



SELF-ACCEPTANCE IN THE JOURNEY OF MAIN CHARACTER IN MARC FOSTER'S *A MAN CALLED OTTO*

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ABSTRACT:

This study aims to analyze self-acceptance in Otto's journey by discovering the factors and obstacles towards self-acceptance in the movie *A Man Called Otto* by Marc Forster. Using self-acceptance theory by Hurlock (1947), this study believes that Otto's self-acceptance was influenced by positive interactions with the people around him. In addition, this study uses qualitative methods based on documentation with a psychoanalysis approach. The data in this study is the movie *A Man Called Otto* by Marc Foster. The findings show that there are several factors that influence Otto's self-acceptance, including positive interactions, role in the community, past relationships, and social circumstances. Moreover, obstacles were found in Otto's self-acceptance process, including the loss of loved ones, self-isolation, and traumatization. This study can be a reference for researchers in studying the representation of self-acceptance in literary works. It also provides a new contribution by linking the concept of self-acceptance with the process of emotional healing and the search for the meaning of life.

Keywords: *A Man Called Otto, Character Analysis, Positive Interpersonal Relationship, Psychoanalysis Approach, Self-Acceptance.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Self-acceptance is a reflective journey. It is a process of appreciating each part of the individual throughout the journey of life. This process may frequently stand against expectations, presenting unexpected moments that can undermine an individual's confidence (Ventaja-Cruz et al., 2024). However, whether or not the process is successful, there is an experience that contributes significantly to the individual's personality to accept and appreciate themselves. This may contribute to a sense of calm and peace, as well as increased satisfaction and ability to tackle upcoming challenges. According to Pramanik & Khuntia (2023), self-acceptance is about accepting and understanding oneself. Each individual would certainly be familiar with this universal topic especially when they are struggling with mental health issues, trauma, and insecurity. This process includes identifying individual

strengths and weaknesses and appreciating themselves with all their flaws. Thus, self-acceptance is not just about valuing oneself, but it is also about emotional well-being (García-Lázaro et al., 2022; Rojo-Ramos et al., 2025; Alwadaeen & Piller, 2022).

Mental health issues, such as depression, are one of the most common mental health conditions that most people suffer from (Amos, 2024; Chan & Fugard, 2018; Reintjes et al., 2025). Depression in elderly people can be caused by the loss of a loved one, which forces them to live their lives alone (Kok & Reynolds, 2017; Dale et al., 2019; Avis, M., Stroebe & Schut, 2021). The feeling of emptiness and sadness might lead to the feeling that life is no longer meaningful (Stahl et al., 2017). Suicide attempts frequently appear in these situations as a means of escaping great suffering. When such attempts fail, the suffering may begin to

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realize that life goes on despite the great sufferings it has (Stanley et al., 2016; Cronin et al., 2020). Failure becomes a reflection of one's ability to confront reality in a better way for dealing with sadness. Through a difficult journey, suffering will learn to accept reality and apply it to find new meaning in life. Accepting yourself with all the suffering that has occurred is an important step towards the recovery process. It is not a simple way, but with the help of those around them and a desire to appreciate ourselves, hope and peace can be found again.

Furthermore, individuals influence those around them. Individuals' perceptions of their surroundings are shaped by daily social interactions. Interacting with others allows individuals to share experiences and feelings. According to Podlowska (2017), positive interpersonal relationships will establish a positive social life as well, which certainly has an impact on self-acceptance. It also teaches individuals about the importance of empathy and mutual respect. When individuals learn to appreciate others, individuals indirectly learn to understand themselves in the same way. Positive interpersonal relationships serve as a reminder that every individual deserves to be loved and accepted for who they are. In this context, positive interpersonal relationships are related to self-acceptance as a continuous process that is formed through the love and support of those around them.

Self-acceptance is the willingness of an individual to accept and live with their own qualities (Hurlock, 1974). Self-acceptance is a major key in individual well-being (Ramadhani et al., 2023; Tang & Zhu, 2024; Alwadaeen & Piller, 2022). Hurlock not only discusses the theory of self-acceptance, but she also discusses the theory of self-development which is also quite relevant to the theory of self-acceptance. Hurlock defines self-development as a stage of personal growth that continues to change and becomes perceptible over time. There are several factors that affect self-acceptance including the understanding of oneself, realistic goals, absence of environmental barriers, the lack of extreme emotional stress, the prevalence of successes, connection with balanced people, self-perspective, good developmental training, and an adequate self-worth (Miswag et al., 2025; Rahayu et al., 2024; Djatmika et al., 2022). According to Hurlock (1947), the indicators of

self-acceptance is individuals who accepts themselves, have reasonable life expectations about their situation, and respects themselves. Individuals with a high level of self-acceptance have a good attitude toward themselves and their lives. Those with high self-acceptance will not be easily discouraged by failure, but will consider it as a process of learning and self-development. Moreover, they frequently have a positive interpersonal interaction since they are able to interact with others without feeling inferior. They are able to create a particular boundary in their relationship with others and are not easily affected by social pressure. Therefore, self-acceptance encourages individuals to achieve inner peace and fulfillment as they are able to accept themselves as they are and not try to be someone else or reach unrealistic standards.

Additionally, according to Hurlock, old age is the final stage of life, occurring when people reach the age of 60 or beyond (Jalal, 2023). Self-acceptance in the elderly can help them improve their quality of life to achieve peacefulness. At this stage, self-acceptance allows individuals to deal with various problems such as physical changes, lack of memory, and other illnesses in a more positive way. Individuals with a high level of self-acceptance will be able to adjust unhindered by age limitations, resulting in happiness and life satisfaction. Elderly people who accept themselves will be grateful for their achievements and experiences. They will see the past with a more positive attitude and fewer regrets. Furthermore, they will also be able to appreciate themselves. In general, high self-acceptance in old age can significantly improve emotional or mental well-being and life, thus allowing those individuals to spend their old age with a more meaningful life. In addition, movies and literature often portray an individual's journey towards self-acceptance as an inspiring and positive story. The protagonists in these works of fiction are usually featured on how they deal with difficult situations and grow as a person through positive interactions with others. An illustration of self-acceptance through positive interpersonal relationships can be found in Marc Forster's *A Man Called Otto*, which is the object of this study.

A Man Called Otto, in summary, tells the story of a grumpy old man named Otto Anderson who became depressed after losing

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his wife. He had felt that his life was meaningless, with no purpose, and was trapped in deep despair. Thus, he attempted suicide several times. However, his life slowly changed when a young family moved to the other side of his house. Instead of making another suicide attempt, he tried to build a positive relationship with his new neighbors. Interactions with his new neighbors gave him a new perspective that even though he lived alone and felt lonely, there were people who still cared and needed his presence. He began to rediscover his long-lost hope and meaning in life. This process helped him to overcome deep feelings of hopelessness and led him on a valuable journey of self-acceptance. In the end, he learned to forgive himself for his mistakes and accepted the fact that loss is a natural part of life that must be faced.

In literature, especially in the field of psychoanalysis, self-acceptance is a widely discussed topic as it plays an important role in personal growth. The researcher found other researchers who discussed the same analytical approach, but with the different literary work. The first study by Yurizka et al. (2022) entitled *Self-Acceptance study in the Korean Drama Series Our Beloved Summer (Intrinsic Analysis of the Main Character's Character*, discussed and analyze the moral message regarding self-acceptance in the main character. The second study by Haura & Indah (2021) entitled *Self-acceptance in Uda ning Wanci Ketiga Novel by Tulus Setiyadi* discribed self-acceptance as an expression of Udan ing Wanci Ketiga's nrima ing pandum mindset. The third study by Putri et al. (2023) entitled *Self-acceptance of the main character in Matt Haig's Midnight Library* demonstrated how the main character reacts to and explains the issue of self-acceptance that has an impact on her mental health. The fourth study by Puspita Sari et al. (2025) entitled *The Process of Self Acceptance as Portrayed in The Substance (2024) by Coralie Fargeat* analyzed the process and effects of self-acceptance in the main character. The fifth study by Yazid & Thohiriyah (2024) entitled *The Process of Self-acceptance after Grieving in Michelle Zauner's Crying in H Mart* explored the author's emotions of grief and acceptance in her literary work.

Similarly, there are no studies that examine the perspectives of individuals struggling towards self-acceptance through

depression and establishing positive interpersonal relationships, specifically in the movie *A Man Called Otto*. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate Otto Anderson's journey towards self-acceptance through positive interactions with people around him in Marc Forster's *A Man Called Otto* by discovering the factors and obstacles towards self-acceptance. This paper argues that Otto's process of finding self-acceptance and dealing with his depression is influenced by a deep understanding of himself and the influence of positive relationships from those around him. These aspects are very crucial in maintaining the continuity of his life. Additionally, the theory used in this study is Elizabeth B. Hurlock (1974) theory of self-acceptance.

2. METHOD

This study uses qualitative methods based on documentation with a psychoanalysis approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2020; Tisdell et al., 2025). Hurlock theory is used to analyze how self-acceptance develops in elderly people. This approach enables the researcher to gain a greater understanding of how elderly people examine the challenges and obstacles they face, as well as how they achieve emotional and psychological wellbeing. Data collection techniques are conducted by analyzing Forster's movie, *A Man Called Otto*, produced by Columbia Pictures in 2022. Collection of information through documentation is carried out by analyzing factors, obstacles, and social or community influences in the main character's self-acceptance. Apart from that, the researcher uses additional data in order to support the primary data, including books and journals that are related to the topic under discussion. The process of collecting data involved analyzing the movie to identify significant scenes which depict the development of the main character, Otto, particularly in terms of self-acceptance (Mauliddiyah, 2021; Anufia, 2019; Herdayati & Syahril, 2019). Furthermore, the process of collecting data involved recording significant dialogues that depict Otto's emotional and psychological journey, as well as taking screenshots of the movie to document important scenes. Each important dialogue and scene was analyzed to determine how Otto's character develops in terms of self-acceptance,

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connections with other characters, and responses to various life situations.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Otto Anderson began his life alone after his wife died, feeling lonely and depressed, which led him to attempt suicide multiple times. A positive interpersonal interaction, on the other hand, has a significant impact on Otto's life and can help him overcome his urge to commit suicide. Thus, he tries to accept the reality as it is and seeks to bring the nature of self-acceptance into him. This discussion will explain his journey towards self-acceptance through positive interaction with the people around him by finding factors and obstacles to his own acceptance.

3.1. The factors that lead to Otto's self-acceptance

3.1.1. Positive Interaction

Positive interaction with those around Otto have had a huge impact on his life. He began to realize that interacting with others can help him overcome the loneliness he has been feeling for so long. The circumstances began with Marisol and his family moving in front of his house.



Figure 1. Otto's anger (13:43)

In figure 1, Otto's interaction with Marisol started off badly due to a misunderstanding between them. Tommy, Marisol's husband, was unable to drive the car properly, which provoked Otto's anger and misunderstanding between the two. In Otto's statement, *"Hey, you can't just drive here."* he assumes that the car they drive does not have a parking permit in the residential complex, but the fact is that they have such a parking permit as new residents of the house in front of Otto's house. However, Otto helps the family by parking their car properly. This makes Marisol suggest that Otto has good qualities, despite

his sensitivity to others. Furthermore, their interaction continues with Marisol, who develops a relationship with Otto as a good neighbor. Marisol frequently asks for help from Otto, although he initially responds with a sensitive attitude but Otto remains willing to help Marisol as long as he is able to do so.



Figure 2. Otto teacher Marisol to drive a car (01:05:11)

The interpersonal relationship between Otto and Marisol is strengthening as the frequency of their interactions grows. This makes Otto feel that Marisol's presence can eliminate his loneliness. Otto also willingly teaches Marisol to drive a car, as shown in figure 2.

Their interpersonal relationship didn't just stop at that moment, they also shared stories and experiences in a cafe by ordering a coffee and bread. Otto also talked about his relationship with Sonya, his wife who passed away. This makes Marisol convinced that Otto is a loyal and good man. Thus, give Marisol the trust necessary to rely on Otto in a variety of ways. After they finish learning to drive, Marisol expresses her desire to spend time with Tommy on a date, so she requests Otto's help in keeping both of her children at home during their date. Otto immediately agreed to Marisol's request for staying one night at his house. Therefore, Otto's relationship with Marisol has positively influenced his life. In his old age, he had new friends who understood his condition and did not criticize him harshly.

3.1.2. Role in the community



Figure 3. Otto walks around the residential complex (06:33)

Otto's role in the community has a significant impact on his self-acceptance. Each action he does has an impact on the community of his Residential Complex. Otto walks around the complex every morning to check on the surroundings. He also often meets Jimmy, his neighbor, when he's jogging in the morning. Jimmy, as shown in figure 3, is quite familiar with Otto's morning habits, which are also known by many people, so when Otto doesn't do this routine activity, his neighbors will be confused.



Figure 4. Otto's willing to take care of a sick cat (52:28)

Furthermore, Otto's role in the community is that he is willing to assist his neighbors who are in trouble, as in the case of Marisol. It comes from Marisol's dialogue *"Because I'm pregnant, I cannot handle the cats because I can get the toxo thing."* Despite his sensitive temperament, Otto cares deeply for animals, particularly cats. This is demonstrated when Marisol discovers a cat who bends in pain under the snow pile. Although he initially refuses to care for the cat, Otto eventually accepts responsibility for it. This suggests that Otto plays a crucial role in the residential complex community



Figure 5. Otto disciplines those who break the rules (31:50)

Otto also helps to keep the neighborhood disciplined and secure. When someone drives their car around the surrounding area without a permit, Otto will loudly oppose it and explain that the complex has a rule that everyone must follow, as shown in figure 5.

Individuals' roles in communities have a significant impact on their personalities. This can be seen in the character of Otto, who plays a role in the community and thus shapes the personality within himself, which is concerned with those around him. As Otto continues about his daily activities and helps his neighbors with small problems, he begins to feel better about the goodness he gave through that contribution. It may seem meaningless, but Otto's contribution to the community offers him a sense of purpose and belonging that he has not felt since his wife's death.

3.1.3. Past relationships

Additionally, the memories of the past is the factor that influenced Otto's acceptance of himself. When he experienced difficult times, such as loneliness, depression, and the desire to commit suicide, his wife's memories would constantly come to mind. This memory fosters in his positive value that Sonya does not want Otto to do something that will harm himself. However, the suffering he experiences drives him to seek an instant escape, specifically a suicide attempt. Otto feels such a great loss when Sonya is gone. He becomes a very different person when Sonya disappears from his life.



Figure 6. Otto attempted suicide (23:00)

In figure 6, it is explained that Otto attempted suicide by hanging himself with a rope. However, the failure was caused by an insufficient knot. In this scene, it can be seen that Sonya comes into Otto's mind and wants Otto to stop doing that as she said “*That’s enough now, darling.*” Sonya encourages Otto to have a good life, with or without him.

The several factors that led Otto to self-acceptance are interrelated. Positive interaction, role in the community, and past relationships all contribute to Otto's self-acceptance. He was able to appreciate himself and recover the meaning of life, which had been lost for a long time.

3.2. The obstacles that affect Otto’s self-acceptance

3.2.1. The loss of a loved one

The loss of a loved one is the greatest obstacle Otto feels in the process of self-acceptance. His wife's death raises a deep sense of grief and loss in himself. The feeling continues in everyday life that makes him suffer mental health issues by attempting to commit suicide several times. This obstacle has a significant influence in his life since she refuses to heal from her resentment. Otto feels that the hard times he's been through are one way to always remember his wife. Furthermore, he thinks that by committing suicide it will solve the problems he's faced and be with Sonya in an other world. he finds it difficult to accept the reality and leads himself to continuous decline.



Figure 7. Otto’s feelings for Sonya (01:09:57)

As shown in figure 7, Otto has great love for Sonya since she had such a big impact on his life. He said “*My life was black-and-white before I met Sonya.*” It shows that Otto's life before he met Sonya was meaningless, he tended to live without clear purposes. Their first meeting at the train station, sparked a new desire for Otto and a renewed motivation to have Sonya completely. Furthermore, Sonya holds an important place in his life. When he leaves, Otto's life will once again become meaningless. He had no enthusiasm for life, which led him to consider trying suicide multiple times. Thus, losing someone that an individual loves has a significant impact on a variety of factors, particularly on self-acceptance.

3.2.2. Self-isolation

Otto isolated himself from his surroundings after retiring from his job. He spends a lot of time at home, remembering his memories with Sonya. Sonya's things are still neatly arranged in their place. He didn't want to move the item so he felt Sonya's presence in his house. This certainly had a big influence on Otto's life, especially on his personality. He had difficulty communicating with other people and became a very sensitive person in various ways.



Figure 8. Otto’s sensitive behavior towards others (02:01)

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As shown in figure 8, Otto displays a sensitive attitude when other people try to interact and help him. He also has difficulty understanding other people's good intentions. The worker at the shop tried to be helpful by assisting Otto in cutting the rope, but he reacted negatively, saying *"Do you think I'm gonna cut myself and bleed all over your floor and sue you?"* This attitude certainly makes other people think that he is a grumpy old man. The self-isolation he carried out at home had a negative impact on his interactions with other people. Otto became more sensitive to small things and didn't want other people to interfere in his affairs. He wanted to relish the sense of solitude he felt alone.



Figure 9. Someone's mocking Otto (01:06:54)

Furthermore, as shown in figure 9, Otto becomes more sensitive when others mock him. He does not accept other people's words who mock him and brings up the problem with violent actions, as shown in figure 9. Otto thought that he didn't need to fix the problem with positive communication because he had undermined his self-esteem. This grumpy nature became a habit that Otto often carried out in his daily life so that many refused to associate with him. Thus, self-isolation has a very negative impact on an individual's personality and communication.

3.2.3. Traumatization

Otto has experienced past trauma in his life. The unexpected incident that caused him to lose his wife made this a bad experience that had an impact on his future life. This previous incident depressed him, and he attempted suicide multiple times. This is Otto's attempt to reject the realities of his life, which restricts his progress toward self-acceptance. He wishes to continue living in the shadow of the past because the person he loves lived during that time period. Furthermore, the

trauma led Otto to believe that he was to blame for his wife's death. He was unable to care for Sonya properly, consequently she died. Thus, terrible trauma restricts an individual's self-acceptance process.



Figure 10. Otto doesn't want to let go his memories of Sonya (01:22:00)

As shown in figure 10, when Marisol tries to give advice by describing the condition of his father who managed to move on from his wife's death, Otto becomes angry. Otto feels that this explanation influences the trauma that occurred in the past. He showed an angry attitude towards Marisol because Otto felt that everyone wanted him to forget Sonya. Otto doesn't want to forget Sonya at all in his life and Sonya is the only woman he loves in this world. Otto wants Sonya to live on in his memory.

The obstacles that Otto experiences towards the process of self-acceptance make him a different individual. Anger and sensitivity appear as a form of various obstacles that occur in his life. This obstacle hindered Otto's process of self-acceptance.

3.3. Community and social circumstances influenced Otto's self-acceptance process

Social interaction and encouragement from others had a positive impact on Otto's self-acceptance journey. The community around him, especially Marisol, plays an important role in providing the emotional support that Otto needs. Apart from that, interactions with other neighbors also have an influence on Otto's life as a form of finding meaning in the life he is living. Otto was able to find a purpose in life that had been lost when he often interacted with the people around him. Through this interaction, Otto's sensitive and grumpy nature slowly disappeared. He becomes someone who is able to respect others and also respect himself.

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Otto's community allowed him to express everything he felt. People in the community understand the feelings of loss and sadness that Otto has experienced since losing his wife. They allowed Otto to express the anger that was within him. Their role in this situation plays an important role in Otto's self-acceptance process. They can respect Otto's feelings without criticizing his actions. Otto became a person who bravely criticized other people if they acted outside the rules. Thus, the relationship that occurred between Otto and the community around him had a positive influence on the process of self-acceptance.



Figure 11. Otto's appreciation for Marisol (13:43)

At the end of the story in the movie *A Man Called Otto*, Otto has been able to find self-acceptance within himself. The end of the movie shows Otto's appreciation for Marisol as a good friend with whom he has a positive relationship, as shown in figure 11. The dialogue "My lawyer will give you access to my bank account." shows that Otto handed over the entire inheritance he had to Marisol as a form of appreciation. Otto also thanked Marisol for her presence which brought new meaning and purpose to his life. He was able to rediscover the happiness he had hidden for so long through his relationship with Marisol.



Figure 12. Love from Jimmy (01:56:39)

The people around him also realized that Otto's presence during his life also had a

positive influence on their lives. They expressed words of love to Otto as a form of thanks for his presence all this time. Thus, Otto became a person who was able to find self-acceptance and have a positive influence on those around him.

4. CONCLUSION

In Marc Forster's *A Man Called Otto*, Otto's self-acceptance is influenced by positive relationships with the people around him. Based on the analysis above, the researcher finds that there are various factors and obstacles in moving towards Otto's self-acceptance. This exploration allows the researcher to analyze these various factors and obstacles. The research results show that there are several factors that influence Otto's self-acceptance, including positive interactions, role in the community, and past relationships. Moreover, obstacles were found in Otto's self-acceptance process, including the loss of loved ones, self-isolation, and traumatization.

Additionally, this study analyzes self-acceptance that occurs within individuals. The current study is only limited to one character, namely Otto Anderson in the movie *A Man Called Otto* by Marc Forster. Furthermore, self-acceptance is a process through an individual's experiences and achievements. Self-acceptance is very important in determining individual well-being.

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