

## SELF-DETERMINATION EVEN IN PHYSICAL AILMENT IN JOHN GREEN'S NOVEL *TURTLES ALL THE WAY DOWN*

By

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### Abstract

*The main aim of this paper is to show the suffering, struggle, and surviving life of the protagonist. John Green's *Turtles All the Way Down* examines the life problems of the protagonist. She has been surviving from infection. This paper encourages and examines the self-determination theory based on health, psychological and pathological ideas. The paper describes how the self-determination theory is suitable to the character of the protagonist and her life. Here the novel explains the life of the protagonist, her struggle, and her destination. This paper explains the life of protagonist and how the protagonist is self-motivate herself and how she have face all the troubles and overcome to reach her destination. The novel indicates the protagonist as a self-motivated and the strongest person. The paper describes the novel through the theory, which is explained and elaborated by Deci and Ryan.*

**Keywords:** *suffer, struggle, survive, self-determination, self-motivation, theory.*

### Introduction

Self-Determination Theory based on the study of human motivation and personality development and wellness. The theory has focused on various types, which is rather than the "just amount of motivation, paying particular attention to autonomous motivation, controlled motivation, and a motivation as predictors of performance, relational, and well-being outcomes". The theory and the ideas address the social conditions which enhance versus diminish these types of motivation, proposing and finding that the

degrees to which basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are supported versus which affect both the type and strength of motivation. Self-Determination theory also examines people's life goals or aspirations, which show differential relations of intrinsic versus extrinsic life goals to performance and psychological health. In John Green's Novel *Turtles All the Way Down*, Self-Determination Theory concerns mindfulness and vitality, and highlights the applicability of Self-Determination theory within applied domains, including

work, relationships, parenting, education, virtual environments, sport, sustainability, health care, motivation and psychotherapy.

"Self-Determination theory articulates a meta-theory for framing motivational studies, a formal theory that defines intrinsic and varied extrinsic sources of motivation, and a description of the respective roles of intrinsic and types of extrinsic motivation in cognitive and social development and in individual differences." Self-Determination theory focuses on how social and cultural factors facilitate or undermine people's sense of volition and initiative, in addition to their well-being and the quality of their performance. The theory mainly focuses on motivational activities based on the atmosphere and the situation.

Humanistic psychology has been influential in the creation of Self-Determination Theory. Humanistic psychology is interested in looking at a person's whole psyche and personal achievement for self-efficacy and self-actualization. Whether or not an individual's self-efficacy and self-actualization are fulfilled can affect their motivation. To this day, it may be difficult for a parent, a coach, a mentor, and a teacher to motivate and help others complete specific tasks and goals. It acknowledges the importance of the interconnection of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations as a means of motivation to achieve a goal. Sheldon says, "Therapists who fully endorse self-determination

principles acknowledge the limits of their responsibilities because they fully acknowledge that ultimately people must make their own choices" (125). One needs to determine their reasons for being motivated and reaching their goal. Self-Determination theory comprises The Organismic Dialectic approach, which is a meta-theory, and a formal theory containing six mini-theories focusing on the connection between extrinsic and intrinsic motivations within society and an individual. Self-Determination theory centres around the belief that human nature shows persistent positive features. "Self-determination also has a more personal and psychology-relevant meaning today: the ability or process of making one's own choices and controlling one's own life". The use of one's personal agency to determine behaviour and mindset will help an individual's choices.

The book *Self-Determination and Intrinsic Motivation in Human Behaviour* (1985) explains about the term Self-Determination theory, which is described by Deci and Ryan. In the book, it is explained as, "The term self-determination refers to a person's own ability to manage themselves, to make confident choices, and to think on their own" (Deci, 1971).

The term Self-Determination has indicated human motivation and personality. The theory has dealt with two major concepts that are people's inherent growth tendencies and the innate psychological needs of these same individuals. The Self-Determination theory has been in various

parts and concept as including health, motivation, work, exercise, etc.

In psychology, self-determination is an important concept that refers to each person's ability to make choices and manage their own life. This ability plays an important role in psychological health and well-being. Self-determination allows people to feel that they have control over their choices and lives. It also has an impact on motivation people feel more motivated to take action when they feel that what they do will have an effect on the outcome.

Self-determination theory indicates that people are motivated to grow and change by essential and universal psychological needs. A person's motivation at this level derives from their instinct to survive. While as this Self-determination theoretical concept is suited in character of protagonist in the novel. The protagonist is a self-motivated person. Even she is in a struggling situation, she hides the situation for her achievement. She makes the struggles as a challenge travels beyond her destination, "Self-determination theory posits that people are driven by three innate and universal psychological needs, and that personal well-being is a direct function of the satisfaction of these basic psychological needs" (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Ryan, 1995). The protagonist is not as much a wealthy person so she has been struggling for her needs and also she also has a parasite infection in her body. Through all these

circumstances, she decides to reach the destination as to find out the billionaire to get the reward. The protagonist tries to hide her pain and infection from others. She does not show the infection to outside world. The protagonist's mindset is that people cannot able to identify her that she is trying to survive from the infection.

I was little, I've pressed my right thumbnail into finger pad of my middle finger, and so now there's this weird callus over my fingerprint. After so many years of doing this, I cover it up with a Band-Aid to try to prevent infection. But sometimes I get worried that there already is an infection, and so I need to drain it, and only the only way to do that is to reopen the wound and press out of any blood that will come (6).

Survival is a technique which a person may use in order to sustain life in any type of natural environment. The basic needs of human life include food, water, shelter and good health. The good health is very much needful to run the life. While in our day by day life, survival is no longer dependent upon them. There are still reasons why it is important to have at least basic know-how and capability. When it comes to the following ancient technique: makes friction fire, build primitive shelters in various climates, collect the thing which is very necessary and purify water as usual needs, find the thinks for basic needs, process and cooks food for to eat and alive, navigating over challenging

landscapes, makes tools and other implements, and understand the weather patterns.

It is not the strongest  
of the species that survive  
nor the most intelligent,  
but the one most responsive  
to change

Survival is the act of surviving or to stay to be lived. It is the fact or state of continuous effort to be lived or existed in difficult situation. Survival in such an empty world seems like an impossible skill to achieve. When basic amenities do not fulfil the needs of the man, there begins the struggle to survive. Society and survival go hand in hand, yet at the same time they can be viewed separately, as humans can continue to exist despite the absence of an organized society. Morality takes the back seat to survival. The phrase survival of the fittest, coined by Herbert Spencer and more notably applied in the evolutionary ideas of Darwinism, where species adapt to their environment and the strongest continue on, can also be used in a post-apocalyptic setting. As the world destroyed, both technology and population is set back and food is generally scarce, scavenging for supplies become a vital action whether you are on the move, the road shows in abundance the suffering of people for their basic amenities.

Survival is being able to do what it takes to stay alive. Some people have had a great deal of training and practice on how to live off the land, while others have a hard time making it through a night without running water and electricity. The most essential

things a person needs are food, water, shelter, warmth, rest, and health. A person's motivation at this level derives from their instinct to survive.

The Protagonist of the novel is Aza Holmesy. She is a very energetic character. In the novel, she wishes to find the billionaire to get the reward. While in the travel of her destination, she needs to survive from the disease as her physical health. And also she had an imaginative feel which is happen in her body. Instead of this situation while she is getting struggle or try to survive from her bad health, she tries to reach her destination, "I felt my stomach begin to work on the sandwich, and even over everybody's Talking, I could hear it digesting, all the bacteria chewing the slime of peanut butter the students inside of me eating at my internal cafeteria. A shiver convulsed through me" (3).

The protagonist has tried to survive from her illness. She tries to inform about the infection to her friend Daisy, but in the beginning, she has tried to hide from her friend Daisy. It is also indicated in the novel as, "I could tell she wanted me to ask her about something, but I couldn't tell what, because my stomach wouldn't shut up, which was forcing me deep inside a worry that I'd somehow contracted a parasitic infection" (4). By this way the protagonist has tried to hide her struggle from others.

The protagonist tries to survive from the infection from the young stage itself. She is

trying to overcome from the infection but she can't make it. So she tries to hide the infection from the outside world. If the protagonist finds the infection is critical, she hides in front of others. When she needs to clean her infection in her finger, immediately she has hidden her infection in front of others and keep go on to the bathroom and clean her fingers with soap and water and applies hand sanitizer as a immediate medicine. In this way the protagonist is considered to be a self-determinant character. She can't able to enjoy as her friends are doing. She can't able to do what she wishes to eat in public place and also in her home because of the infection, she is irritated by the infection.

The Protagonist is the strongest girl because she survives and struggles from her disease and takes medicine by her own self without the knowledge of others. She applies the medicine which she knows as best. Even though she tries to survive from her parasite infection, she meets with some other illnesses in her stomach. She gets trouble, struggle and mental disorder. She considers the infection as the parasite. She shares her struggle to one of his friend Davis as, "I started telling Davis about this weird parasite, *Diplostomum pseudospathaceum*. It matures in the eyes of fish, but can only reproduce inside the stomach of a bird. Fish infected with immature parasites swim in deep water to make it harder for birds to spot, but then, once the parasite is ready to mate, the infected fish suddenly start swimming close to the surface. They start try to get

themselves eaten by a bird, basically and eventually they succeed, and the parasite that was authoring the story all along ends up exactly where it needs to be in the belly of bird" (105-6). The protagonist compares her infection and also she is psychologically affected because of the infection.

The Novel *Turtles All the Way Down* focuses the struggles and the motivational life of the protagonist. Even though the protagonist has the parasite infection, all her critical circumstances have overcome her troubles and she reaches beyond her destination. She tries to hide herself and takes the medicine by herself even it is good or bad. Though the protagonist is the struggling person, she hides all her struggles and motivates herself to reach her destination. The Self-Determination theory and the theory of motivational ideas are very well suited for the protagonist.

### Conclusion

In the modern world, human beings are harvesting each other in order to survive. John Green brings out the point that even though the protagonist is ill and gets struggle from the infection, the protagonist is a self-motivated person and she reaches the destination which she decides to achieve. Likewise one should face the hardships of life in all the critical situations which an individual needs to overcome from the struggle. People need the basic needs in order to survive in the world for their own survival and the self-motivation is very important.



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