

## EXISTENTIALISM IN *THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS* PORTRAYED THROUGH CHRIS GARDNER'S WILL IN ACHIEVING THE SUCCESS.

### (*EXISTENTIALISM IN THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS PORTRAYED THROUGH CHRIS GARDNER'S WILL IN ACHIEVING THE SUCCESS*)

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#### Abstract

*The Pursuit of Happyyness* is a novel which depicts a series action in pursuing success by the main character, Chris Gardner. His performance is narrated through an idea of existentialism. Thus the concept of being for others in his belief is associated with ideology, freedom and responsibility. Those ideals are to picture the encouraging factors to achieve his objective. Hence, his goal is to find out his objective as human being. The data applied in this writing is qualitative data which means the data is in a form of texts. Data collection in this thesis is documentary study. The data is documented from selected quotation of the novel. This thesis is a descriptive study which elaborates Sartrean *Existentialism* to see human as the subject. This notion results in his famous remark existence comes before essence. Remarkably, Chris is not predetermined or interfered by his the others. By any means, the result indicates that happiness can only be succeeded through freedom of choices which are motivated by his own children and his dream. In conclusion, his existence has proven that essence will come later as he agreed to ignore the others.

**Keywords:** *The Pursuit Of Happyyness, Existentialism , and Success.*

#### Abstrak

*The Pursuit of Happyyness* adalah sebuah novel yang menggambarkan tindakan seri dalam mengejar kesuksesan dengan karakter utama, Chris Gardner. Penampilannya diceritakan melalui ide eksistensialisme. Dengan demikian konsep yang bagi orang lain dalam keyakinannya dikaitkan dengan ideologi, kebebasan dan tanggung jawab. Cita-cita yang membayangkan faktor yang mendorong untuk mencapai tujuannya. Oleh karena itu, tujuannya adalah untuk mengetahui tujuannya sebagai manusia. Data yang digunakan dalam penulisan ini adalah data kualitatif yang berarti data dalam bentuk teks. Pengumpulan data dalam tesis ini adalah studi dokumen. Data tersebut didokumentasikan dari kutipan yang dipilih dari novel. Tesis ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif yang menjelaskan Sartrean Eksistensialisme untuk melihat manusia sebagai subjek. Hasil gagasan ini yang ada pernyataan terkenal datang sebelum esensi. Hebatnya, Chris tidak ditentukan atau diganggu oleh-Nya yang lain. Dengan cara apapun, hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa kebahagiaan hanya dapat berhasil melalui kebebasan pilihan yang termotivasi oleh anak-anaknya sendiri dan mimpinya. Kesimpulannya, keberadaannya telah membuktikan bahwa esensi akan datang kemudian saat ia setuju untuk mengabaikan orang lain.

**Kata kunci :** "*The Pursuit Of Happyyness*", "*Eksistensialisme*", dan "*Kesuksesan*".

#### Introduction

People cannot determine values according to their perspectives. Before existentialism comes, people must obey the values of good and evil determined by the traditions. These values have been determined and must be obeyed. People just accept it as the absolute truth. (Flynn: 1995-9)

This situation makes people have no authority to control their own life. The good values for people are not determined by themselves. Whereas the people should have authority to describe the values for them. However the values are constantly change, they depend on the flow of time and human development.

These are the problems of society which are criticized by the existentialists. They bring the ideology that people must be free to choose as stated by Jean Paul Sartre, "human is condemned to be free". The notion people must be free is to make a person become is free subject, in modern era the center of everything is a human as subject. Someone must have authority over himself/herself to pursue their own goal or achievement.

In general meaning, existentialism means the concept of freedom and value arise from their view of the individual. So the individual is a freeman. No people are exactly alike. Everyone has the uniqueness that makes their different each other. Someone must notice his/her individual existences.

Someone has authority to define himself/herself. It is part of the role of a human to identify himself as the one and the only one.

*The Pursuit of Happyness* is the story that tells about the struggle of Chris Gardner as the main character to achieve his success. There are processes of experiences which can be categorized as hard experiences. He experiences difficult childhood until he promises to be a good father for his children. The process of hard experiences until achieving the success is the phenomenon of someone's willingness to choose the way of life. Chris Gardner becomes successful man without graduating from the education institutional. It means that the institution actually cannot determine the success of the people. It cannot be guaranteed that someone who has degrees can be successful in life. Degrees means social rank, thus he bound to certain status in their live, whether low class, middle class, and upper class. If someone can decide or choose his/her own way of life, he/she can be responsible for himself/herself. Moreover if someone achieves success according to his own choice, it can make someone satisfied of his success.

### Research Method

This chapter is going to describe the method of analysis in conducting scientific research. The type of data in this thesis is qualitative. As stated by McMillan (1992: 9), qualitative data are based on a research that focuses on understanding and meaning through verbal narratives and descriptions rather than through numbers.

Documentary (bibliographical) study is applied to this study as the technique of data collection. Blaxter et al (199: 187) describe that documentary (bibliographical) study proceeds by abstracting, from each document, those elements which we consider to be important or relevant, by grouping together those findings, or setting them alongside others which we believe to be related.

The primary data is *The Pursuit Of Happyness* novel. The data taken from the novel will be the dialogues and the conflicts written in the novel. The secondary data are the opinion and arguments which strengthen the ideology of existentialism can be practiced by people to achieve the success. The data also are examples of some existentialist, someone who practices existentialism in his/her life.

### Result

The result of this article is to show some problems of choosing the topic. First the novel reflects the ideology of existentialism described through Chris Gardner as the main character. The process of Chris Gardner to achieve the success contains existentialism inside. He has strong will to live. He is persistent to struggle in his life. His belief leads him to achieve the success. The second is that the novel is actually based on the true story of the author Chris Gardner. It shows that existentialism can be practiced in the real life. It is not just ideology but the practical world view which can

lead someone to achieve success. Chris Gardner actually wants to share existentialism to the people through his novel.

### Discussion

*The Pursuit of Happyness* is the story that tells about the struggle of Chris Gardner as the main character to achieve his success. There are processes of experiences which can be categorized as hard experiences. He experiences difficult childhood until he promises to be a good father for his children. The process of hard experiences until achieving the success is the phenomenon of someone's willingness to choose the way of life.

### Chris Gardner's view point on Existentialism

The setting of "The pursuit of Happyness" begins in 1981 in San Francisco, California. Linda is the wife of Chris Gardner. They live in a small apartment with their son, Christopher. He is five years old. Chris is a salesman who spends the entire family savings to buy a franchise for selling portable bone density scanners. This scanner is able to produce better images than X - ray, but according to doctors who have met Chris, the price is too expensive. Linda is a laundry worker. The broken home begins when they cannot pay the rent. Chris family conditions become worse and worse especially when he often parks his car everywhere. Chris cannot pay a traffic ticket, so the car is taken.

Between steep rents and the chronic car repairs caused by the toll the hills took on transmissions and brakes—not to mention that pile of unpaid parking tickets all too familiar to most San Franciscans—staying afloat could be a challenge. But that wasn't going to mar my belief that I'd make it. Besides, I knew enough about challenge. I knew how to work hard, and in fact, over the next years, challenges helped me to reshape my dreams, to reach further, and to pursue goals with an increased sense of urgency.

(Gardner, 2006:2)

Lonesome within Chris is the one that signaled his solitude. Loneliness is one thing called Sartre as a marker of existence man in his essay, "Existentialism is Humanism". Sartre is also added that humans lives just in the world, without God there can help. Hence he decides his own existence. Chris and his son are sleeping in public places. He decides to stay at the Glide Memorial Church. Due to limited space, they have to queue to get a room. They sometimes success and sometimes fail, so they sleep outside. Of its poverty and homelessness, encouraging Chris to do his job harder and harder and he gets a job at Dean Witter Reynolds.

Some of the places where we slept suggested as much—on the Bay Area Rapid Transit subway trains, or in waiting areas at either the Oakland or San Francisco airport. Then

again, the more hidden places where we stayed could have given away my situation—at the office, where I'd work late so we could stretch out on the floor under my desk after hours; or, as on occasion we found ourselves, in the public bathroom of an Oakland BART station.

(Gardner, 2006:6)

In the last story, Chris manages to be the best participant, and he becomes an employer there. A few years later, he makes a stock company, it is Gardner Rich. In 2006, he sells a piece of stock, and he manages to get a million dollars from the sale of shares.

By picking Chicago as the town in which to plant Gardner Rich & Company, as I dubbed my enterprise, I had once again made a round trip, returning to a spot not far from Milwaukee and Moms, as well as a town where I had plenty of relatives. This move made sense because Chicago was a city where six-year-old Christopher and two-year-old Jacintha—both of whom moved from Los Angeles to Chicago—could grow up and have a place to call home. So in a sense, I had circled back around. But I was breaking new ground as well, by raising my kids, I had broken the cycle of fatherless children that my own father had started.

(Gardner, 2006:290-291)

#### **Existentialism Values as Ideology of Chris Gardner's Life**

Chris is a hard worker. He also has a good self-concept which appeared during his childhood. He has a dream. He has good self-esteem so there is a motivation from himself and from his son to work hard. The last, he has a high self-confident. He has a big future to do his jobs although it is too hard to do it. Chris accepts the volunteer job in a stock firm "Dean Witter Reynolds." He promises that there is a job for the best worker. From his debt and homeless, it encourages Chris to do his job harder and harder to impress his boss in Dean Witter Reynolds.

*The Pursuit Of Happiness* symbolizes life struggling to get a job by depicting Chris's efforts. Pursuit means running, Gardner's life is always running and running such as when he tries to sell the scanners, interviewed by Dean Witter, holds customers, etc. While Gardner is informed that he has been accepted as a worker at Dean Witter, he also runs into the street that shows his happiness. There is also racism when Gardner as the new Dean Witter's employee is often asks to park the car, everywhere, although Gardner has a limited time. Gardner's personality symbolized a good man who can manage properly and emotionally intelligent, so it is suitable as a winner of life. Therefore, there is an existentialism value within him to pursue something.

As long as I kept my mental focus on destinations that are ahead, destinations that I had the audacity

to dream might hold a red Ferrari of my own, I protected myself from despair. The future was uncertain, absolutely, and there were many hurdles, twists, and turns to come, but as long as I kept moving forward, one foot in front of the other, the voices of fear and shame, the messages from those who wanted me to believe that I wasn't good enough, would be stilled.

(Gardner, 2006:6)

Self-confidence can make Chris to reach his goal as the result of his idea. Although his achievement can be reached by others ideas, individualism states that achievement is a result of new discovery that other people never makes in which he neglects other people opinion to determine himself. Another existentialism values in Gardner is his children. Although Chris deals with courage and in dependency that existentialist belief in himself to have what the best for himself, Chris is a part of society. It is because the meaning of happiness.

Inside his head, happiness is, as written in the above quotation, described with the union of his two children. For example, as he gets the position in his company and he takes the liberty to employ his children to stick together as one. Thus the others are simply a symbol of devil, which deceived them. For Chris-and-Sartre, devil is around them, through the conflicts that always arise in human relationships, others or the other is nothing but a devil for themselves. He is different from egoism or selfishness. In other word, Chris is feeling of bravery of himself in taking opinion because he cares the most important circle in his life that is his two children. After he gets the highest position in his company he conveyed that his two children are his happiness.

#### **Chris Gardner's Encouraging Factors**

The novel is written based on the writer's actual experience. It is very important for every person to achieve their success by working hard and it is also valuable for everyone to build their personality and character. Chris in the story is acted as a subject who learns to be responsible and well-trusted. Thus, the mistyped word "happyness" instead of "happiness" suggests and symbolizes that subject of story of the pursuit of happiness is in the harsh conditions that he can make the correct word of happiness itself which makes him angry.

Common fathers will have given up, much like Linda does. Unlike Chris, she is not devoted to making the family as a whole, even though she has been through problems. Chris ever thinks to give up his child to social services, or to his wife, or to unknown women in a shelter, but he changes his mind. Because Chris does not imagine living without his son and hardships that he has. He has a son in tow will have made life easier. But Chris defines happiness as being a responsible father, and accepts with that moral decision the accompanying difficulties.

In early 1981, when I became a first-time father, overjoyed as I was, that sense of urgency kicked

up another notch. As the first months of my son's life flew by, I not only tried to move ahead faster but also began to question the path that I'd chosen, wondering if somehow in all my efforts I wasn't trying to run up the down escalator. Or at least that was my state of mind on that day in the parking lot outside San Francisco General Hospital as I approached the driver of the red Ferrari.

(Gardner, 2006:3)

Gardner fights to raise his young son while homeless and living on the streets of San Francisco. Gardner, who serves a brief stint in the Navy and have no education beyond high school, will finally get back on his feet to become a millionaire stockbroker and business owner. All of these notions are inspired by someone in his life.

Uncle Archie had a contagious aura of calm that he maintained even during the excitement of the fights or when crises came up. A man in his late twenties at the time, he never had a son, and I didn't have a father, so that drew us closer. Besides his hardworking ethic on the job, Archie used his quiet, strong intelligence to rise up through the ranks of his union at Inland Steel, setting an example for me about tenacity and focus.

(Gardner, 2006:27)

Gardner relates the misspelled "Happyness" of the book's title. It is derived from the event when Gardner is looking for daycare for his son. As the result, Gardner can pursue his career. According to Sartre, it is a necessity for humans. Humans cannot choose. Even if someone tries to run away from choice by committing self, the man is still making the choice to kill himself. Choices make man in his life not only made once, but many times in his life. He rejects the correct because it misspelled "Happiness" in its name, but gained insight into what happiness meant to him personally when he explained the literal meaning of the word to his curious son.

For a minute, I start to question in my mind how good a child care facility can be that can't even spell "happiness" correctly. Of all the things I have to worry about, that's not one of them. Even so, back out on the street, I feel the need to make sure my son knows that the word is spelled with an I and not a Y. H- A-P-P-I-N-E-S-S. "Okay, Poppa," says Christopher, repeating the word. "Happiness." "That's a big word," I say with approval, wishing that I could ensure Chris's and my own happiness in the immediate future. The ability to spell is not my main concern when I call the numbers I've been given for Miss Luellen at one house and Miss Bessie at another and a third place on Thirty-fifth Street—babysitters who keep kids on a regular basis but not any kind of daycare centers with licenses and registrations. The woman on Thirty fifth says to bring Christopher

early on Monday and says that I can pay her by the week. One hundred bucks. There's no real money savings except that I can pay as I go. Though this doesn't do a lot to reassure me that he's getting the best care possible, it's better than nothing.

(Gardner, 2006:230-231)

Based on quotation above, Chris then continues his explanation by saying that in his every act, man must choose projects that fundamentally for his life. This is where humans get their freedom. Humans are free selecting these projects in accordance with his will.

There is no point to regret. It is therefore senseless to think of complaining since it is his decision about what he feels, where he lives, or what he does. Sartre goes on to express his theory of freedom concept of responsibility. According to Chris in the novel, with great freedom, come responsibilities. Hence Gardner writes responsibility is simply the logical requirements of the consequences of our freedom.

## Conclusion

The article concludes that deals with Existentialism analysis which employs on Sartre's theory pictured in the main character of *The Pursuit of Happiness*. The character analyse in this thesis performs a series action in pursuing happiness, namely Essence and existence which describe his existence as existentialist, being for others which describe his existentialism value as ideology and the freedom and responsibility to picture the encouraging factors to achieve his objective. Hence, the goal of the study is to find out his objective as human being.

The result of this thesis indicates that the existence of Chris is not predetermined or interfered by the others. By any means, the result indicates that happiness can only be succeeded through freedom of choices which are motivated by his own children and his dream. In conclusion, his existence has proven that essence will come later as he agreed to ignore the others.

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