sincere words had dropped out of Koga’s mouth. “Your compliments bring people joy. I think that’s great.”
For a moment, Hinako looked taken aback, but then she smiled shyly.
“Oh, my. I’ve been given a compliment. You’re right. It does feel nice.”
Emiri was right. It does take energy to do something if you’re not used to it. But if it makes someone this happy, offering praise here and there is a small price to pay.
(p.137-138).

This excerpt illustrates the emergence of congruence through Koga’s ability to act with spontaneity and sincerity. This congruence signals that his self-image is no longer in conflict with his immediate experience. Koga shows a shift toward organismic valuing, in which he responds to the social environment from genuine feeling rather than a forced ideal self. By offering Hinako positive regard, Koga demonstrates a more flexible self-concept that can accommodate others’ happiness. This movement toward mental well-being is depicted as an ongoing process of effort and choice, as seen in his realization that while this new way of being “takes energy,” it is a “small price to pay” for the resulting harmony. His awareness regarding the effort required shows that he is not experiencing a perfect, effortless resolution, but is instead actively participating in his own growth. By aligning his

actions with his daughter's mature insight and Hinako's reality, Koga reduces the incongruence that previously drained his psychological energy. This transition reflects a narrative journey toward greater openness to experience in which well-being is found in the fluid.

The next main character's self-acceptance also solidifies. Megumi moves toward the active process of mental well-being, characterized by a shift toward becoming a fully functioning person. This stage is defined by existential living, where the individual begins to act from an internal valuing process rather than from a need for conditional positive regard. By letting go of a rigid ideal self, Megumi gains the capacity for openness to experience enabling her to engage in more authentic, congruent interactions with her environment.

"Hey, Aoba. Will you tell me about the cliques and the social ladder again?"

"Hmm..." Aoba scrunched up her face. "I've told you about them so many times."

"Just once more. This time I'll listen."

"All right, I guess I can." Aoba sighed with a hint of attitude. (p.183).

This quote illustrates the emergence of congruence through a deliberate, authentic action that aligns Megumi's behavior with her newly integrated self-concept. Her request to *"listen"* signifies a shift away from her previous denial and distortion of Aoba's reality, intended to protect her own self-image. Instead, she demonstrates existential living by being fully present in the moment and prioritizing an authentic connection over the modern mother performance. This shift represents mental well-being not as a fixed destination or a perfect resolution, but as an ongoing process of choosing congruent communication. The interaction shows that while the tension has not entirely vanished, Megumi is now able to navigate this reality without experiencing the sharp incongruence that previously led to inner

conflict. Her internal valuing process now guides her to value her daughter's subjective experience, showing that her well-being is found in the continuous effort to remain open and responsive.

Tomoka, as the fourth main character, enters a continuous process of mental well-being characterized by an increasing openness to experience. This stage reflects a shift in which she no longer perceives environmental unpredictability as a threat to her identity, but rather as a natural part of her daily life. By loosening her conditions of worth, she allows her self-image to become even more fluid. This transition suggests that her self-concept is moving toward a state where her internal world and external reality are no longer in constant friction, facilitating a more authentic way of existing.

Tank's mischievous nature knew no bounds, turning every night into a full-fledged zoomies fest. But Tank was also incredibly affectionate, constantly competing with Tangerine to show his belly to her. No amount of petting was enough for him, and she joked with Daigo that she was going to get tendonitis at this rate. It was strange that it no longer bothered her as much when her clothes got covered in fur. (p.238-239).

This excerpt demonstrates the emergence of congruence as an active, ongoing process rather than a static resolution. Tomoka realized that the fur on her clothes no longer bothered her as much. This realization signifies a significant reduction in the distortion she had previously used to maintain a sterile, perfect self-image. Her ability to joke about "getting tendonitis" reflects a newfound organismic flexibility, in which she can engage with the chaotic zoomies fest of her environment without experiencing the former state of tension. This mental well-being is visible in her capacity to integrate the mischievous and affectionate reality of her cats into her daily life. This state shows that her self-concept has expanded

to prioritize genuine connection over rigid order. Ultimately, this represents a movement toward becoming a fully functioning person capable of navigating life's imperfections with ease and unconditional self-regard.

As the last main character, Abino also moves beyond the initial phase of emerging self-acceptance. She enters a process of mental well-being defined by an increasing openness to her own organismic experience. By loosening the conditions of worth that demanded she remain in a state of perpetual penance, Abino begins to integrate previously suppressed feelings into her current consciousness. This movement suggests a burgeoning congruence, in which she no longer needs to resort to denial or distortion to protect a fragile sense of loyalty. This congruence allows her to acknowledge the fullness of her history without being paralyzed by it.

Abino closed her eyes. A calico with a bent tail. Shiny fur. The white blaze from her forehead to her snout. Chitose was proud and thoughtful. There was a strong determination in her eyes, and she was graceful even in the way she showed affection. When they were together, Abino hadn't been able to utter any of this, even to herself, but she had so many things she wanted to say to Chitose. 'We were together for only a short time, but I was happy. I'm sorry I couldn't protect you. Thank you for coming to me.' (p.293).

The emergence of congruence as an active process of reconciling one's internal narrative with lived reality is highlighted in this quote. Abino's ability to recall Chitose's features with such vividness and to voice her gratitude signals a reduction in the distortion that previously forced her to view her past only through the lens of failure. This shift toward mental well-being is a movement toward becoming a fully functioning person who can accept contradictory experiences. The pain of her failure to protect Chitose, alongside the truth of "*I was happy.*" By articulating these feelings, Abino demonstrates unconditional self-regard and acknowledges her genuine emotions without the internal pressure to be a perfect

protector. This integration of her organismic valuing process allows her self-concept to expand and move her away from a static identity as a traitor and toward a dynamic state of being that is open to the present because it has finally made peace with the past.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION

This chapter presents the conclusions and suggestions from the entire study, which analyzes the characters in Syou Ishida's *We'll Prescribe You a Cat* (2024) using Carl Rogers' Self-Concept theory. The conclusion section will provide explicit answers to both research questions and summarize key findings regarding the role of incongruence and congruence restoration as mechanisms of character development. Meanwhile, the suggestion section will outline the implications of these findings for the field of literary criticism and provide specific recommendations for further academic research.

A. Conclusion

This study analyzes the psychological development of the novel's five main characters in *We'll Prescribe You a Cat*. The results confirm that Carl Rogers' self-concept theory framework is an in-line and effective tool for understanding narrative dynamics. The first research question of this study examines the characters' mental conditions by analyzing several components of self-concept: self-image and ideal self. The analysis confirms that a significant incongruence between their perceived self-image and their idealized standards is the primary source of their internal tension, as their self-perceptions fail to align with their actual experiences.

Building upon that analysis, the second research question explores the transition toward mental well-being through a decrease in incongruence and the emergence of congruence. This transformation is facilitated by unconditional positive regard, which enables the characters to cultivate more profound self-

acceptance. By integrating previously rejected aspects of their self-image and revising their ideal self-expectations to be more realistic, the characters narrow the incongruence gap. Ultimately, this alignment represents the attainment of mental well-being as a continuous process, as the characters evolve into more fully functioning individuals within the narrative.

B. Suggestion

This study, which analyzes character self-concept in the novel *We'll Prescribe You a Cat*, has confirmed Carl Rogers' theory as a strong framework for understanding character conflict and development. The findings regarding incongruence and the role of unconditional positive regard open up several opportunities for further exploration. This study can be developed further by exploring other dimensions that have been overlooked by humanistic psychology. First, further studies could use alternative psychological theories to analyze the same object. For example, attachment theory could be used to explain the bond between the characters and the cat as an attachment figure, or cognitive-behavioral theory could be used to identify specific changes in the characters' cognition after the intervention.

Second, a more thorough examination of the conflict's social aspects is required. In addition to comparing this novel with other literary works that depict comparable tensions between individual well-being and societal aspirations, further research might concentrate on how Japanese social and cultural standards surrounding the ideal self are the primary cause of significant incongruence. Third, this book contains many symbolic elements, including psychological ones. A more

thorough examination of the cats and the clinic's significance as mental health symbols in the story would be worthwhile.

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CURRICULUM VITAE



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