

**SOCIAL ANXIETY THROUGH THE EYES OF AUTISM SIBLINGS:
COMPARING *MY NAME IS KHAN* (2010) AND *RAIN MAN* (1988)**

A GRADUATING PAPER

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Degree in English Department



By:

Haidar Nushir Bi'aunillah

21101050020

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

FACULTY OF ADAB AND CULTURAL SCIENCES

STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF SUNAN KALIJAGA

YOGYAKARTA

2025

A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

I certify that this graduate paper is definitely my own work. I am completely responsible for the content of this graduating paper. Other researcher's opinion or finding included in this research is quoted or cited in accordance with ethical standards.

Yogyakarta, June 5th, 2025



Haidar Nushir Bi'aunillah
NIM: 21101050020

STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
SUNAN KALIJAGA
YOGYAKARTA



**KEMENTERIAN AGAMA REPUBLIK INDONESIA
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI SUNAN KALIJAGA
FAKULTAS ADAB DAN ILMU BUDAYA**

Jl. Marsda Adisucipto, Yogyakarta, 55281, Telp./Fax. (0274) 513949
Laman: <http://adab.uin-suka.ac.id> Surel: adab@uin-suka.ac.id

NOTA DINAS

Hal: Skripsi

a.n. *Haidar Nushir Bi'aunillah*

Kepada
Yth. Dekan Fakultas Adab dan Ilmu Budaya
Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga
di Yogyakarta

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Nama : Haidar Nushir Bi'aunillah
NIM : 21101050020
Program Studi : Sastra Inggris
Fakultas : Adab dan Ilmu Budaya
Judul Skripsi : **Social Anxiety Through the Eyes of Autism Siblings:
Comparing My Name Is Khan (2010) and Rain Man
(1988)**

kami menyatakan bahwa skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan pada sidang munaqosyah untuk memenuhi salah satu syarat memperoleh gelar Sarjana Sastra Inggris.

Atas perhatian Bapak Dekan, kami mengucapkan terima kasih.

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Yogyakarta, 4 Juni 2025

Dosen Pembimbing,

Danial Hidavatullah, SS., M.Hum.

NIP. 19760405 200901 1 016

APPROVAL



KEMENTERIAN AGAMA
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI SUNAN KALIJAGA
FAKULTAS ADAB DAN ILMU BUDAYA
Jl. Marsda Adisucipto Telp. (0274) 513949 Fax. (0274) 552883 Yogyakarta 55281

PENGESAHAN TUGAS AKHIR

Nomor : B-994/Un.02/DA/PP.00.9/06/2025

Tugas Akhir dengan judul : Social Anxiety Through the Eyes of Autism Siblings: Comparing My Name Is Khan (2010) and Rain Man (1988)

yang dipersiapkan dan disusun oleh:

Nama : HAIKAR NUSHIR BI'AUNILLAH
Nomor Induk Mahasiswa : 21101050020
Telah diujikan pada : Jumat, 30 Mei 2025
Nilai ujian Tugas Akhir : A

dinyatakan telah diterima oleh Fakultas Adab dan Ilmu Budaya UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta

TIM UJIAN TUGAS AKHIR



Ketua Sidang

Dr. Danial Hidayatullah, SS., M.Hum
SIGNED

Valid ID: 685280d5132a3



Penguji I

Dr. Witriani, S.S. M.Hum.
SIGNED

Valid ID: 685279019643c



Penguji II

Dr. Ulyati Retno Sari, S.S. M.Hum.
SIGNED

Valid ID: 685248842498



Yogyakarta, 30 Mei 2025
UIN Sunan Kalijaga
Dekan Fakultas Adab dan Ilmu Budaya
Prof. Dr. Nurdin, S.Ag., S.S., M.A.
SIGNED

Valid ID: 68527eb0b6d73

MOTTO

“As you start to walk on the way, the way appears.”

- Rumi



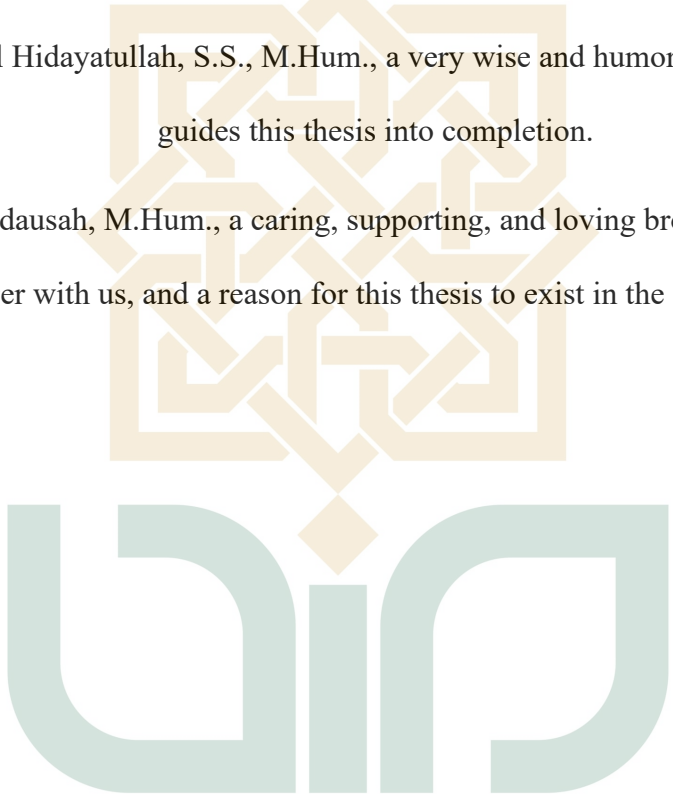
DEDICATION

This graduation thesis is dedicated to:

All lecturers of the English department, Faculty of Adab and Cultural Sciences,
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YOGYAKARTA

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Haidar Nushir Bi'aunillah
Student ID. 21101050020

SOCIAL ANXIETY THROUGH THE EYES OF AUTISM SIBLINGS:

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By: Haidar Nushir Bi'aunillah (21101050020)

ABSTRACT

The films *My Name Is Khan* (2010) and *Rain Man* (1988) depict the characters with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), which implies the existence of deficits in communication. These weaknesses suggest different adversity and social anxiety in societal communication, as these characters take a step in society, making the societal outcomes of each character different. To address the gap between individual and society, the first societal unit to be comprised is family, which, in specific of the narratives, is the sibling dynamics. Therefore, the perspective of the siblings is urged to be discussed, instead of only the autistic individuals. In analysing, social Anxiety by Stefan G. Hofmann and Patricia M. DiBartolo is used as the main theory in this research. It entails many specified terms, such as social withdrawal, social inhibition, social isolation, and fear of embarrassment, in which the symptoms are used to identify the occurrence of social anxiety. The research method used is descriptive qualitative method. In the descriptive presentation, the narrative and social phenomena in the forms of actions and dialogues are accounted for in this research. Finally, the result reveals that the isolations of Rizvan Khan and Raymond Babbitt differ, suggesting to be the reason for the distinction in societal outcomes. Moreover, while accounting for the communication deficit, the high intelligence of individuals with autism is revealed to help the communication, thus reducing the occurrence of social anxiety. Furthermore, the conclusion includes the exclusivity of inhibition and isolation as a result of the communication deficit of the individuals with autism. Lastly, social situation, such as societal freedom, and personal background, including autism severity, greatly determine how social anxieties occur.

Keywords: *Autism Sibling, Social Anxiety, Comparative Literature*

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ABSTRAK

Film *My Name Is Khan* (2010) dan *Rain Man* (1988) menceritakan karakter-karakter dengan Gangguan Spektrum Autis (ASD), yang menyiratkan adanya kekurangan dalam komunikasi. Kelemahan ini menunjukkan kesulitan dan kecemasan sosial yang berbeda dalam komunikasi masyarakat, karena karakter-karakter ini mengambil langkah dalam masyarakat, membuat hasil sosial dari setiap karakter berbeda. Untuk mengatasi kesenjangan antara individu dan masyarakat, unit masyarakat pertama yang harus diperhitungkan adalah keluarga, yang, secara khusus dalam narasi kedua film, adalah dinamika saudara kandung. Oleh karena itu, perspektif saudara kandung menjadi penting untuk didiskusikan, tidak hanya perspektif individu autis. Dalam menganalisis, Kecemasan Sosial oleh Stefan G. Hofmann dan Patricia M. DiBartolo digunakan sebagai teori utama dalam penelitian ini. Teori ini menyediakan banyak istilah khusus, seperti penarikan sosial, hambatan sosial, isolasi sosial, dan takut malu, di mana gejala-gejala tersebut digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi terjadinya kecemasan sosial. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah metode kualitatif deskriptif. Dalam penyajian deskriptif, naratif dan fenomena sosial dalam bentuk tindakan dan dialog diperhitungkan dalam penelitian ini. Akhirnya, hasilnya mengungkapkan bahwa isolasi Rizvan Khan dan Raymond Babbitt berbeda, yang menunjukkan alasan perbedaan dalam hasil sosial. Selain itu, sambil memperhitungkan defisit komunikasi, kecerdasan tinggi individu dengan autisme terungkap membantu komunikasi, sehingga mengurangi terjadinya kecemasan sosial. Lebih jauh, kesimpulannya mencakup eksklusivitas hambatan dan isolasi sebagai akibat dari defisit komunikasi individu dengan autisme. Akhirnya, situasi sosial, seperti kebebasan di masyarakat, dan latar belakang pribadi, termasuk tingkat keparahan autisme, sangat menentukan bagaimana kecemasan sosial terjadi.

Kata Kunci: *Saudara Kandung Autis, Kecemasan Sosial, Sastra Banding*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT	i
NOTA DINAS	ii
APPROVAL.....	iii
MOTTO	iv
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	vi
ABSTRACT.....	viii
ABSTRAK	ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
CHAPTER I.....	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Research	1
1.2 Research Questions	4
1.3 Objective of Study.....	5
1.4 Significance of Study.....	5
1.5 Literature Review.....	5
1.6 Theoretical Framework	7
1.6.1 Social Anxiety.....	7
1.6.2 Film Theory.....	9
1.7 Method	10
1.7.1 Type of Research.....	10

1.7.2	Data Sources.....	11
1.7.3	Data Collection Technique.....	11
1.7.4	Data Analysis Technique	11
1.8	Presentation	12
CHAPTER II.....		13
INTRINSIC ELEMENTS		13
2.1	Theme.....	13
2.2	Setting	15
2.3.1	Setting of Place	15
2.3.2	Setting of Time.....	17
2.3	Plot	21
2.3.1	Plots of <i>My Name Is Khan</i> (2010).....	21
2.3.2	Plots of <i>Rain Man</i> (1988).....	24
2.4	Character and Characterisation	26
2.4.1	Major Characters in <i>My Name Is Khan</i> (2010).....	27
2.4.2	Minor Characters in <i>My Name Is Khan</i> (2010).....	29
2.4.3	Major Characters in <i>Rain Man</i> (1988).....	31
2.4.4	Minor Characters in <i>Rain Man</i> (1988).....	33
CHAPTER III		35
ANALYSIS		35
3.1	The Coexistence of Autism and Social Anxiety in Individuals	35
3.2	Incidental Outcomes of Savant in Autistic Communication.....	50
3.3	The Impact of Being Around Autism: A Brother's Perspective	60

CHAPTER IV	67
CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION	67
4.1 Conclusion	67
4.2 Suggestion	67
BIBLIOGRAPHY	68



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Rizvan, Zakir, and their mother are going out of a building	15
Figure 2.2 A tram is going through the street	16
Figure 2.3 A flight information board	17
Figure 2.4 Establishing a context of historical riot	18
Figure 2.5 A TV showing the 9/11 incident news	19
Figure 2.6 An old TV playing the show "The People's Court"	20
Figure 2.7 Rizwan does his prayer.....	28
Figure 2.8 Charlie tries to persuade Raymond to come with him	31
Figure 2.9 Raymond is reading a phone book	33
Figure 3.1 Rizvan is sitting in an airport bench while writing in a book.....	36
Figure 3.2 Rizvan is running away from a crowd	40
Figure 3.3 Raymond is sitting at the end of a bed	44
Figure 3.4 Raymond is walking at the front of Charlie's car.....	46
Figure 3.5 Young Rizvan is bullied by his peers	52
Figure 3.6 Raymond is being driven away by a stranger	55
Figure 3.7 Zakir's last face-to-face interaction with his mother.....	62
Figure 3.8 Raymond is told to be quiet in a coarse manner	64

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

My Name Is Khan (2010) and *Rain Man* (1988) both portray characters with autism. These characters are depicted as being forced to step into society despite their clearly visible communication deficit of their autistic traits. This leads to contradiction, as socialisation, specifically, communication is needed to fit in the society. Despite this similarity, the result of these autistic characters regarding their social life is different. As shown in the films, one of the autistic characters happens to be more successful in society and dealing with social anxiety than the other, and that is Rizvan Khan from the film *My Name Is Khan* (2010). This goes to show that, although with a similar start, the outcomes of social life and social anxiety may differ from one person to another, and that urges this study to compare the two films.

Considering the side of sociality of the autistic individuals, family is argued to be the foundation of society, making its role the most pivotal and crucial part of society (Shrivastava et al., 2015, p. 101). As shown in both films, the only existing familial relationship is the sibling relationship as the films tell the story of siblings that consists of an autistic person and a neurotypical person. These premises necessitate not only accounting for the perspective of the autistic individuals but also the perspective of their neurotypical brothers.

In relation to the condition that the characters possess, autism is a term of disorder or illness referring to the disabilities in neurology and development of a

human being (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, pp. 50–51). The symptoms of this disorder are seen in the unique and different behaviours, characteristics, and even abilities (compared to a normal person), which leads to deficit in communication and interaction in society. Some of the characteristics of people with autism are difficulty in communication, difficulty in learning, and intellectual difficulties (Plaza-diaz et al., 2021, p. 2). Depending on the severity of the disorder, people with autism may live their lives normally if they have mild autism or dependently (needing a caregiver constantly) if they have severe/profound autism (Peterson et al., 2024, p. 24). This goes to show that autism is a complex disorder that has a large spectrum and therefore, is called autism spectrum disorder (ASD) (Mikhail et al., 2024, p. 48270).

One of the few things to raise society's awareness regarding autism is through media such as films. In line with that, the representations of autism in media such as films are increasing, and they strengthen the existence of autism itself in society as a whole. Furthermore, there are other concerns relating to the representation of autism in filmic industry. They are the concerns of the accuracy portrayed and the potential stereotype and labelling of the community of autism. "Savant" stereotype has been labelled to the concept of autism, and the film industry is now trying to portray more varied representations of autism (Dean & Nordahl-Hansen, 2021).

Arguably, the most prevalent phenomenon in societal communication is social anxiety. It occurs in everyday life frequently, and it is evidenced by the fear of social activities and situations that involve other people in society. Social anxiety

can have mild, moderate, or severe effects. While some social anxiety sufferers only experience symptoms during particular situations, such as giving a performance in front of an audience or dining with others, others can have symptoms during any kind of social interaction (Beidel et al., 2014, p. 917). Using this ground, then how does social anxiety occur also in an autistic person? Is the social anxiety of an autistic person any different, considering their communication deficit? And how does autism affect the surrounding people? Can the sibling of an autistic person receive social anxiety complicitly?

Leitenberg (1990, p. 1) asserts that social anxiety is an uncomfortable feeling that is produced by uneasiness, self-awareness, and emotional distress in any kind of social situation. To add to that, the nature of social anxiety is argued to wrap around the state of fear that a person feels to be incompetent, or lacking in some way. This thinking is based on a related argument saying that people who undergo social anxiety want to make a good impression on the other participants but feel that they would fail in doing so (Schlenker & Leary, 1982, p. 642). Additionally, it is humanly conventional to be afraid of being looked at weirdly or even rejected socially. Almost everyone in the world has faced social anxiety at any point in their time (Leitenberg, 1990, p. 1).

As presented in both *My Name Is Khan* (2010) and *Rain Man* (1988), the autism sibling relationship is already an intriguing concept to be studied. Furthermore, both films show social anxiety in autistic persons that is different. These differences are suggested to be caused by the contrasts in social situation, personal background, and so on and so forth. Aside from that, the cultural difference

can be perceived clearly even with the settings of both films being the same. This happens because Khan is a migrant who comes from a different country, and Raymond is a native citizen. These phenomena drive the researcher to compare the two films.

All in all, the relationships of autistic persons are quite complicated in and of themselves, and a must interaction that autistic persons go through is their interaction with their siblings. Because of their lack of communication and social skills, then autistic persons may have difficult times in social situations, which leads to social anxiety. Another interesting point to study these two films is the representation of intelligence on the side of autistic persons. The two films show that although the autistic persons have weaknesses in communication, they have magnificent intelligence that stands out from their characteristics.

Finally, Stefan G. Hofmann and Patricia M. DiBartolo (2010) put together a book concerning social anxiety. The book entitled *Social Anxiety: Clinical, Developmental, and Social Perspectives*, which they and others wrote, unfolds not only the definition and classifications of social anxiety, but also other intricacies such as causes, impacts, and others. Therefore, the theory is used to analyse and compare the existing social anxiety in the two unidentical films.

1.2 Research Questions

The researcher formulated these questions to conduct this research:

1. How does social anxiety occur in autistic persons and their neurotypical brothers complicitly in the films *My Name Is Khan* and *Rain Man*?

1.3 Objective of Study

This research has the objective of finding out how social anxiety occur in the relationship of autism siblings with two different pair of siblings that have different successfulness in the society using comparative method by basing the research on the theory of social anxiety by Stefan G. Hofmann and Patricia M. DiBartolo.

1.4 Significance of Study

This research is expected to contribute to the overall literature of social anxiety in the realm of cinema. The specification of social anxiety in autistic individuals further specifies the research, bringing forward a new combination of specified phenomena and a mental condition to the discussion. Furthermore, the focus in analysing sibling relationships gives specific that put emphasis to the importance of family as the first unit of society. Apart from all that, a unique concept arises: complicit social anxiety.

1.5 Literature Review

Conducted similar studies have been found by the researcher. One of them is an article from an international journal *Culture in the Frame of Multicultural Religiosity* published by International Proceedings of Nusantara Raya entitled *Cultural Conflict in "Alif Lam Mim" and "My Name is Khan" Movies* that is conducted by Endang Sartika, Sukma Laelatul Hida, Dewi Amalia Putri, Rahma Alia Anzani, and Siti Maesaroh (2022). This research study uses qualitative research method with semiotic approach and aims to analyse the cultural conflict in both movies. The result is the awareness that intercultural understanding is needed

to avoid cultural conflict and therefore maintaining peace in the world. The similarities between said study and our study lies in the same one object of film which is *My Name Is Khan*.

Another similar study is conducted by L.M Ikalyuk and O.V. Kuzmyn (2015) entitled *Psycholinguistic Characteristics of Autists and Their Prototypes in American Cinema Discourse (Based on the Films Rain Man and The Real Rain Man)*. This study uses analysis and synthesis methods and the method of psycholinguistic text analysis. The aim of this study is to analyse the main characteristics of people with autism by comparing between the renowned American Savant named Kim Peek, using the documentary film *The Real Rain Man* and his portrayal in the film *Rain Man* where the main character, Raymond Babbitt, is inspired by Kim Peek. This research is concluded with a statement that the portrayal of Kim Peek in the film *Rain Man* is far from accurate. Despite that, *Rain Man* still acts crucially in the mission of raising people's awareness regarding autism. In this case, the similarity is in the object of *Rain Man* film.

The last similar study to this research is entitled "*My Name is Khan and I am not a Terrorist*": *Representation of Muslims in 'My Name is Khan'* (2011). This study focuses on analysing how Muslims are presented in *My Name is Khan* using the theory of orientalism by Edward. In this study, the results are that Muslims are presented as "others" according to orientalism theory and the after-effect of 9/11 really makes Muslims suffer because they need to prove that they are innocence which is ironic. The similarity is again in the object of the study; the film *My Name*

is Khan. Although the topic of our study and this study is different, there may be several correlations such as the social difficulties described in both studies.

To gap the conducted research and the previous studies, it can be seen that the previous studies decided to research one object of the study whereas this research uses two objects of the study to be compared that broaden the scope of this research. Aside from that, the two previous studies do not concern in the aspect of autism whereas this research uses the concept of autism as a crucial topic to be discussed. Finally, this research uses the theory of social anxiety and in contrast, no previous studies do the same.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

1.6.1 Social Anxiety

This research uses social anxiety as its base theory, that are in line with a collaborative book entitled *Social Anxiety: Clinical, Developmental, and Social Perspectives* (2010) by Stefan G. Hofmann and Patricia M. DiBartolo. They stated in the introduction of the book that they made this book along with some of the most renowned theorists and researchers across several different fields of study.

One of the theorists, Daniel W. McNeil, wrote that social anxiety is simply the fear of social situations. He also described that social anxiety has an essential feature across all definitions, which is anxiety that is triggered by social or performance situations that leads to behavioural avoidance. From this definition alone, social anxiety is not quite exact and sounds ambiguous. Therefore, it is stated by Marks (in Hofmann & DiBartolo, 2010, p. 7) that specific phobias such as agoraphobia and other animal phobias are excluded from the spectrum. To further

specify and in line with the definitions, social anxiety is argued by Leitenberg (in Hofmann & DiBartolo, 2010, pp. 3–4) to have “external appearances” that lies under the term itself. Some of them are shyness, social phobia, avoidant personality disorder, fear of strangers, shame, embarrassment, public speaking anxiety, speech anxiety, social inhibition, and social timidity. Out of many mentioned external appearances, the researcher determined that five of them are able to represent social anxiety. They are social withdrawal, social inhibition, social isolation, and fear of embarrassment.

1. Social withdrawal is an act of withdrawing from a social situation in accordance to social relation deficiency and inability to engage in an interaction.
2. Social inhibition represents a feeling of inadequacy to convey something caused by being subjected to undesirable and feared social situations. In this situation, one may withstand the feeling with distress or even avoid the situation altogether.
3. Social Isolation implies a state of one’s social relations where there are not many people who are considered as a viable option (or none at all) to be partners to interact with. This state is also indicated by ostracism by the people around them and even the feelings of being left out, ignored, or excluded.
4. Fear of Embarrassment denotes the feeling of being afraid of being embarrassed, whether by someone else’s (close associate) or one’s own embarrassing action (Hofmann & DiBartolo, 2010; Leitenberg, 1990).

1.6.2 Film Theory

A broad branch of human knowledge with a catch of film or cinema as the form of media is a general perspective in defining film theory (Elsaesser & Hagener, 2015, p. 3). Film theory becomes crucial as a tool for the comprehension and understanding of filmic elements in this particular research's objects of study. Furthermore, as film theory offers many specific terminologies that are elaborated in the further discussion, the theory provides more in-depth elaboration of films as a work of art and history (Villarejo, 2007, pp. 10–11). The explained advantages of film theory suggest that the implementation, subsequently, strengthens the analysis of film itself. This is in line with the basic conceptions of the theory itself, which responds to propositions in the essence of the film, such as intricacies of film language (Villarejo, 2007, p. 133).

In understanding and analysing a film, a particular concept arises in the process. *Mise-en-scène*, a French-rooted word, is an action in which a film is visually constructed with all the intricacies (Kuhn & Westwell, 2012; Metz, 1991, p. 186; Villarejo, 2007, pp. 28–29). The concept functions for filmmakers as an act to decide on what to put in a shot of a film and how they are being delivered (Monaco, 2009). Villarejo (2007, p. 29) divides the concept into several parts, which are setting, lighting, wardrobe, cosmetics, actions of characters, and, fascinatingly, hair.

Hand in hand with *mise-en-scène*, the field of cinematography provides another perspective on analysing a film. Looking at it from the view of a filmic tool, camera, other factors are added to the equation (Villarejo, 2007, p. 36). The

movements of a camera, for instance, which refer to how the camera is moving when the shot is taken, come in varieties, such as panning movement; the camera moves vertically (Villarejo, 2007, p. 40). Depending on the movements, flexibility comes in the distance between the camera and the object of the shot. Meaning, they can change and stay without any problems. Furthermore, the distances are said to be in many kinds. From the farthest to the closest, there are extreme long shot, long shot, medium long shot, medium shot, medium close-up, close-up, and extreme close-up (Villarejo, 2007, p. 38).

1.7 Method

1.7.1 Type of Research

This study uses qualitative descriptive method to analyse two films, which are *My Name Is Khan* (2010) and *Rain Man* (1988). Qualitative is a method that presents text and imagery, conversing from its contrast, quantitative, which presents numerical research. It is used predominantly to discuss about social phenomena and narrative which is perfect in tackling this research's objects and topic (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Aside from that, the researcher uses the comparative approach which refers to the comparison between two different objects that are usually differs in social environment and cultural context (Esser & Vliegthart, 2017, p. 2). In this research, comparative is used to address the difference that the objects of the research offer, particularly in the different culture, personal background, and the societal outcomes.

1.7.2 Data Sources

The data sources of this research are divided into two, which are primary and secondary data. The primary data is in the form of qualitative audiovisual and digital materials which consists of actions and dialogues that shows social anxiety experienced by the total of four characters (two from the film *My Name Is Khan* and the other two from the film *Rain Man*). The actions and dialogues are in the form of interaction between Rizvan Khan and Raymond Babbitt with their siblings, Zakir Khan and Charles Babbitt, or even with the society. The secondary data is acquired in the form of journal articles and books that would support the analysis of the primary data. The varieties in data sources suggest that the research employs triangulation which suggests validation in analysis.

1.7.3 Data Collection Technique

To collect, the researcher uses qualitative audiovisual and digital materials technique in regards to the objects of the research being films. In this technique, the researcher watches the films *My Name Is Khan* and *Rain Man*. While watching, the researcher takes and picks every scene that shows social anxiety in the form of practices and discourses using the theory of social anxiety by Stefan G. Hofmann and Patricia M. DiBartolo. Aside from that, the researcher also collects other academic writings such as articles and books to help the research.

1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis phase is done by the researcher firstly by identifying the variables of social anxiety by Stefan G. Hofmann and Patricia DiBartolo, which are social withdrawal, social inhibition, social isolation, and fear of embarrassment.

Secondly, the researcher links the variables to the data taken from the characters. In presenting the data in the analysis, hand-coding technique is used. It refers to the action of categorising the analysis in few parts and marking these categories with names (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

From those films, there are four total characters, consisting of two pairs of siblings with one of the characters from each siblings having autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), that are analysed. These characters are Rizvan Khan and Zakir Khan from the film *My Name Is Khan* (2010) and Raymond Babbitt and Charles Babbitt from the film *Rain Man* (1988). In detail, social anxiety in the eyes of autism is seen from Rizvan Khan and Raymond Babbitt, who suffers from ASD and the social anxiety that occurs complicitly is analysed from their brothers, Zakir Khan and Charles Babbitt. Moreover, the mise-en-scène of the data is also analysed, considering the data come from films. Lastly, the researcher applies the secondary data to further strengthen the analysis and conclude them altogether as the result of the research.

1.8 Presentation

There are four chapters in this research study. The first one is an introduction that describes background of the study, research questions, objective of the study, significance of the study, literature review, theoretical framework, and research method. The second chapter analyses the intrinsic element in the object of the study. Findings and discussions are in the third chapter and it concludes the analyses of social anxiety in both object of study. The last chapter talks about conclusion of the study and suggestion for further studies.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

4.1 Conclusion

Four out of four analysed characters have shown that they experience social anxiety. In detail, inhibition and isolation are depicted equally by both characters with ASD, which can be concluded to be associated with the traits of ASD they possess. On the side of their brothers, they feel complicit uncomfortableness around the autistic brothers, whether it is withdrawal or fear of embarrassment. Furthermore, in comparison, there are two factors that differentiate the individuals with ASD in society. They are the severity of the condition and the value of freedom. Both play a pivotal role in the types, intensities, and frequencies of experienced social anxiety. In addition, as the analysed characters possess a high intelligence, this trait influences their sociality as it provokes further interaction regardless of the positivity or negativity the interaction.

4.2 Suggestion

Moreover, it needs to be noted that this research is limited to the filmic and cinematography realm of cinema. Although results and discussion may relate and be used in every other research regarding social anxiety and ASD in said realm. Finally, the researcher suggests that every analysis and discussion in regard to this research's limitation and weakness are needed to further dive into the fields of social anxiety, ASD, and cinema.

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