

From Dread to Fulfilment: A Study of Existential Angst and Personal Growth

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Abstract

*Existential angst, the profound sense of unease stemming from questions about life's meaning and purpose, is fundamental to human existence. The current study explores the depths of existential angst through an interdisciplinary lens, encompassing philosophy, psychology, sociology, and literature. The study investigates how the protagonist in Paulo Coelho's novel, *Adultery*, grapples with existential questions, highlighting individuals' disturbing yet transformative journey in their quest for happiness and fulfilment. In examining the protagonist's character, this research underscores the timeless message that it's never too late to unearth life's essence and strive to make it more meaningful. It illuminates the crucial roles of love and the pursuit of passion as powerful catalysts for personal growth and self-discovery. Through the protagonist's experiences, the study serves as a source of inspiration, conveying that individuals can bring positive change to their lives by shedding the meaningless and embracing love, peace, and self-redemption, recognizing their miraculous existence in the grand scheme of creation. Moreover, this research invites future scholars to delve deeper into the complexities of existential angst in fictional characters and real-life individuals. It opens doors for psychoanalytical studies and further exploration of strategies to address existential angst. Ultimately, this study transcends the boundaries of fiction to offer profound insights into the human condition and the enduring search for purpose and fulfilment.*

Keywords: Existential Angst, Self-redemption, Self-discovery, Psychoanalytic Study.

Introduction

Existentialism is as much a literary phenomenon as a philosophical one. It talks about fundamental problems of human existence: death, anxiety, sexual commitment, freedom and responsibility and particularly the meaning of existence itself (Priest & Jean, 2001), whereas angst is a German word which means "anxiety or fear" but in existential philosophy, it has attained a more peculiar sense of having anxiety or fear as a result of the dichotomous implications of human exemption. The dual problems of constant choices and responsibility to back those choices or preferences can produce angst. Existential angst is the relation to one being aware of the possibility that life lacks meaning, causing extreme anxiety and a feeling of despair or hopelessness.

Moreover, existential angst, or existential anxiety or dread, is a term used in philosophy and psychology to describe a profound and often distressing sense of unease, anxiety, or uncertainty about the fundamental aspects of human existence. This existential unease typically revolves around questions related to the meaning and purpose of life, the inevitability of death, and the individual's place in the universe. Existentialist philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Søren Kierkegaard explored these themes extensively. They argued that existential angst arises when individuals confront human existence's inherent ambiguity and absurdity. It often occurs when

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people grapple with questions such as: What is the meaning of life? What is my purpose in life? Do our choices and actions have any significance in the grand scheme?

Various life events, such as significant transitions, personal crises, or moments of introspection, can trigger existential angst. It may lead to feelings of anxiety, despair, and a sense of existential isolation. However, some existentialist thinkers argue that confronting this anxiety can also be an opportunity for personal growth and self-discovery. By grappling with these profound questions, individuals may find a path towards authenticity, self-fulfillment, and a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in the world. It's important to note that existential angst is a normal part of the human experience, and many people confront these questions at some point in their lives. It can catalyze personal reflection and philosophical exploration, ultimately leading to a more meaningful and fulfilling life.

Over time, research in the field of existential angst encompasses a wide range of interdisciplinary studies, drawing from philosophy, psychology, sociology, and other fields. The focus is primarily on exploring the nature, causes, and consequences of existential angst, characterized by profound existential questions and the emotional distress associated with them. Philosophers have long explored existential angst, particularly existentialist thinkers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. They examine the philosophical implications of existential questions, such as the meaning of life, freedom, and the absurdity of existence. Psychologists have delved into the psychological aspects of existential angst, examining how deeply it is related to mental health, well-being, and coping mechanisms. Sociologists investigate how existential, cultural, and societal factors influence angst. They explore how different cultures and societies address existential questions and how this impacts individuals' experiences of angst.

While significant research has been conducted in the field of existential angst, there remains a notable gap in understanding how, in a modern and technologically advancing world where mental health, diversity and acceptance have been given primary importance, people are still exposed to new existential questions of identity and meaning of human existence. To fill that gap in the existing knowledge, the current study explores existential angst as a multi-dimensional aspect of human life that needs to be addressed through all philosophical, psychological and sociological areas of existence. The study will analyze the protagonist of the novel *Adultery* by Paulo Coelho to uncover the reasons that lead human beings to question the purpose of their life and the choices they make to find meaning and fulfillment. It will also highlight the protagonist's mental state when she struggles to find meaning in her life. The study is significant as the fictitious characters accurately reflect the human struggles and quest for meaning in contemporary society. Moreover, it will help uncover the importance of obscure, underlying and hidden facets of life and provide the evidence to prove that love is the essence of one's life. The protagonist's character will be analyzed with the lens of Kierkegaard's theory of existentialism.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the present study is to explain why and how every individual experiences existential angst at some point in their life and to uncover ways to overcome it.

Research Objectives

- To analyze the segmental changes in the protagonist's life caused by existential angst.
- To explore and understand the role and implications of love/passion in human life as depicted in the novel.

Research Questions

1. How does the author reveal that every individual experiences existential angst through characterization in *Adultery*?
2. How does the protagonist navigate her way out of existential angst?

Significance of the Study

This study highlights the importance of love and the quest for passion by considering the protagonist's life. It reveals disturbed and unhappy people going out of their way to pursue happiness and thrills in their dull lives. By providing a detailed analysis of the protagonist's character, this research established that it's never too late to realize life's true essence and work for it to make it better and worth living. It will also highlight the valuable role of love and the quest for passion. This study will turn out to be a source of inspiration for ordinary people that they can bring positive changes in their lives by letting go of what doesn't make any sense in their lives and seeking love, peace and redemption in nature and themselves because they are the miraculous creation of God. The research also provides the path for further researchers to delve deep into the effects of existential angst in individuals and explore several ways to counter it in fictional characters and the psychoanalytical study of human beings.

Literature Review

In this section, the researchers have reviewed the literature already present in the field of work to identify the gap this study aims to fill. The novel *Adultery* has been explored from multiple angles using different theoretical frameworks. Azizah Nurhayati, in her research article, analyzed the forms of repression and denial found in the protagonist, Linda, when she was going through a rough patch in her life. This research applied psychoanalysis as a theoretical framework and discussed the id, ego and superego phases in Linda's life. She established that the main character was dominated by her superego by the novel's end, even though, at first, her id had taken control of her mind completely. The domination of the id led her to commit adultery (Nurhayati, 2017).

Moreover, she asserts that Linda had repression and denial as her ego's defense mechanisms, initially to cope with her situation. Repression and denial are evident through her dialogues and behavior towards everyone and everything. Although at first, she was afraid, bored and depressed with her marriage and her lustful desires, in the end, her personality achieves balance again. Psychoanalysis helps identify the form of instincts and patterns of personality conflicts in human beings (Nurhayati, 2017). These conflicts appear from the struggle between id, ego, and superego. The id is a pleasure seeker without any contact with reality. The dissatisfactory feeling in this phase may lead to an imbalance of the human personality, as seen in Linda's character (Minderop, 2010). Similarly, in 2015, another researcher talked about the psychological aspects acting as catalysts in changing the insight of the protagonist, Linda, about her marriage and family. Her depressed and bored mental state causes her to make irrational decisions, and how she becomes an unconventional woman all of a sudden and is ready to cross all limits to reignite the love and passion missing in her married life (Sharma, 2015).

Another research explores *adultery* within the dynamics of women's psyche by taking into account Linda's character and her journey from being a disturbed, bored individual committing adultery in pursuit of passion to the one who resolves all her issues and gets back to normal. The research explored the sub-conscious levels of Linda's mind to trace her evolution over time. The researchers have analyzed Linda's character with the help of Freud's levels of ego defense mechanisms. The researcher talks about her struggles in her phase of repression and asserts that it's the conflict between her conscious and unconscious mind that doesn't let her settle. However, when she realizes that her family is the thing that matters and their love is the

pure love she is craving, she reaches the sublimation stage, i.e., being back to normal (John, 2022).

The works mentioned above have analyzed the novel *adultery* in the light of psychoanalysis, studied the connection between the mind and personality of the protagonist, and asserted that the id, ego, and super-ego are at play; the id's dominance cause trouble while restoring the supremacy of the superego help Linda get back to normal. The current study will explore this novel with a new dimension of existential angst in not only the protagonist but also the other supporting characters, as *adultery* has so far been examined through the lens of psychoanalysis, and the previous research has not focused on the meaninglessness of a stagnant life that most characters face in the novel. The researcher evaluates how every individual faces existential angst at some point. This research will also shed light on the role of love in taking out the protagonist of her existential angst and how love redeems her at the end of the novel.

Research Methodology

The study employs textual analysis as a research method. The data has been analyzed in light of Soren Kierkegaard's theory of existentialism. After close reading, the researchers have taken into account the characters and chunks relevant to the topic from the text.

Theoretical Framework

The researchers have taken two postulates from *the theory of existentialism* by Soren Kierkegaard as a theoretical framework of this research that he states in his work *the concept of anxiety: a simple psychologically orienting deliberation on the dogmatic issue of hereditary sin* published in 1844. Soren Kierkegaard was a 19th-century Danish philosopher known as the father of existentialism. His philosophy had an immense influence over the 20th century's developing existentialism and post-modernism.

The following are chosen postulates from the theory:

Angst and Dread

Kierkegaard held that it is spiritually crucial to recognize that one experiences not only a fear of specific objects but also a fear of general apprehension, which is called dread. He interpreted it as God's way of calling each individual to commit a personally valid way of life. Kierkegaard understands anxiety (angst) to be both the attraction to and the repulsion from the nothingness of future possibilities. Thus, anxiety is not simply a psychological state, mood or feeling but is an ontological structure essential to human beings and the mark of human freedom (Kierkegaard, 1844).

Pathos (passion)

To decipher the absolute, the mind must radically empty itself of objective content. The desire for absolute support is radical emptying. Kierkegaard names this desire Pathos (Passion). Passion is closely aligned with faith in Kierkegaard's thought. When linked with love, faith drives humans to seek reality and truth in a transcendent world, although intellectual facts do not favor it. To live and die for a belief, to stake everything one has and is in the belief in something that has a higher meaning than anything in the world, is belief and passion at their highest (Kierkegaard, 1844).

The researcher aims to apply this theoretical framework to the novel *Adultery's* characters (mainly the protagonist). The researcher tends to locate instances of fear of loss and boredom that cause anxiety in the chosen novel's characters and their journey to find passion.

Data Analysis

Paulo Coelho has artistically highlighted human miseries in his novels. To fulfil the research objectives and answer the research questions, the researchers will analyze his novel *Adultery* in light of Soren Kierkegaard's selected postulates of the theory of existentialism.

Dread and Angst

“Every morning, when I open my eyes to the so-called new day, I feel like closing them again, staying in bed, and not getting up. When I open my eyes to this ideal life that everyone dreams of having but few achieve, I know the day will be a disaster” (Coelho, 2014).

This opener describes her mental state. She is clearly leading a meaningless life; she does not find any good reason to get off her bed every morning. She constantly feels that her life lacks purpose. She is evidently experiencing dread and angst despite having an ideal life. She wants to do something different, but then, at the same time, she is afraid of change. She knows adventure is dangerous but feels routine is more lethal. Waking up every morning, making breakfast for her family and going to work, then doing the same tasks at work every day and coming back home to make dinner for her family and to put her kids to bed, she questions what all her life is about. Or is that all she needs from life? She feels troubled and anxious about her daily grind. She constantly fights to find the meaning of her existence; she feels she is wasting her life “wasting the best years of my life in a pattern that will be repeated over and over until I die” (Coelho, 2014).

She did not want to ruin the blissful environment in order to feed her inner monster who was craving for some adventure. When she commits adultery, she gives herself justifications that she needed it all this time and only a new man can change her miserable life into something worth living but this did not help her either and she was still afraid because she knew “how easy it is to ruin everything” (Coelho, 2014). It felt like she had fallen into a rut and now she is furnishing it. She is destroying her family life. She feels that she is in an inescapable trap. That trap can be her own thoughts and frustrations but she cannot fight them neither can she turn a back on them. All she can do is to stay silent and remain patient because that is what mature people are supposed to do. It's like putting on a mask and hiding your true identity and letting yourself die on the inside but hiding your true self and suppressing your true desires. It is highly painful but society has set the standards for the individuals and now they have to follow them throughout their lives and have to die with the same standards contrary to what their heart says “we're leading dull, unadventurous lives and yet we feel obliged to repress our emotions and our desires, because they don't fit with what we call maturity” (Coelho, 2014).

She is questioning the norms of the society and the way people are supposed to live their lives. She wonders why people never object to these worn-out lifestyles, what they want in life, growing up, getting good jobs, getting married, have kids and then work for their comfortable and luxurious life and continuing this practice for the rest of their lives, is that what they truly want? Why aren't they fed up with pretending to be someone they are not. Why don't they take a break from the hustle of life? Why are people pretending to be happy or they really are happy and she's the only one unsatisfied with her apparently perfect life?

She feels that she is leading a futile, “pointless existence” (Coelho, 2014). Then she realizes that it's not only her who feels this way but every other person she meets is facing existential angst. When every morning she sees her neighbour washing and polishing his car himself despite being able to afford a servant for such petty chores, she realizes that he did not have anything worth doing in his mornings so he chooses to wash his car in order to show the world that his existence is not useless he still is doing something and pretends that this is the most

important task one can come up with in the morning “a clean car won’t change the world, but this morning, it is the only thing my neighbour cares about” (Coelho, 2014).

Similarly, conversation with Jacob strengthens her belief that she is not the only one who is wretched here but deep down every single being is busy pretending to be happy. Jacob acts like he is an independent, complete and satisfied man in front of everyone including his wife, but when he meets Linda, he opens his heart to her because he notices the same restlessness in her eyes, he thinks that she might be able to understand his exasperations. Jacob’s confession “I have everything a man could dream of, but I’m not happy” (Coelho, 2014) reveals that he too has an ideal life just like Linda. As the protagonist looks at her past and feels that her past was much brighter than her present similarly, Jacob too was praising his happening past in his head. He feels a sense of saudade and nostalgia and “his eyes have a vacant look as he gazes back at the past” (Coelho, 2014), his life had taken such drastic changes and then became a stagnant pool once and for all, where no waves ever generate and nothing changes. Linda realizes every person she tries to interact with seems to be wounded by their inner beast who does not let them live peacefully with what they got but constantly push them to add some spice to their life and to pursue something new. Even her ideal husband is not happy, who never in his life complained about anything. While talking to him in his drunken state she gets to know “Adventure. His only wish was adventure.” (Coelho, 2014) Linda realizes that even he is not enjoying his life to the fullest, he too is drowned in the ocean of responsibilities. A free man fastened by so many strings.

He wanted to sell everything and buy a boat and travel across the world to meet new people every day and experience life from a totally different prospective where there are no responsibilities, no nine to five duties, no dinner commitments and no fake laughter at the cocktail parties, where you do not need to pretend to be polite and decent every second every minute. He feels extremely sad that he couldn’t fulfil his dreams and had to live a life where you cannot survive without pretending. His stance “deep down there’s a voice telling me: none of this makes sense.” (Coelho, 2014) shows that this way of living does not make sense to him. He is of the view that “time continues to pass. Often, for no apparent reason, [we] feel an immense dread” (Coelho, 2014) we have engaged ourselves and now we are nothing better than a terrified prisoner.

Passion

Along with angst and dread; the quest for passion is visible in the novel as well. Linda after having a realization that she doesn’t want to lead a sad life like her husband and Jacob, decides that she will seek passion and will break the monotonous shackles of life. She questions herself “what exactly is missing in [her] life? (Coelho, 2014). She had a loving caring husband and she married him because she loved him a lot and she knew that he is the man she can spend the rest of her life with and he will never let her regret her decision because he is the best in every way possible. Despite that she feels anxiety and burden which she cannot cope up with anymore. She tries to figure out what exactly is the problem that living with a true gentleman is not making her happy internally and she feels as if there is a conflict between her body and soul. She wonders that has she stopped loving him after so many years of marriage? Is he no more appealing to her? Is she losing interest in him? But then she derives a conclusion that she still loves her husband but she is bored because their marriage is old and they do not surprise each other anymore. They already know everything about each other. There is nothing new and challenging, no spark and passion anymore. “It has more to do with boredom, with lack of passion for life, with a shortage of challenges. It’s a combination of factors” (Coelho, 2014). She understands she needs novelty, newness and sort of renovation to her dull life. She realizes that she never takes any risks in her life. She always eats in the same restaurant and orders same dishes. She has lost the habit of trying and asking for something new, she wears same

sophisticated designer clothes to look all decent and maintain her stature as a dignified journalist, graceful mother and an elegant wife which is kind of boring for her because the colourful person inside her dies a little when she pretends to be a refined woman. She has made herself dull by leading a monotonous life and not taking risks and by not being passionate at all for anything in her life. Now she feels frustrated and she questions the meaning of her existences because she is at a stage where she regrets all her decisions and all she wants is to live rest of her life passionately no matter if she isn't happy but at least she would have spark, thrill and passion. She is determined that she doesn't have "slightest interest in being happy. [she] prefer[s] to live life passionately" (Coelho, 2014).

In the name of adventure, first, she tries feeding her lust. She knows that she likes being with her husband and she regards his civility but she thinks that he is not a great help when it comes to living a passionate life. She thinks that her married life is monotonous and an extra marital affair will spice it up. "I always loved him and always will- but our life together is verging on monotony. Love can withstand this, but for lust, it's fatal" (Coelho, 2014).

She wanted to go out of the way to prove to herself that she is free and independent and she can do whatever she feels like doing and at the end of her life she won't be among the people who keep on saying that they have wasted their precious lives because they did not do what they could have done because they were afraid. She was also afraid of losing her family and loved ones but at the same time lack of change was depressing her soul and she wanted to try something new so she intimates "flirting with forbidden is what makes life interesting" (Coelho, 2014). When she returns Jacob's kiss for the first time; she feels that it was all she ever wanted. She felt that she is in another world where there is only pleasure and there is no room for anxieties and frustrations. She celebrates something new and out of the way in her life. "I did something I've never done before, and that in itself has begun to break down the walls imprisoning me" (Coelho, 2014).

She feels happy that she has done something out of her routine, she feels glad that she has finally shown some courage to break the rules and tried to reach the unreachable or rather forbidden in her case. The other reason she feels happy about is that she broke the rules and nothing horrible happened to her, nobody knew about her indiscretion and everything was going the way it was going earlier. She feels better and braver as if someone has untied her from all the strings she'd been carrying around. She feels free. She feels like a new person who is "once again mistress of [her] own thoughts and actions" (Coelho, 2014). She claims that she "feel[s] better and better, braver, freer" (Coelho, 2014).

She feels as all her problems have vanished away and she has a purpose in life again. She has a goal to conquer a man's heart. A man whom she loved in her teen years, a man who was her unrequited love. As soon as she makes out with him, old flames start burning again and she feels as if she has fallen in love with him all over again and she cannot back off this time because this time he showed up as a magic solution to all her anxieties. She feels as if she is sired to him. He's the only one who has the charisma to feed and nourish her inner monster. She feels out of this world when she is with him as if she is drenched in the waves of pleasure. "All my feelings of impotence, fragility, failure, and insecurity are replaced by one of immense euphoria" (Coelho, 2014).

That euphoric feeling doesn't last long as she realises, he treats her like a prostitute. She feels happy while being with him but as soon as she leaves for home, she feels that she is insulting herself being with a man who treats her like a toy to fulfil his physical desires and nothing else. She was being passionate and adventurous, pursuing the man of her dreams but when she noticed that he did not want the same and is going to spend rest of his life with his wife she again feels what was there before: anxiety, frustration, fear, boredom and at the top of it, meaninglessness. She was again a hopeless mess submerged in loneliness and despair then she realizes that she was seeking change and passion but instead she ended up running after

fantasies and nurturing her inner monster. She feels ashamed of herself that she's been lying to her husband all this time and committing adultery. She was guilt-ridden because in spite of knowing that she's been cheating on him; her husband did not take any severe action and waited for her to take a wise decision because he was truly in love with her and his attitude made her realize what true love looks like. It's not selfish but lies in the happiness and satisfaction of your beloved. Her husband understands her position instead of judging and criticizing her. He only wishes for her happiness, comfort and peace of mind "when I looked up there was a single outstretched hand: my husband's" (Coelho, 2014).

She realizes in the time of distress he was the only one present by her side. His love makes her realize that true passion comes with true love and not by giving in to your lustful desires. It helped her to leave everything behind and return back to her husband and try to regain what she had lost: her respect and honour. With her husband's support she was again able to stand with her head up in front of the world.

Her bitter experience with Jacob was like a wakeup call as if he just shook the dust off of her. With every passing day she discerns that her husband's love for her is pure and it will help her get rid of her unreasonable wish for petty adventures. Moreover, she realises what's purer than her husband's love is the love of God and the love of nature because by loving God and his nature one can understand the importance of his/her being. When one deviates from the path which leads towards God and which abstain human beings by acting upon the will of God then their destruction starts, they lose the meaning of their existence and all they feel in life is dread and angst. Nothing intrigues them and they experience the absence of passion which causes extreme dissatisfaction. Linda admits it all. "Ever since we've moved away from God, we live[d] in a fragmented existence. We try to find oneness, but don't know the way back; thus, we are in a state of constant dissatisfaction" (Coelho, 2014).

She tries to strengthen her connection with God. She tries to stay close to nature as well, while being in the air on her paragliding trip, she had no control over her body, she was moving with the pressure of air, she was unable to resist anything at that time and she felt as if all her worries have disappeared and she is just like a new born baby and as protected as a fetus in the womb of the mother. She felt safe and complete. Her burdens were taken off of her shoulders and she was going on with the flow "putting up no resistance" (Coelho, 2014). She feels as if she is floating in eternity and nature is speaking to her and telling her that she has an importance that she is special and beautiful with all her flaws, she should love herself because God has created her and God never creates junk. She feels as if nature is making her realize that she is running after wrong people and useless things and she should stop pursuing them and instead should love and concentrate on her dear ones who love her no matter what she does in her life. Nature was giving her strength and courage to rebuild her life and better than before this time. Her she has strength of mountains, calm of lakes and the sun's shine "my mind has left my body and blended with nature" (Coelho, 2014).

When she lands after paragliding over snow covered mountains, she becomes a new person who knows what to do with the rest of her life because nature played its role as a guide and a healing agent, it made her realize the importance of the hidden facets of life. She observes that all the emotions she wasn't able to feel for the long time are returning back to her. She is able to breathe freely once again and this time not running after lustful desires but by realizing the true meaning and essence of life, that is to love and love abundantly. To love yourself, love nature and to love God. She feels a huge burden has been taken off of her limbs. She finds peace in the arms of the mother nature. She feels joyous "blood is returning to parts that were blocked by emotions that are finally beginning to dissolve" (Coelho, 2014).

She experiences that love and only love is the way out when you are soaked in the storm of anxieties and pointlessness and only love can change a man nothing else has the power to alter

a person's personality. Nothing other than love can do so "wisdom and experience don't change the man. Time doesn't change the man. The only thing that changes us is love" (Coelho, 2014). She admits that only love can introduce a person to the truth of his existence and one can feel remorse and then only love can provide courage to a person to rebuild what he has lost on his way to find out the answers of his being. Love takes away all the fears and anxieties. "those who know how to love Truth, rejoice with the truth, and do not fear it, because sooner or later it redeems everything" (Coelho, 2014).

Conclusion

The present section intends to answer the questions put forward by the study in the beginning by concluding the discussion in previous section in the light of Kierkegaard's postulates of existentialism. It provides an explanation of why and how every individual experience existential angst at some point in their life and uncovered the possible ways of getting out of it towards a better and fulfilled life.

Data analysis has shown that none of the characters of the novel were entirely happy and they felt anxious very often because they were living by other people's choices. Linda's husband was not living his dream because he had to support his family and give them luxurious and comfortable life. He wanted to fulfil their wishes so he sacrificed his own. He wanted to sell everything and buy a boat and travel the world but it wasn't possible for him because he was bound by the chains of his responsibilities and it has been revealed that he was not happy on the inside. It was simple things in life that he always craved for but couldn't do as he after-all had to lead a life according to the set standards of the society.

Just like him, Jacob also felt the heavy burden of existence as he too was not living the kind of life he wanted. He was a successful politician and the world has known him but he wasn't happy as well because he too was doing what other people expect him to do. He had to leave everything he used to enjoy for the sake of building other people's dream world. He had to continue with the profession he never liked and marry a woman he wasn't passionate about just because he had to give in to family and societal pressure.

Similarly, Linda the protagonist, according to the norms of society had a perfect life but she got frustrated by living a life which other people think is ideal. She felt afraid by taking any step out of the way to make herself happy because she always thought about others who are connected with her life. Despite wanting change and adventure she was terrified that she will end up ruining everything that she has. She was always more concerned about what others would think rather than listening to her own thoughts and emotions. Ultimately, suppressing her desires and maintaining composure at all times backfired and she went deep into the pit of existential angst.

We aren't who we want to be. We are what society demands. We are what our parents choose. We don't want to disappoint anyone; we have a great need to be loved. So, we smother the best in us. Gradually, the light of our dreams turns into the monster of our nightmares. They become things not done, possibilities not lived (Coelho, 2014).

Thus, after comprehensive data analysis it was found that living by other people's choices and ignoring your heart's desires over time cause existential angst and deep down every individual is facing existential angst no matter if they manage to put a façade and be cheerful all the time. The study has also found that the existential angst in one's life is inevitable when the world is too much with us and we get distant from God and His creations. It can only be overcome by having passion which helps a person strengthen the relationship with God and nature and by believing in love because love is the supreme power which heals everything and cause salvation and redemption of the living beings.

Power of love was observed as a life altering for the characters in the novel, especially the protagonist Linda. She felt that lack of passion in her married life is driving her astray. Lack of novelty in her and her husband's ways are causing boredom leading to meaninglessness. In the pursuit of sophistication, they have lost touch to their raw unfiltered selves that enjoyed adventure, risks and challenges. Linda feels that she has to travel through the tunnel of passion to find her purpose in life. Committing adultery was initially an attempt from her to seek out passion and adventure but soon she realized that it was a meek try to feed her lust. Later, when she finds herself in extreme guilt of cheating on her husband, he turns out to be kind and forgiving which for her was the definition of true love. That is when her bond with him gets strengthened. It gives her the first ray of hope amidst her existential dread.

She realizes that along with the love of human beings one needs to have the love for divine entity and its creation. One cannot find peace and purpose without having a love for God and being close to nature. She asserts that moving away from God and laws of nature can cause immense meaninglessness and loving God and his creation is the only thing that can cause man's salvation. She claims that returning to God and spending time in nature, doing simplest of the things made her realize that it takes very little to be happy and instead of going after what's forbidden and problematic one should appreciate the true love around them and value their loved ones.

Overall, the study revealed that living according to the rotten standards of society, distancing yourself from God and your faith and ignoring your own will can cause existential angst in human beings which can be overcome by seeking out true love and passion and emptying your mind of all that is unnecessary. Returning to God and loving his creation way forward to find greater meaning and purpose in life.

Suggestions and Recommendations

The current study has explored the novel *Adultery* in the light of the theory of Existentialism and established that love and particularly divine love provides meaning to otherwise empty life. The novel and its characters can be explored through other multiple angles. The future researchers can talk about the psychoanalytical aspects of the novel and its relevance to not only fictional characters but also help identify the troubles of human beings in real life. The researcher also suggests that the future researchers can explore both extrinsic and intrinsic elements of the novel and can come up with a whole new idea about the message writer conveyed through the text.

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