Emotional Paralysis in *Anxious People* by Fredrick Backman

A thesis submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of *Master* in Literature and Civilization

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Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that this work entitled Emotional Paralysis in *Anxious People* by Fredrick Backman contains no unreferenced material that has been written by another person,and that this work has never been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution.

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Dedication

This humble work is wholeheartedly dedicated to the two persons I love the most, for always being my guiding light and the source of my inspiration. I am truly thankful and honored to have you as *My Parents*.

To my dear sisters, *Bochra* and *Jihad*, and my brother, *Mohamed*, who have been my constant companions and confidants throughout this journey.

To my wonderful little sisters, *Manel*, *Khadija*, *Hiba*, *Rahil*, and *Sabah*, thank you for being in my life.

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Abstract

This research aimes to investigate the theme of Emotional Paralysis and the way it was depicted in Fredrick Backman's novel *Anxious People*. This novel examines people's anxieties and the way they affect people's psychological health. While exploring the lives of a group of anxious adults, this novel deals with how emotional experiences like hopelessness, fear, loneliness, and detachment are intertwined within the human social consciousness and how this relationship affect individuals lives in both positive and negative ways. By utilizing James Averill's Theory of Emotions as Transitory Social Roles, this study suggests a theoretical framework for analyzing the characters' different experiences, emotions, and behaviors, as well as how they navigate the social expectations placed by society, and what kind of coping strategies they use to manage the stress generated by these expectations.

Keywords: Anxiety- Emotional Paralysis- Human Connection- Social Roles- Social Expectations.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

General introduction

Man is a social being, who lives with different individuals of his/her kind, affecting, and being affected by them. These individuals set behavioral rules and laws for him, within which his/her behavior must be and s/he must abide by them to maintain his/her status and position in society. However, these social expectations can be both a blessing and a curse. On one hand, it can provide a sense of structure and guidance for individuals as they navigate their lives. On the other hand, these expectations can be a significant source of stress and anxiety, leading to several negative emotional and psychological outcomes.

One of the primary ways that society's expectations contribute to anxiety is through the pressure to conform, and the fear of failure. Society often places great standards and norms for behavior, appearance, success, and achievement that can be difficult to meet. Individuals who are unable to conform to these standards may feel overwhelming pressure leading to a fear of failure and a sense of inadequacy, self-doubt, and then emotional suppression. As individuals, they may feel the need to suppress or fake their emotions to conform or be accepted and to accept everything as it is and never protest. Over time, the brain may become less responsive to emotions, resulting in a decreased ability to feel happiness, joy, or other positive emotions, and hence resulting in a higher sense of fear and anxiety about everything, and thus, leading to emotional detachment as a means of self-protection. This can interfere with the ability to form and maintain close relationships, as well as the ability to experience pleasure or enjoyment from activities previously enjoyed. It can also lead to feelings of isolation, loneliness, and depression, and negatively affect an individual's psychological health causing *emotional paralysis*.

Anxious People (2020), a novel by Fredrik Backman, revolves around the experiences of a group of individuals with anxiety who find themselves held hostage during an apartment viewing. Throughout the novel, the characters start revealing more about their lives, fears, and anxieties. Starting as strangers, the characters find themselves brought together by their interactions with their individual experiences of anxiety. Some characters struggle to connect with others, while others find relief in the support of those around them. The novel's exploration of these relationships highlights the importance of human connection in addressing anxiety and advancing emotional well-being. The main priority of this case study is analyzing the novel *Anxious People* through the lens of James R Averill's theory of *Emotions as Transitory Social Roles,* which suggests that emotions are roles that individuals play in response to social situations. According to this theory, one can see how the

characters in the novel assume different emotional roles in response to their social and cultural environment, and how they manage to survive despite all the pain and suffering caused by these roles. Through this case study, one aims to understand how Backman portrays emotional paralysis caused by social norms and values in the characters of the novel, and also to investigate the coping strategies used by the characters to fullfill the social expectations. This research also underscores how *Anxious People* is a powerful testament to the transformative power of human connection, and how it provide sometimes a source of healing and support to overcome anxiety and promote emotional well-being, and other times can make people sick.

Delving into the curves of this story leads into a big maze of hypotheses and assumptions making one wonder and imagine: are people free to express their emotions without fear of judgment or social criticism? Would it lead to a greater sense of authenticity and emotional connection among them? Would they be more honest about their feelings and relationships? Or, could they be deeper and more meaningful? It also makes one probe: Would the absence of social norms regulate emotions and make people overwhelmed by their own emotions, eventually leading to chaos, conflicts, and misunderstandings reign among them?

In order to solve this puzzle, one will need to gather all the available pieces of information, by answering the following questions:

1. How is the concept of Emotional Paralysis embodied in the characters of the novel *Anxious People*?

2. How do societal expectations and norms impact the emotional expression and experiences of the characters in the novel?

3. How do the characters in *Anxious People* navigate the tension between their desires and societal expectations?

In response to these inquiries, the researcher proposes that the author's intention in writing this novel falls within the purview of portraying how people's anxieties can be exhausting and dangerous sometimes, the fact that can spoil them to enjoy life. It also insists on the significance of people in each other's lives, and how it can both kill and heal at the same time. From these assumptions thus come the given hypotheses:

1. People are caught in difficult experiences which lead them to enter a phase of emotional paralysis whenever things get complicated.

2. Emotional paralysis may vary from one person to another, a fact that makes it difficult to comply with social norms and hence deviate from the acceptable.

3. Averill's theory of Emotions as Transitory Social Roles seems a suitable approach to clarify how social relations are both difficult yet effective to the paralysis under study.

In order to effectively address the research questions and objectives of this thesis, the researcher utilizes a diverse range of secondary sources, including academic articles and books relevant to the novel's context; and electronic resources, including online journals and databases, to provide critical analysis and contextual information of the subject matter.

This work is organized into three chapters. The first chapter will provide an introduction to the concept of emotions examining it from various perspectives. It also will explore the different factors that trigger anxiety and the concept of fear of emotions. Finally, the chapter will discuss the concept of paralysis of emotions and how it can threaten human well-being.

The second chapter will focus on the Constructivism Approach, specifically James R. Averill's theory of *Emotions as Transitory Social Roles*. The chapter will explain Averill's proposed diagram of emotions and examine his three emotional paradigms in depth.

In the third chapter, a literary analysis of the novel will be conducted to explore the characters' entrapment in emotional paralysis. The researcher will apply Averill's theory to gain insights into the complex interplay between individual emotions and social dynamics within the novel. This analysis will shed light on the character's motivations, conflicts, and personal growth.

CHAPTER ONE:

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

When we think of the word emotion, most of us think of love, hate, shame, joy, jealousy, or fear; those powerful emotions that we experience throughout life. Our emotions drive many of our actions, either to be good or bad, which makes us wonder how they happen. As emotions play a significant role in shaping human experiences, scientists have devoted extensive efforts towards comprehending the way it works. In this chapter, one will begin by defining what emotions are and explore their mechanisms. Then will delve into the various factors that trigger anxiety and discuss their significance in the lives of individuals. Lastly, the researcher will examine the concept of fear of emotions and highlight how it poses a threat to the well-being of humans.

1.2. The Concept of Emotions

Emotions are the effect of chemical messages that the brain sends to the body, in case it senses something. In these cases, the feeling area of the brain becomes dominant, and its reactions sometimes become so strong that they control the whole brain, and are unable to think rationally. In other cases, our thinking can influence our emotions, which can be unhelpful. Our emotions play a powerful role in the way we experience the world, that is why we should understand and regulate it to better control it, or else it will destroy our lives (Scherer, 2005).

We often view human emotion as something constant and universal but it differs from one person to another. In the very beginning, the word emotion was unknown, thus the primitive man tried to think about his psyche and explain the reasons for his actions. In this vein he came up with a lot of ideas, some were based on experience, the others based on illusion and superstition, like the attribution of some of the abnormal behaviors to the presence of evil spirits that inhabits the human body and controls its actions. It was believed that these spirits are the reason for human misery and disease, and people cannot get rid of them except at their death (Rosenwein, 2002).

With the emergence of philosophy, ancient philosophers were sure of the existence of a hidden and invisible force that pushes man and directs him to good or evil. So they continued seeking to understand the human soul and its components and began to explain the activities and physiological changes that occur and appear in the individual. According to Socrates, man is a body that consists of the elements of the tangible material world, and a part of the divine spirit, that takes control over the body, the instincts, and the lusts (Solomon, 1993).

1.3. Theories of Emotions

Over time, emotions have become a vital subject in so many different disciplines; psychology, philosophy, ethology, learning theory, and psychiatry. Unlike in the past when emotions were ignored, dismissed, considered irrational, and treated as the lower part of the soul, some emotions, like scientific curiosity and passion for the truth, became the reason for improving knowledge, and were the stimulant of the new wave of interest in emotions, "*The unexamined life is not worth living,*" said Socrates (Plato, 2009). Not only curiosity and seeking the truth, but also seeing emotion as a practical and personal necessity, that helped humans develop and survive, and seeing it as an important mental aspect to understand the value and meaning of our life.

What is an Emotion is a question that has been asked by the American philosopher and psychologist William James a hundred years ago. Since then, both philosophers and psychologists have been engaged in an ongoing debate about his answer. The same question was debated twenty-five hundred years ago, by Aristotle, who evolved in his *Rhetoric* a highly modern theory of emotion that stands up to the most contemporary criticism (335 BCE). Now thanks to many great thinkers, theorists, and philosophers, we can learn a great deal about the history of emotions.

Emotions have always been a subject in the field of ethics. One will start with the philosopher and psychologist Aristotle, who was interested in analyzing people's psyches and motivating them to do the right thing morally. In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle argued that the basis of life is the human psyche and the right emotion is a big part of virtue (350 BC). Aristotle avoided the mind-body dualism in his book *De Anima*, where he proposed that the human soul is a unified entity that can be divided into two parts, both of which are integrated by emotions. A rational part, according to him, covers feelings that relate to expectations and beliefs, and an irrational part includes physical sensations (350 BC). Aristotle also argued that we can shape our emotions through experience and habit. In his *Rhetoric*, he argued that many emotions are characterized by a strong moral belief about how others should behave (335 BCE).

On another part, the Stoic is a longstanding school of philosophy that dealt with the importance of emotions. They describe emotions as natural responses to adversity and disasters. For them, emotions are a kind of response we make to the world when it seems to us to require a reaction on our part, and it can be rational, or disobedient to reason. The Stoics consider emotions as destructive ways of seeing life and its misfortunes. Stoics' view was not against feeling or emotion but in favor of seeing the world exactly, living by reason, and staying disconnected from externals. According to them, we should replace emotions with reason and what they called *psychic indifference* (apatheia, or apathy) (Graver,

2019). According to Lucius Annaeus Seneca, a major Stoic philosophical figure of the Roman Imperial Period, every disturbance is an emotion, and again every emotion is a disturbance (41-49 CE).

Seeing emotions the language of the mind, in *The Passions of the Soul* (1649), Descartes opposes the idea that one has to deal with emotions morally, reason must intervene. Instead, he considered emotion a neutral or morally ambiguous part of the body and as aspects of the soul. He argued that emotions may change both our perception of the world and our thoughts about it, either in a good or bad way.

Spinoza, on the other hand, viewed emotions as misleading thoughts. *Ethics* is one of the most important works in Spinoza's career which gave us an effective aspect of the world. According to him, "*In the mind, there is no free will but the mind is determined to wish this or that by a cause, which has been determined by another cause, and so on to infinity*" (1677, p. 48-49). This means our ideas are not free and are all related to the great mind of God. Spinoza developed his theory of emotion which copied that of the Stoics a thousand years earlier. He viewed emotion as a species of misleading and flawed thoughts that damage the determination of the world.

The Theory of the Mind has another point of view on the matter. *The Treatise of Human Nature* is an important work by the Scottish Enlightenment philosopher David Hume, where he defended the idea that anything we cannot prove is true by experience is not genuine knowledge; hence, it is simply a matter of custom or habit (1739-1740). For example, our ordinary beliefs in general, in objects, or the existence of God. He also joined the battle about whether moral knowledge is based on reason or feeling. Hume argued in his *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751), that we are guided by moral sentiments which are emotions. It helps us in our judgments of what is morally right and wrong. Hume believed that emotions play the role of impulse, in moral knowledge it motivates us to do the right thing and to avoid the wrong.

Hume also published *The Dissertation on the Passions* (1757). He was the first modern philosopher to pay much attention to the effect of ideas and beliefs in generating emotions. Following Descartes's footsteps, Hume said that emotion can be agitated both mentally and physically. He classified it into two general categories; direct, and indirect, each category having a type of history. Joy, grief, and hope are direct emotions; they are caused simply by feelings of pleasure or pain. In contrast, indirect emotions, such as love, hatred, and pride, are caused by pleasures or pains plus certain beliefs about the object and the association with some person.

Charles Darwin was an English naturalist, geologist, and biologist. He proposed another theory stating that emotions are linked to our evolutionary past and that they have helped us to survive and

thrive as a species. For example, he suggested that fear helps us or the animals to avoid danger, while anger helps us to defend ourselves. In his book *The Expression of Emotion in Man and Animals* (1872), Darwin argued that man evolved from lower life forms, and emotional expression in man and animals is similar.

Seeing emotions as sensations of bodily changes, William James was an American philosopher and psychologist who developed his theory of emotion discussed in his essay *What Is an Emotion?* (1884). William James and the Danish psychologist, C.G. Lange, were working on a similar theory at the same time. So they collaborated and called it *The James-Lange Theory*, and they defended it in *The Emotions*, published in 1884. This theory defines emotion as the perception of physiological disorders caused by our awareness of events and objects around us. When we confront a snake, for instance, our muscles involuntarily bond and we start breathing fast and prepare ourselves to jump, so fear here is the perception of these involuntary, physiological changes. This idea is the opposite of what we ordinarily know to be the causal order of events. According to James, we do not cry because we feel sad, but we feel sad because we cry, we are afraid because we tremble. Thus, the physiological reaction is central to emotion, and feeling sad is not the cause of this reaction, but instead our experience of that reaction.

The American philosopher, John Dewey was interested in theoretical and applied psychology. For him, the experience is primarily interaction with one's environment. Thus doing and feeling are also experienced. In his *Theory of Emotion* (1894), Dewey attacks Darwin for thinking that behavior expresses emotions. According to him, a person jumps when s/he faces a snake as an expression of fear, s/he has to do so to avoid a threatening object. For Dewey, emotions are not simply subjective feelings that happen to us, but rather they serve a purpose in our interactions with the world.

On another level, Sigmund Freud was an Austrian neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis, whose theories changed the whole idea of emotions. Freud recasts our entire topography of the mind, with his new concept of consciousness, where all the mental events, including emotions, are unconscious, but they still influence a person's behavior the same way as if it was conscious.

In all of Freud's theories of the mind, psychic energy is the ultimate cause of emotion. In 1923 Freud developed his better-known agency view of the mind, dividing it into the *Id* (the source of instincts), the *Ego* (the rational self), and the *Superego* (the internalization of the rules and restrictions learned from one's parents and other authorities), in which the notion of unconscious emotions played an important, but ambiguous role. Freud's work is based on these three components: instinct, idea, and affect:

  • An emotion is itself an impulse or a natural force that is mainly unconscious.

 • An option is a drive from within the unconscious but aimed at a conscious object, here the emotion becomes unconscious so that one might experience it without knowing what or why.

 • An emotion is just an effect, just a feeling, or the product of the processes of the mind.

Among the scholars who view emotions as adaptational reactions was Paul Ekman. In contrast to Charles Darwin's claim that facial expressions of emotions are universal, Ekman believed that emotions are largely cultural in origin. Thus he began his research in a try to refute him but as he explored the subject, Ekman discovered that Darwin had been right, so he altered his views. In subsequent years, he expanded and perfected his studies and established a curated observation system that has become basic in psychology, setting up the unity of facial realization. In his book *Emotions Revealed* (2003), Ekman said that emotions make us ready to deal with special events without thinking about them. We do not choose to feel them, they just happen to us automatically. He also argued that feelings get influenced by what we learned during our raising. It directs our behavior in a way that leads to either positive or negative results.

Seeing emotions as an appraisal of the world, Richard Lazarus and Folkman's *Cognitive Appraisal Theory* (1984), is the most known form of the theory of emotions in psychology. The theory says that humans respond to experiences cognitively first, emotionally second, and physically last. Thus emotional responses are mental, biological, and physiological reactions indicated by pleasure, pain, and other feelings.

Classifying emotions as a cultural category, Catherine Lutz was interested in how emotions are perceived in relation to culture. She is an anthropologist who did her field studies in the South Pacific on the island of Lfaluk in the Caroline Islands. In her efforts to get along with the people she lived with as well as understand them, she became keenly aware of the differences between their emotional lives and her own. The problem was not just language but the cultural context as well. This led her to question the fact that emotions are universal and biologically determined. Catherine argued that emotions are culturally shaped and constructed. She replaced the Jamesian question *What is an Emotion?* with a much more open-ended question about the variable functions and roles played by emotions in society. In other words, she was interested in understanding how emotions are used and understood in different cultural contexts (1988).

Emotions, from another perspective, are socially constructed. According to Averill, emotions involve how we evaluate and interpret situations, and how we express ourselves through our behavior and physiological responses. He argued, "*An emotion is a transitory social role (a socially constituted*

syndrome) that includes an individual's appraisal of the situation and that is interpreted as a passion rather than as an action" (1980, p. 312). Averill defined emotions as a transitory social role or a pattern of behavior that is influenced by social expectations. This means that our emotions are not just individual experiences are also affected by the social and cultural context we live in.

In his book *From an Empirical Standpoint Psychology* (1874), the German philosopher and psychologist, Franz Brentano points out that all mental phenomena; including emotions, are intentional and directed toward a specific object. Brentano rejects the traditional view of emotions that treats them as mere sensations, and he distinguished two types of emotions, the primary ones, such as love, hate, and fear, which are directed toward their objects immediately and without any mediation, and secondary emotions that are directed toward their objects through some other mental act, such as judgment or imagination. Franz saw that emotions play an important role in our motivation and behavior, and they reveal something about the values and attitudes of an individual toward the world.

The researchers Stanley Schachter and Jerome E. Singer developed their *Two-Factor Theory* (1962), which considered emotion to be based on two factors: physiological arousal and cognitive label. According to the theory, when people experience an emotional event, they first experience a physiological response that determines the strength of the emotion, such as increased heart rate, sweating, and trembling. This physiological response is followed by a cognitive appraisal of the situation, to identify the emotion label, which involves interpreting the meaning of the event. For example, if someone encounters a snake, their body may respond with physiological arousal, such as an increased heart rate. They may then cognitively interpret the situation as dangerous, and experience the emotion of fear.

These theories are not the only ones that exist for emotions but they do provide great examples of how thoughts and feelings are found to be different from one person to another. The thing that all these researchers agreed on is the idea that emotions are based on some kind of self-stimulation or personal experience, which means that people might feel different emotions while going through the same situation because they have different thoughts about it.

1.4. The Role of Emotions

Emotions play a great role in the survival of human beings. It motivates us to take action to accomplish a goal, like acting quickly in a dangerous situation to save our life or others. In addition, it helps to organize our behavior, for instance, when faced with a difficult exam a student might be anxious about whether s/he will do well, and this emotional response can motivate him/her to take action, like studying hard to succeed. Emotions help us also communicate with people and recognize

what they are feeling, it allows us to respond appropriately and build deeper, more meaningful relationships with our friends, family, and loved ones.

Emotions have a great impact on our decisions. Anger for instance can make you more likely to take risks which can sometimes get you in trouble. Fear can make you more uncertain about your decisions, and this would probably make you look like an unconfident person, and guilt can motivate you into doing something in a situation and this should help you make amends.

In the general picture, emotions play an important role in our life; however, it also tends to drive us crazy when it is exuberant. Mental illness usually develops as a result of excess emotions. An unhealthy overflow of emotion does not just drive mood disorders but fuels most psychological problems, such as; phobias, trauma, anxiety, hoarding, obsessiveness, borderline personality disorder, and drug and alcohol abuse. It is common to experience a sense of danger in situations where the threats are not immediate but rather distant and abstract, such as the fear of losing one's money or being affected by war. While these threats may not be immediately pressing, they can still trigger strong emotions such as fear and anxiety, which affects individuals' mental health, causing them to feel overwhelmed and unsettled. Since anxiety has an eminent relation with this study, it is hence relevant to explore it from within the scope of psychology.

1.5. The Concept of Anxiety

According to DeMartini et al, (2019), anxiety is a mental and psychological state where one's mind is always preoccupied with distress, disquiet, and continuous tension and fear towards the stressful expected situations; for example, an expected event like the coming exam or unexpected ones like war, and death. Anxiety is often accompanied by behaviors like, sleep disorders, heart racing, nail-biting, and loss of appetite, and these symptoms can develop to become *Pathological Anxiety,* like phobias, panic attacks, and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

The term anxiety, or as it is called by some *restless or constant worry*, is an uncomfortable feeling of vague fear or apprehension accompanied by characteristic physical behaviors. Unlike fear which occurs in the existence of a felt threat, which can be either faced or avoided, anxiety is the result of uncontrollable or unavoidable threats where the fear appears in the form of an exaggerated reaction toward the situation. As such, it causes a lot of negativity that controls a person's thinking and affects his state of health (2019).

Life nowadays is based on velocity, a lot of tension, and stress. Thus, thousands of individuals from both sexes end up having various emotional disorders like anxiety. Both men and women tend to live

under a lot of emotional pressure, yet, according to McLean et al. (2011), women are more likely to experience anxiety disorders than men. This could be happening because they are emotionally weaker, or more likely to experience higher levels of fear, horror, and helplessness.

Anxiety is a serious problem that needs to be addressed. It negatively affects the quality of life of the individuals, causing seclusion, problems at work, and with family, and could cause some serious diseases, and be the reason for developing harmful habits such as alcohol and substance abuse. Patients with anxiety keep hesitating to report their conditions, as the problem is personal and they prefer to hide it from others because they feel shy about it. After years of suffering individuals become forced to search for a way to arrange their lives, so they start looking for treatments for anxiety disorders. According to Shear et al (2011), it is expected that women are the first to start looking for anxiety treatment because they are more open to asking for help when they cannot solve a problem on their own.

1.5.1. The Anxiety Debate

As suggested by Fanselow's work (1984), fear is an innate response that has evolved as a protective mechanism against potential danger. While fear can be appropriate in certain situations, it can also become excessive and harmful and causes anxiety. Sometimes, although a situation may warrant some level of fear, anxiety can cause an exaggerated response that is not commensurate with the actual level of danger. For instance, presenting in front of classmates may induce feelings of fear, but it is not a life-threatening situation.

As children when we used to feel emotions, like anger or sadness, we tend to scream, cry or have a big outburst full of whipping because the emotions we are feeling are uncomfortable, or painful. Clearly, as adults, we experience emotions too, and those emotions can be more uncomfortable, or dire than they were when we were children, but we restrain ourselves to react in such a way as children because we are afraid of our emotions.

Fearing our emotions can lead to negative impacts on our mental and physical health, as well as our relationships. Sometimes as an attempt not to give in to our emotions, we get ourselves into a spiral of addiction in order not to feel. Or we escape from them or suppress them through *Avoidance Coping* which involves trying to run away from stressors rather than facing them. This may initially appear to reduce anxiety, but ultimately, it exacerbates it and is considered unhealthy. Suppressed emotions are akin to a malignant disease that remains hidden and threatens human life until it appears and destroys it (Holahan et al., 2005).

1.5.2. Different Causes of Fear of Emotions

Fear of emotions may happen due to repeated abuse (physical, emotional, or spiritual), or pending past traumas such as war, death of loved ones, or accidents. This sometimes makes a person miss inner safety, so the fear of going through the same feelings again compels him/her to suppress his/her emotions. Other times, it can arise from childhood, the ways parents treat their children. For instance, a child might be punished because s/he was afraid of something or because s/he got excited while expressing his/her joy and caused chaos. Eventually, the child will not feel safe expressing his/her emotions again out of fear of punishment.

Emotional Invalidation can also cause fear of emotions. It happens when we tell someone that his/her emotions are wrong, or s/he is overreacting. We can also do the same thing to ourselves while having our self-talk, which weakens our connection with others and increases feelings of loneliness (Fanselow, 1984). Ignoring our emotions creates a boomerang effect where the emotions will just come back later, and sometimes even stronger than they were before, causing us anxiety which in turn makes us emotionally paralyzed (Holahan et al., 2005).

1.6. Emotional Paralysis versus Anxiety

Emotional paralysis is the result of trauma, anxiety disorder, and the feelings coming from the voices we hear in our heads that compel us to feel and behave according to how society and others want us to while preventing us from acting the way we honestly want. This voice in the head is our internal antagonist, also called the *Critical Parent.* Its source of thought comes from all the humiliations we received as children from people around us at home, and outside, and emotions we were never allowed to express. This can include being mocked, controlled, or simply not being mindful of our feelings. We translate these sounds into a personal sense of inefficiency, shame, and fears, and accept them as normal behaviors. Conversely, the truth is that many of us do not recognize that these thoughts and behaviors are issues that have an impact on our mental, physical, and emotional health (Tullett., & Inzlicht, 2010).

Emotional Paralysis is a combination of anxiety, depression, fear of the future, reflections of the past, and a feeling of guilt. Having it does not make you bizarre or mentally ill, all of us suffer from it to varying degrees because it is a necessary part of being human. However, some of us grew up feeling more emotionally paralyzed than others, depending on the severity of pressure between the external self that tries to fit the mold of society and survive in a certain environment, and the internal self that struggles and strives against external circumstances to create a real, and honest life. The effects of this battle can be crippling at best and devastating at worst (DeMartini et al., 2019). Emotional Paralysis has two types:

a. The Severe Type : anxiety can cause paralysis-like physical symptoms, though it is not factual but it feels like your body is literally paralyzed. This type takes over all your other emotions, making you unable to react to either good or bad events that may happen to you. It can lead to someone feeling stuck in a thought or a place, and the idea of doing something seems impossible, and it may even lead to fainting. This type of emotional paralysis is the most dangerous. Some of its symptoms include a dire urge to self-harm, suicide, or the loss of emotions; which is a state where a person fails to express his/her emotions and also finds it difficult to distinguish and appreciate the feelings of others.

b. The Generalized Type : this type interferes with multiple aspects of everyday life. It impels you to avoid all the situations that make you anxious and limits you. It makes it hard for you to enjoy your life. We all learned to live with the symptoms of this type which end up defining our lives, our roles, and our emotions of guilt, shame, fear, anger, or frustration with ourselves and the world around us. This can be expressed in many ways:

-Running from reality through finding some kind of addiction (hobby, work, or alcohol and drugs),

- Lack of confidence and feeling of inferiority in front of people,

-Believing in the need to justify oneself to others to be worthy and accepted,

- Brain inability to process things every time one tries to change for the better,

- Feeling sorry for oneself,

- Taking most decisions based on the fear of three things: Fear of the future, fear of people's judgments, and fear of failure.

-Possessing multiple selves and the feeling that the person is obliged to play different roles according to persons and circumstances.

-The constant thinking about the future and the past, and neglecting the present because one is too afraid to face your paralysis head-on,

-Feeling guilty without a clear cause,

-Having difficulty thinking or remembering, and

-Experiencing unusual cases of anger or irritation and fatigue.

1.7. Conclusion

In conclusion, emotions play a significant role in shaping human experiences, and scientists have dedicated significant efforts toward understanding their mechanisms. In this chapter, we defined emotions, explored the triggers that lead to them, and discussed their significance in the lives of individuals. We also examined the concept of anxiety and fear of emotions and their negative impact on well-being, including emotional paralysis.

In the next chapter, we will continue our exploration by delving into the *Constructivism Approach*, which sheds light on how our emotions are constructed by culture and the effects of society's judgments and the pursuit of social approval on our emotions. We will also study James R. Averill's Theory of Emotions as Transitory Social Roles, which proposes three emotional paradigms, followed by an in-depth explanation of his proposed diagram of emotions.

CHAPTER TWO:

The Theory of Emotions as Transitory Social Roles

2.1.Introduction

The Social constructionist viewpoint suggests that emotions are not merely individual or biological phenomena, but can also be socially constructed and affected by cultural and contextual factors. This perspective was discussed by many scholars, the most important of which was the psychologist James R. Averill. According to his point of view, since emotions are shaped by social expectations and norms and are displayed in social situations in ways that reflect those expectations and norms, they can be considered transitory social roles (1980). In other words, people may modify their emotional expressions to conform to societal expectations. The constructivist approach will be covered first in this chapter, followed by a discussion of James R. Averill's Theory of Emotion. Next, we will talk about the three emotional paradigms suggested by him. Finally, we shall provide a detailed explanation of his proposed diagram of emotions.

2.2. Constructivism and Emotions

The Constructivist Theory of Emotions holds the idea that emotions are not innate but rather developed via society and culture. It is a theoretical approach that upholds the influence of subjective experience and individual interpretation on how we perceive the outside world. (Averill, 1980). From a constructivist point of view, emotions are not merely biological or universal reactions to stimuli but rather are the result of a continuous process of clarification and appraisal of a situation, based on values, beliefs, and experiences.

Constructivists suggested a series of theories that explain emotions in a different but complete manner. Our interactions with the environment, as well as our internal cognitive and affective processes, all contribute to the construction of our emotions (Jain, 1994). This approach also asserts the importance of cognitive processes such as attention, interpretation, and attribution in shaping emotional experience (Gohm, 2002). According to this perspective, emotions are not fixed or enduring states but rather are constantly evolving and changing based on our ongoing interactions with the environment (Aranguren, 2017). As we gain new experiences and perspectives, our emotional responses may shift and adapt to reflect our changing understanding of the world (Griffith, 2017). *The Cognitive Appraisal Theory* proposed by Lazarus and Folkman is a reliable model within the constructivist approach. According to this theory, emotional responses are the result of an individual's cognitive appraisal of an event. This involves evaluating the significance of the situation for their goals, values, and well-being, as well as their perceived ability to cope with the situation. The theory suggests that there are two main stages in the appraisal process: primary appraisal, which involves evaluating the significance and potential benefits or threats of the event, and secondary appraisal, which involves

assessing one's capacity to deal with the circumstance (1984). Collecting different views within the constructivist emotion theories leads us to Averill's theory which will be a stone step for the analysis of *Anxious People* (2020).

2.3. Averill's Cognitive Theory of Emotions

James R. Averill was an American psychologist who contributed to the study of emotion and social psychology in the late 20th century. He proposed his cognitive theory of emotion, which suggests that a person's perception or interpretation of a situation determines how s/he feels. Averill believed that emotions are social constructs that are developed and sustained via social interactions. He argued that emotions are not innate or biologically determined but are learned through socialization and cultural conditioning (1980).

Emotions are ways of communicating social information and maintaining social relationships. According to Averill (1980), social and cultural factors such as gender, social status, and cultural background have a great impact on emotions. He believed that emotions are rules that are learned through social interactions and are reinforced by social approval or rejection. Furthermore, Averill argued that emotions are the product of three interrelated components: cognitive appraisal, bodily changes, and subjective experiences.

a. Cognitive appraisal*:* Averill placed a strong focus on the role that cognitive appraisal has in assessing the strength and valence (positive or negative) of emotional experiences. This cognitive appraisal involves a person's beliefs, expectations, and judgments of their environment, which can help in shaping the way they feel emotions.

b. Bodily changes*:* Averill also recognized that emotions are accompanied by physiological changes in the body. These changes are an important component of emotional experiences and can help individuals respond and cope with emotional events, they can include: changes in heart rate, breathing, muscle tension, and other bodily responses.

c. Subjective experiences: Finally, Averill argued t hat emotions are subjective experiences that involve feelings, thoughts, and sensations, and they can be affected by both cognitive appraisal and bodily changes, as well as by cultural and social factors. He recognized that emotions can be complex and multifaceted, and he shed light on the importance of understanding the subjective experiences of emotions to fully understand their role in human behavior and social interactions.

In this view, Averill explained how emotions are not fixed internal states but rather temporary roles that a person takes on in a social context. He also contended that in addition to personal experiences, social and cultural conventions, beliefs, and expectations also have an impact on people's emotions. For instance, anger might be seen as a social role that individuals play in response to perceived injustice or violation of social norms. Similarly, sympathy might be seen as a social role that individuals perform in response to the suffering of others.

2.4. Emotions as Transitory Social Roles

Emotional roles are the expectations built by society for how individuals should behave, display and control their emotions in a particular social event. According to Averill, emotions are not simply individual experiences that arise from an internal state of mind or biology. Instead, they are seen as transitory social roles and socially constituted syndromes which means that they are shaped by the social context in which they occur. For example, women are often expected to be more nurturing and emotional, while men are expected to be more stoic and unemotional. These gender norms can lead to different emotional syndromes for both men and women.

Averill's theory suggests that emotions are not just a response to a stimulus, but they are also shaped by the individual appraisal of the situation. This means that not only external factors determine emotions, but also internal cognitive processes such as perception, memory, and reasoning. Overall, Averill's idea of emotions as transitory social roles and socially constituted syndromes highlights the social and cultural nature of emotions and emphasizes the importance of the social context in shaping emotional experiences.

2.5. Involvement in Emotional Roles

To better appreciate the complexity of emotional experiences and behavior in social situations, it is important to know how people participate in emotional roles.

a. Gender Roles: In each culture, there are specific gender standards around emotional expressiveness. For instance, men are often expected to suppress or conceal their emotions, particularly those that are perceived as weak or feminine such as sadness or fear. Women, on the other hand, may be expected to be more expressive and emotional. These gender roles may affect how people express and experience emotions in different social events (for more check Blackstone, 2003).

b. Cultural Roles: the social and personal norms may differ between cultures, which affects emotional expression. For example, in some cultures, such as Japan, it might be more suitable to keep emotions like anger buried or suppressed because they are considered inappropriate and impolite. While

in other cultures, like the United States, expressing emotions is often seen as a way of asserting oneself. (Matsumoto & Hwang (2013) worked on this idea).

c. Social Roles: Emotions can be affected also by social roles. For instance, a doctor may need to suppress their emotions to remain professional and impartial when treating a patient, while he may show more empathy and compassion when interacting with family and friends (check Hechter, 2001).

d. The Emotional Labor Roles: Some jobs, such as customer service and healthcare, require persons to control their emotions to maintain a positive attitude and provide a good experience for others. This is referred to as emotional labor, and it frequently entails concealing unfavorable feelings while expressing positive ones (Ashforth., & Humphrey, 1993)

e. **Emotional Expressiveness Role**: This concept describes how openly and freely some people can be in expressing their feelings in social situations while others may be more reserved and shy about their emotional experiences (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013).

These roles interact since one may find that some or all of them are in use in certain situations. Furthermore, involvement in emotional roles can impact people in both positive and negative ways. On one hand, it might aid individuals to build positive relationships with others. On the other hand, suppressing or disguising emotions to fulfill these expectations may lead to negative consequences like emotional exhaustion, and burnout.

2.6.Averill's Three Paradigms of Emotion

Averill proposed a model of three types of emotional experiences, which are *Impulsive, Conflictive*, and *Transcendent* emotions. Here is an explanation of each:

● **Transcendental Emotions**: these are those emotions that go beyond the individual level and have a transformative effect on the person experiencing them. These emotions can be rather integrative, characterized by a sense of integration or wholeness, in which the person feels connected to something greater than himself/herself. This can include sentiments of awe or wonder in the face of nature or the universe or a sense of oneness with a larger community or social group. It can be transformative, the kind of emotions that have the potential to transform the individual, leading to personal wisdom, growth, insight, and a deeper understanding of oneself and others. We can see this transformative effect in experiences of love, which is a strong emotion that involves a deep sense of attachment and caring for another person. It is also reflected in forgiveness, or empathy, which can lead to a bigger sense of connection and understanding between people. It can also be transcendent emotions that involve a sense

of virtue or going beyond the individual self, towards a greater sense of interrelatedness and meaning. This can include feelings of gratitude, which is a feeling of thankfulness for the good things in life, such as health, healthy relationships, and good experiences. This emotion can lead to a sense of connection to others and the world around us, which increases our sense of well-being and happiness.

●   **Impulsive Emotions**: These are strong emotional reactions that are difficult to control or manage at the moment. These emotions are often caused by surprising or nerve-racking situations and can lead to hasty actions or behaviors that are not necessarily rational or productive. This type of emotion includes anger, frustration, jealousy, and fear. When these emotions happen, individuals may experience an intense urge to act or react in a certain way, even if that action or reaction is not in their best concern or the best concern of others around them. Impulsive emotions can be problematic in many areas of life, including personal relationships, work, and social situations. For example, an individual who frequently experiences impulsive anger may lash out at others, leading to damaged relationships and professional setbacks.

●   **Conflictive Emotions**: These are emotional experiences in which an individual experiences two or more opposing emotions at the same time. For example, an individual may feel both love and anger towards a family member who has hurt them, or they may feel both excitement and fear about moving to another house. Conflictive emotions can be confusing and uncontrollable, as the individual may feel torn between opposing feelings and unsure of how to advance. This can lead to feelings of stress, anxiety, and even guilt or shame for experiencing conflicting emotions.

The three paradigms of emotion proposed by James R. Averill, the impulsive, the conflictive, and the transcendent emotions, can interact with each other in complex ways. Here are some examples of how these emotions can interact:

Conflictive emotions can sometimes lead to impulsive reactions, like lash-outs, yelling, or hasty decisions. For instance, if someone feels unfairly criticized by their boss, they may feel conflicted emotions like anger or resentment. As a result, they might impulsively quit their job or confront their boss without carefully considering the repercussions. The same for impulsive emotions, such as jealousy, envy, or greed, which can sometimes cause conflictive reactions, such as competitiveness, animosity, or aggression. For example, if someone sees their colleague receive a promotion that they wanted, they may feel jealousy or envy, which could lead them to feel resentment or bitterness toward their colleague.

Whereas conflictive emotions such as fear, mistrust, or suspicion can sometimes inhibit transcendent experiences, such as love, gratitude, or awe. For example, if a person has been in a previous romantic

relationship that did not end up well, s/he may feel dread or betrayal that prohibits him/her from loving or trusting again.

Finally, transcendent emotions, such as empathy, compassion, or forgiveness can assist in resolving disputes and fostering better harmony and connection. For example, if two friends disagree, they may be able to overcome their conflict by understanding each other's perspective, feeling empathy for each other's, or forgiving each other's mistakes.

2.7.Averill's Diagram of Emotion

Avril used a diagram to explain the different models or classes of emotions. The diagram illustrates the formal congruence between the sociological (top half) and psychological (bottom half) determinants of emotion.
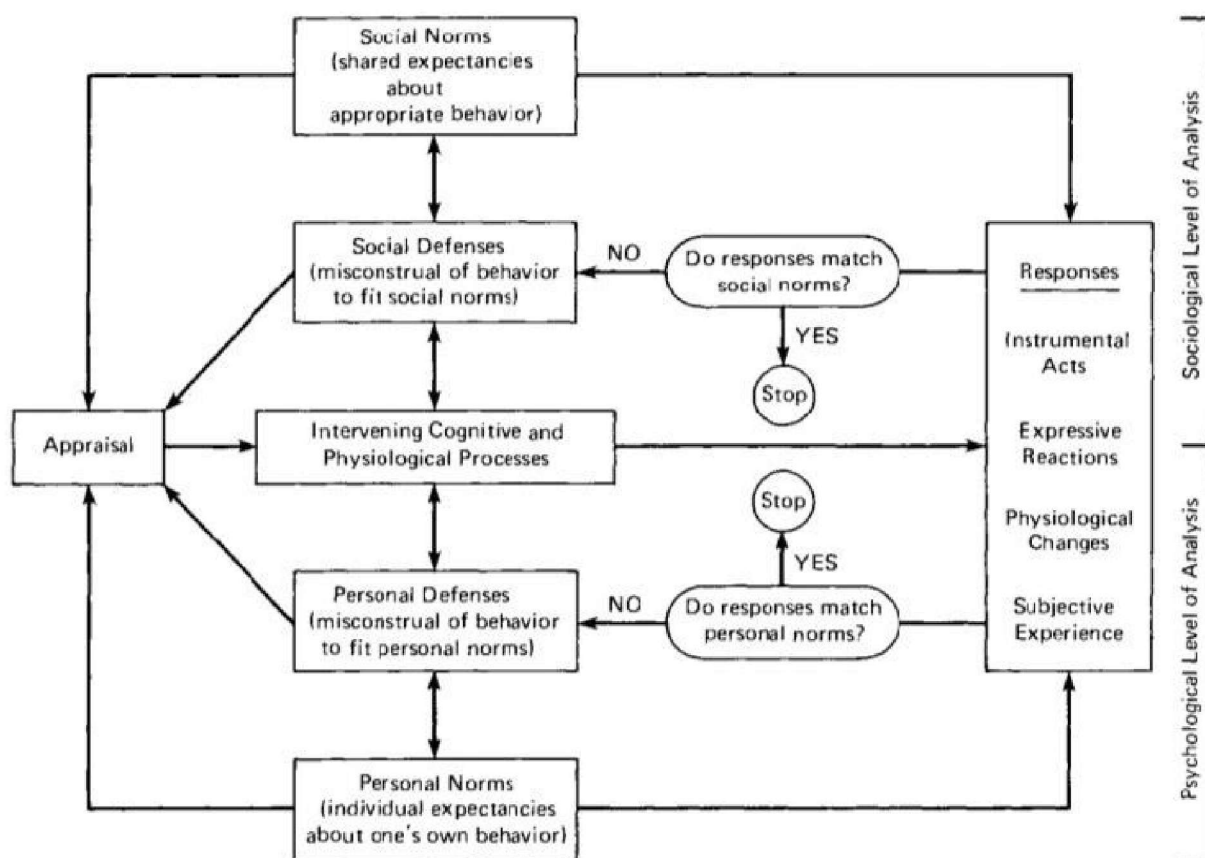

Fig. Amodel of emotion, depicting the sociological (top half) and psychological (bottom half) levels of analysis (Averill, p. 330).

As we notice, the diagram is a set of boxes each box contains a word, and the arrows define the relationship between these words. Starting with the first box the word *appraisal* is the process of evaluating an event. It is the first step we take when we face a situation. The next step is *intervening* in cognitive and physiological processes. This step refers to the mental and physical processes that occur between a stimulus and a response. Right after comes the *defense mechanism* which can be both social and personal, as shown in the diagram. This step with the one before leads us to the box of *responses*, from which we conclude whether the instrumental acts, the subjective experiences, the psychological changes, and the expressive reactions that we did fit the mold of the social and personal norms or not.

In the next paragraphs, one will explain all that had been mentioned earlier in detail for a better understanding of the diagram.

a. The Appraisal: Averill defines an appraisal as the cognitive process through which individuals assess and make meaning of their experiences, including the interpretation of events, and the evaluation of their relevance to one's goals and values. According to Averill, the appraisal interferes with the relationship between the individual and their environment.

b. Intervening Cognitive and Physiological Processes: when we experience an emotion responding to a particular event, there are psychological and physiological mechanisms that mediate the relationship between an emotional stimulus and an emotional response. These processes can include cognitive appraisals (such as our interpretation and evaluation of the situation), physiological changes (such as changes in heart rate and breathing), and other factors that influence how we experience and express emotions

● **Cognitive Processes**: They refer to the mental operations that entail thinking, comprehending, and perceiving information. These processes include; Attention, the cognitive process of selecting and focusing on certain aspects of the environment. Memory is the process of storing, retrieving information, and encoding. It allows us to learn from past experiences and make decisions based on them. Language is the process of interacting through spoken or written words. It allows us to express our thoughts and feelings to others.

● **Physiological Processes**: Called *fight or flight response*, it is a physiological response to an anticipated threat or danger. It prepares the body to either fight the threat or flee from it.

● **Emotional Expression:** a physiological process that involves changes in facial appearance, body gestures, and vocalizations. It advertises our emotions to others and brings out a response from them.

- **Hormonal Changes:** changes in hormone levels in the body can influence behavior by running various bodily functions and emotions.

c. Social Defenses: These are the strategies individuals and groups employ to protect themselves from potential danger or awkward social situations, or to prevent conflicts, maintain social relationships, and preserve self-esteem (check Armstrong, 2018). Here are some examples of social defenses:

-**Denial**: Denial involves refusing or minimizing the existence of a problem or threat.

-**Rationalization**: Rationalization involves justifying or explaining away behaviors or situations to make them seem less dangerous or harmful.

-**Projection**: Projection involves attributing one's satisfactory thoughts, emotions, or behaviors to others.

-**Social Comparison**: Social comparison involves comparing oneself to others to improve self-pride.

-**Humor**: Humor involves using comedy to cope with anxiety-provoking situations.

-**Withdrawal**: This involves removing oneself from a threatening or stressful situation.

-**Displacement**: Displacement involves redirecting one's negative actions or emotions towards a less threatening target. Social defenses can be useful in managing social anxiety and keeping social order but they can also contribute to negative impacts such as prejudice, discrimination, and conformity.

d. Social Norms: These refer to the unwritten rules that guide behavior within a particular group or society. They provide a foundation for how individuals should interact and behave with each other, and they can vary according to each culture and context (for further explanation Hechter, 2001). Here are some examples of social norms:

-**Personal Space:** It refers to the physical distance that people keep between themselves and others in social situations.

-**Gender Roles**: They dictate the suitable behavior and responsibilities for men and women. For example, in some cultures, women are expected to take care of the home and children, while men are expected to be the primary breadwinners.

-**Punctuality**: It governs how people should behave when it comes to time management. For example, being late in some cultures is considered disrespectful, while in other cultures, it is more acceptable to arrive late.

-**Cultural Traditions**: They dictate appropriate behavior for particular cultural events or celebrations.

-**Manners**: It dictates applicable behavior in social interplays, such as greeting others, making eye contact, and using polite language.

   e. Personal Defenses: These refer to the mechanisms and plans that persons use to protect themselves from emotional and psychological harm. These defenses are used to cope with stressful or difficult situations (check Vaillant, 1992). Here are some examples of personal defenses:

Repression: This is a protection technique that involves preventing negative or dangerous thoughts, emotions, or memories in the unconscious mind.

 Regression: It involves reverting to acting like a child to avoid dealing with difficult or stressful situations.

Intellectualization: It involves using realistic and logical thinking to avoid dealing with emotional or psychological pain.

Disassociation: involves disconnecting from one's emotions or surroundings to avoid emotional pain.

Sublimation: This involves guiding bad or harmful drives into socially acceptable behavior. For example, if someone experiences rage or disappointment, he might direct those emotions to exercise or the creative world.

Compartmentalization: It involves separating different conditions of one's life to avoid dealing with conflicting emotions or experiences.

Avoidance: It entails preventing situations or people that spark negative energy or emotions.

Self-justification: It is a personal defense mechanism by which individuals make excuses or justifications for their actions.

Minimization: This is a personal defense mechanism by which individuals lessen or downplay the negative consequences of their behavior.

Self-serving bias: It is a personal defense mechanism by which individuals assign their successes to internal factors, such as personal skill or effort, while attributing their failures to external factors, such as bad luck or unfair circumstances.

While these personal defenses can be beneficial in the short term, they can also lead to long-term problems if they are used extravagantly or inappropriately. It is important to be aware of these defenses and to develop healthier coping plans to manage stress and difficult situations.

f. Personal Norms: These refer to an individual's anticipations about how he should act in a specific situation, based on their personal values, beliefs, and moral standards. These norms are unique to each individual and can vary widely depending on cultural, social, and personal factors (for further explanation check Widegren, 1998). Here are some examples of personal norms:

-**Honesty:** An individual who always tells the truth, even in situations where lying may be more advantageous or appropriate.

-**Responsibility**: An individual who takes control of their actions and accepts the consequences, even when things go wrong.

-**Compassion**: An individual who helps others in need, even when it requires personal sacrifice.

-**Respect**: An individual who treats others with nobility and good manners, even when they disagree or have different beliefs.

-**Social Interactions**: refraining from gossip, treating others with respect and kindness, and avoiding clashes.

-**Integrity**: An individual who acts according to his values and standards, even when it is hard or unpopular.

-**Fairness**: An individual who treats others equally and impartially, without favoritism or prejudice.

-**Open-mindedness**: An individual who acknowledges the different perspectives and points of view, even when they question his own beliefs.

-**Reliability**: An individual who fulfills his engagements and obligations, and Keeps his promises.

-**Generosity**: An individual who helps others, even when it is not expected or required.

Personal norms can play a great role in shaping behavior, both by providing a framework for decision-making and by influencing the emotions and motivations that drive action. However, personal norms can also be influenced by cognitive biases and situational factors, such as social pressure, which can lead individuals to act in ways that are inconsistent with their values or goals.

2.8.Conclusion

This chapter provided an inclusive understanding of the *Social Constructivist Perspective* of psychology and the concept of emotions as Transitory Social Roles. We explored the different paradigms of emotions (*transcendental, conflictive, and impulsive*), and Averill's diagram of emotion, which helped us to acknowledge the complexity of emotions and their various influences. In the next chapter, we will use Averill's three paradigms of emotion to analyze the characters in the novel *Anxious People* by Fredrick Backman, highlighting how emotions can be shaped by social and personal norms. By applying the framework presented in this chapter, we can gain a deeper understanding of how emotions are performed in this novel, and how they impact each character's behavior and interactions with the others.

CHAPTER THREE:

Averill's Theory of Emotions in *Anxious People* by Fredrick Backman

3.1.Introduction

In the novel *Anxious People* by Fredrik Backman, the characters are not just individuals experiencing emotions, but they also embody social roles that are influenced by the situations they find themselves in, and the people they interact with. As James Averill suggested in his theory of *Emotions as Transitory Social Roles*, emotions are not solely internal experiences but are also shaped by the social context in which individuals find themselves (1980). In this chapter, a literary analysis of the novel will be conducted to explore the characters' entrapment in emotional paralysis.The researcher will apply Averill's theory to gain insights into the complex interplay between individual emotions and social dynamics within the novel, shedding light on the characters' motivations, conflicts, and personal growth, focusing on how the characters' emotions and behaviors are influenced by society and the people around them, and how they assume different social roles as a result.

3.2.The Characters' Entrapment in Emotional Paralysis

The Swedish author Fredrik Backman's book *Anxious People* was released in 2019 by Månpocket. Its original Swedish title is *Folk Med ångest, People With Angst*. The word angst refers to anxiety or fear of specific forthcoming events or a sense of uncertainty or lack of confidence. This novel depicts the backstories of a group of adults with anxiety who live in Stockholm, a small city in Sweden.

Throughout the novel, the characters take on different emotional roles as a response to the stressful social situation they face, and hence the emotional paralysis they find themselves entrapped in. They may feel obliged to remain calm and obedient to avoid augmenting the situation, or they may adopt a mask of confidence and authority to effectively manage the challenges they encounter. In this chapter one will apply James R Averill's theory of emotions to analyze some of the main characters of the novel.

3.2.1.The Bank Robber

In general, society expects mothers to accomplish certain roles and responsibilities. Some of these common expectations include providing care and support to children, maintaining a household, and advancing the family's financial well-being. On the other hand, single mothers may face extra pressures and expectations, such as being the sole breadwinner or managing the household without a partner's support. Thus it is important to recognize that not all mothers can fit into these traditional molds and that individuals may face unique challenges and circumstances that make it difficult to meet these expectations, so it would be unfair to expect everyone to conform to social norms and not break them when necessary. As the narrator argues, "*Nothing is easier for people who never do anything themselves than to criticize someone who makes an effort.*" (p.209). In the case of the *unnamed* protagonist in

Anxious People, she is a single mother who tried to rob a bank to pay rent. One can use Averill's three paradigms of emotion to explore her behavior and motivations in more depth.

The transcendental paradigm suggests that emotions arise from our search for meaning and purpose in life. Through our reading of the story, one can tell that the perpetrator's main goal was to provide a better life for her daughters than the one she lived. This paradigm emphasizes the importance of values, beliefs, and personal goals in shaping our emotional experiences. So the woman's actions can be seen as arising from her deep-seated values and beliefs, her reliability, love, and desire to protect her daughters from a potentially dire situation. It comes from the importance of providing for her children and keeping a roof over their heads. Her desperation and fear of letting her daughters down, and not being able to keep her promise, the fear of losing them, all can be seen as giving her actions a sense of urgency and purpose, she "*swore never to become a chaotic parent. The sort who can't cope with being an adult, the sort who can't pay bills and has nowhere to live with their kids*." (p.54).

From a *conflictive perspective,* the woman's actions can be seen as arising from a conflict between her internal needs and external circumstances. She is faced with a difficult situation that is beyond her control, her integrity forbids her from asking her husband for money. She did everything she could to solve her problem but nothing works, and she feels powerless to find a solution that does not involve robbing the bank.

The impulsive paradigm emphasizes the role of physiological and neurological processes in shaping our emotional experiences. The perpetrator's desperate need for money made her feel trapped, and like she has no other option but to rob a bank. She has not fully considered the consequences of her actions, she just kept convincing herself that she is not robbing, she is just borrowing, and will bring back the money later and apologize, as the narrator argues, "*You tell yourself that you're only going to ask for six thousand five hundred kronor for the rent and that you'll return it as soon as you get paid*." (p.67).

Overall, the woman's behavior can be seen as a complex interplay of internal and external factors that have led her to make a desperate and risky decision. The analysis of her personality through Averill's three paradigms of emotion helps us understand the different aspects of her motivations and emotions that contributed to her behavior.

3.2.2.The Lesbian Couple
In the novel Julia and Ro, represent a lesbian couple seeking to start a family and find a home. The couple represents a modern European family unit that challenges traditional notions of what a family should look like. However, despite Sweden's reputation as an LGBTQ-friendly country, this community

still faces subtle forms of opposition and surprise (Korten, 2019). As demonstrated by Estelle's reaction while introducing the couple, "*Yes, those two are going to have a baby together, you know, even though they're from... well, you know." She winked at the bank robber as if that were all she needed to say.*"(p.132).

According to the narrator, "*Parents are defined by their mistakes*."(p.27), this quote highlights the weight of responsibility that comes with being a parent. While Julia and Ro are not yet parents, this idea still applies to their situation as they prepare for the arrival of their child. Their anxiety and insecurity are a reflection of the pressure they feel to be perfect and the fear of being judged for their failures.

According to Averill's *transcendental paradigm*, Ro and Julia's desire to start a family and be parents is motivated by a deep sense of love and connection between them. These are positive and constructive emotions that motivate their actions throughout the novel. In addition, Julia's choice to be less judgmental, more compassionate, and friendly towards others demonstrates her capacity for love and empathy, and her deep good personality.

From a *conflictive paradigm* point of view, Ro experiences conflict when faced with the challenges and uncertainties of parenthood. She is afraid she is not a good partner, and she does not know enough to be a good parent like her father. She is also grieving her dad, who has dementia and can no longer help her through making the big decisions. These conflicts cause her anxiety and uncertainty.

Concerning Julia, while she is excited about becoming a parent, her past experiences with her abusive father have left her feeling anxious and unsure about her ability to be a good parent. Julia's pregnancy has amplified her conflictive emotions, causing her to lash out at other characters and making her frustrated and angry about Ro and always criticizing her behaviors but deep down Julia knew that Ro is going to be a great parent.

From an *impulsive paradigm* view, Ro occasionally acts impulsively when her emotions become overwhelming. Her fears make her stressed and anxious which leads her to get into a lot of quarrels with Julia to make impulsive decisions and behave erratically.

Julia also exhibits impulsive emotions, particularly fear, and anxiety. Her apprehension about becoming a parent and the unknown future, also her pregnancy leads her to act in ways that may not be rational or well thought out, for example, she can be harsh on her wife or others and hurt them with her words, and then regrets it.

Overall, this analysis clarifies how Ro and Julia are experiencing a range of emotions, including love and connection between each other, conflicts and impulsive actions in the anxiety inducing times, care and empathy towards those who need it. These two characters added depth to the novel's exploration of identity, love, and family.

3.2.3.Estelle

Estelle is an eighty-seven year old widow who still grieves her late dead husband Knut. She has lived long enough to have learned a deep compassion, forgiveness, and emotional maturity. Estelle's character can be analyzed according to Averill's three paradigms of emotions as follows:

According to *transcendental emotions*' view, Estelle's character fits well with this paradigm, as she displays a range of positive emotions such as empathy, compassion, and kindness towards others, for example, she is the first who asked the bank's robber if he is doing okay, and offered him a glass of water, not knowing it is actually a female. She is quick to offer a helping hand even to those who do not need it, and her ability to understand and connect with others on an emotional level is a significant strength. Estelle's grieving for her late husband Knut reflects her personal values of love and commitment. Her ability to offer sage advice on marriage, parenting, forgiveness, and giving second chances, demonstrates her wisdom and emotional maturity, indicating that she has developed a deep understanding of human emotions and relationships over time.

On a *conflictive emotions'* scale, Estelle is depicted as a calm and composed person who is optimistic and always tries to see the good in people. She is always willing to provide help to those in need. However, none of the other characters could see her hidden things. Estelle struggles with anxiety related to social interactions, often feeling the need to please everyone in order not to be alone. She even went to an apartment viewing on the day before New Year's Eve just so she could have company during one of her and her husband's favorite times of the year. Estelle also experiences a sense of guilt towards her husband, feeling that her actions have betrayed him in some way. All of these conflicting emotions make it difficult for Estelle to find peace, and her story serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of suppressing one's true feelings.

From an *impulsive paradigm* point of view, Estelle's actions are always driven by her empathy and compassion towards others, so her impulsive emotions mostly do not harm anyone but they might get her into trouble. Despite the challenging circumstances of the bank robbery, she tries to calm the situation and find a way out, and help the bank robber. Her eagerness to intervene and solve the

problem could have put her in a dangerous situation if the circumstances were different and the bank robbery was a *real* bank robbery.

Overall, Estelle is a complex and well-developed character who represents different paradigms of emotions. Her actions and decisions are driven by her empathy and compassion towards others, but they also expose her imperfections and weaknesses. Estelle's character shows the challenges and opportunities that come with experiencing and managing different emotional states.

3.2.4. The Police Officers

Jack is a multifaceted character in the novel. Being the son of a police officer, he is depicted as a dedicated police officer with a strong sense of responsibility and a desire to protect others, even at great personal cost. Despite his personal anxieties and insecurities, Jack is always looking for ways to calm tense situations and ensure that everyone involved stays safe. This commitment to his job and his empathetic approach to others make him a relatable and sympathetic character. Through his struggles, Jack adds depth and complexity to the novel, making him an integral part of the story. One can analyze his character according to James Averill's three paradigms of emotions as follows:

On a *transcendental paradigm* scale, saving Nadia ten years ago gave Jack a sense of significance in effecting positive change in people's lives and protecting them, which inspired him to become a police officer, he was so motivated by the idea that his work allows him to save people. His sense of responsibility and desire to protect people is evident in his dedication to his job. His willingness to take charge and challenge his superiors when he feels that something is not right, shows his desire for personal growth and development. Also, Jack's tolerance and understanding of his father's position when he helped the bank robber, and his willingness to take responsibility for his disappearance, are a perfect example of his transcendental emotions.

Jack's character can be analyzed in the *conflictive paradigm* as he displays various *conflicting* emotions. Initially, his desire for career growth and success conflicted with his love for his father, so he had to make renouncements to stay close to him, and work with him. In addition, Jack's strong belief in doing his job correctly often clashed with Jim's more relaxed approach, for example searching up how to handle a hostage situation in google, or when he helped the bank robber to escape; leading to frequent bafflement by Jack towards his father's behaviors. This created tension between the two, which was evident in their strained relationship. However, despite their differences, Jack still values his relationship with his father and refuses to let go of him.

From an *impulsive emotions'* point of view; Jack's actions are always motivated by a desire to help others, even if it means putting himself in danger. In addition, the feeling of failure makes him act harshly sometimes with people around him. For example, the idea that the wounded bank robber may be dying somewhere and he cannot help him, brings back memories of his unsuccessful attempt to prevent the man from jumping off the bridge, and this drives him to act against his values.

Jim, the father, is another police officer who provides a different perspective of social interactions and their complexity. One of the major themes in the book is the idea that people are often more complex than they appear on the surface. This is certainly true of Jim, who at first glance might seem like a bumbling and somewhat ineffectual police officer. However, as the story progresses, it becomes clear that Jim is very intelligent and perceptive. He often sees things that others miss, and he has a soft spot for wounded souls, it is a great trait in any human, but sometimes a disadvantage in his work as a cop. Jim is far more concerned with doing the right thing than with doing his job well, which makes him sometimes act against his role as a police officer. According to James Averill's three paradigms of emotions, one can analyze Jim's character as follow:

On a *transcendental emotions'* viewpoint, Jim exhibits transcendental emotions throughout the book, particularly in his approach to the hostage situation. He is empathetic, and compassionate towards the hostages, and the robber, and is constantly looking for ways to connect with them on a deeper level. Jim's understanding of human nature is one of his greatest strengths as a police officer.

Jim also experiences *conflictive emotions* throughout the story, particularly in his relationship with his son. It is clear that he loves his son deeply and is immensely proud of him, but still fears that he will be hurt by his work and affected by it too much. The two often clash over their differing approaches to policing, with Jim prioritizing doing the right thing over the following procedure. What gave Jim another conflictive emotion, since he is happy that he did the right thing helping the perpetrator to escape, but feels guilty lying to his son.

While Jim does not particularly show impulsive emotions in his actions, he does exhibit a certain level of impulsiveness in his decision to help the robber escape. This decision is driven by his emotional connection to the robber as she looks so much like his daughter Jill, and whom he sees as a wounded soul in need of help. Jim's empathy and compassion lead him to act on his impulses in this situation, even though it goes against his role as a police officer.

Overall, Jack and Jim have a complex relationship, which on the surface appear to be a strained and difficult relationship due to their differing approaches to policing and their conflicting personalities. However, despite their differences, it is clear that they both deeply care for each other. Jack admires his father's intelligence and perception of nature, while Jim is immensely proud of Jack and his dedication to his work. Their relationship is marked by moments of tension and conflict, and also moments of deep love and understanding.

3.2.5.Zara: The Bank Director

Zara is a fortunate and ambitious bank director who comes across as a confident, decisive, and conscious person who is not afraid to speak her mind. She has been carrying a heavy burden of a secret for ten years, and she has been struggling with an ongoing guilt complex. This caused her to experience continuous feelings of worry, shame, and anxiety, leaving her emotions paralyzed, and unsure of what to do or how to act. Zara experiences complex and varied emotions throughout the novel that can be analyzed through Averill's three paradigms of emotion.

On the *transcendental emotional* level, Zara desires personal and social growth and a sense of purpose in life. Honesty is a key trait of her personality, she is a direct person, who always tells the truth, even in situations where it may be beneficial or appropriate to lie. Zara is realistic, she tends to use rational and logical thinking to avoid facing emotional or psychological distress. She focuses on results rather than sentiments, focusing on achieving her goals or protecting the bank's interests, even if it demands making tough decisions. Zara's integrity has always been notable, as she acts according to her personal beliefs, values, and norms, even when it is challenging or not well-liked by others.

Zara is lost in a chaos of *conflicting emotions*, torn between her need to keep her secret hidden, and her desire to let up on her feelings of guilt, fear, and shame. While from an *impulsive emotions'* view, Zara's emotions can be impulsive and overpower her logical thinking, leading her to act in ways that contradict her values, especially when confronted with situations that trigger memories of her secret.

3.2.6.Roger and Anna-Lena

Roger and Anna-Lena, a retired couple addicted to Ikea, are on a never-ending hunt for fixing apartments to hide the fact that they do not know how to fix their failing marriage. This can give us a study of regular couple's life using Averill's diagram.

Roger is a middle-aged man, who struggles with anxiety related to his career and societal expectations of success. Throughout the novel, Roger's need to be needed and appreciated is a recurring theme that shapes his character, as the writer asserts, *"because he was hoping to see some sign that the*

people inside couldn't cope without him." (p.151). He feels like he has failed to live up to his potential and has let down his family, and he is doing his best to be a great and helpful person in the eyes of his wife Anna-Lena. Analyzing Roger's character according to Averill's paradigms of emotions:

On the *transcendental emotions'* level, Roger may seem reserved and stoic on the surface, but he has a deep capacity for love and empathy, and he is genuinely committed to his marriage and his family. Through his struggles and growth, he serves as a reminder that it is never too late to change and improve oneself.

Roger shows deeper *conflictive emotions* contrary to what he opts to express. He has a deep love and respect for his wife. However, his need for control and his difficulty expressing his emotions often lead to miscommunication and frustration between him and Anna-Lena.

On the *impulsive emotions'* level**,** Roger's anxiety can be overwhelming at times. The pressure he feels to achieve success and meet societal expectations may lead him sometimes to act against his values.

Anna-Lena is Roger's partner and projection at the same time. While Anna-Lena was busy with her career, Roger consistently put his career on hold to care for the kids. The thing that made her feel guilty, and try her best to help him feel needed. She was the first to suggest that the hostages help the robber, as she knows what it is like to feel trapped by one's mistakes.

On a *transcendental emotions'* scale, Anna-Lena's big love, respect, and support for her husband was manifested in her desperate attempts to make him feel competent and useful. She sacrificed her desire in settling down and living happily with her husband, as she declared, *"I'm looking for a home, too.*"(p.124).

Anna-Lena was struggling between her *conflicted emotions,* from one hand she was happy seeing her husband feeling confident working and getting rid of his depression, on the other hand, it was the feeling of guilt that she lied to him and hired Lennart, to make him believe that his negotiating tactics work, as she manifests, "*I had no right to do what I did to Roger.*"(p.124).

Anna-Lena's emotions can be *impulsive*, leading her to make decisions that contradict her logical thinking. For example, she suggests helping the robber and showing empathy and understanding for her situation, despite the risks involved. This suggests that Anna-Lena's emotions can sometimes overpower her thinking, leading her to act impulsively.

Overall, Roger and Anna-Lena are a couple who are struggling with their failing marriage. Both characters are driven by their emotions, particularly their need for love and validation from each other. Roger's anxiety and difficulty expressing himself create conflict in their relationship, while Anna-Lena's impulsiveness and guilt lead her to make questionable decisions. Despite their flaws, both characters show a deep love and commitment to each other, and through the events of the novel, they may be able to overcome their problems and reconnect.

3.3.A Synthesis

Anxious People by Fredrik Backman is an exploration of the impact of anxiety on people's behaviors and relationships. Through the stories of eight strangers held hostage during an apartment viewing, Backman shows how anxiety can wound individuals, how people who did terrible things did not do it because they are terrible but because they have been through something terrible enough, that left them scared and deeply wounded. The novel is also about the power of forgiveness and second chances. The characters' past mistakes and regrets emphasize their potential for growth.

Through the course of the novel, the characters begin to form meaningful connections with one another, seeing each other in a new light and finding similarities between each other. The bank robber who is afraid to let down her daughters, the old married couple battling to rescue their marriage, the bank director carrying her anxiety in her bag, the lesbian couple afraid of not being good parents, the real estate agent struggling at her job, the lonely old lady, the quarreling police officers, and the rabbit. All characters come together to support each other and find solves in one another.

Ultimately, *Anxious People* is a proof of the power of human connection in even the most challenging circumstances, as one of the characters of the novel says, *"We're just strangers passing each other, your anxieties briefly brushing against mine as the fibers of our coats touch momentarily on a crowded sidewalk somewhere. We never really know what we do to each other, with each other, for each other"* (p. 98). This novel is a portrayal of the messiness and complexity of life, highlighting the importance of empathy, understanding, and compassion in healing the wounds of the past and creating a better future. It also brings new insights on how to deal with emotional paralysis whenever faced depending on social interactions with each other. Although these latter are difficult to manage in the rather individualistic world, social interaction is key element to reconstruct the individual's and hence well-being.

3.4.Conclusion

In conclusion, James Averill's concept of emotions as transitory social roles provides a valuable framework for analyzing *Anxious People* by Fredrik Backman. This novel explores the interconnectedness of individuals and the profound influence of social and cultural factors on their emotions and behaviors. Through the characters' journeys, the story emphasizes the importance of empathy, connection, and understanding in fostering emotional well-being and addressing anxiety.

By applying Averill's theory of emotions as transitory social roles in this chapter, one has gained valuable insights into the complex interplay between individual emotions and the social dynamics depicted in the novel. The characters' experiences of coming together in a high-stress situation have displayed the flexibility of emotions and the transformative power of human connections. We have observed how the characters' emotions and behaviors evolve as they navigate their roles and relationships within the novel, providing a profound exploration of the human condition.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

General Conclusion

From a young age, people are often programmed to conform to societal norms and expectations, which include people's roles, career paths, and even emotional expression, and these society's expectations can be a significant source of anxiety for individuals, whether it be the pressure to conform, the fear of failure, or the unrealistic expectations created by social media, these expectations can contribute to several negative emotional and psychological outcomes, hence experiencing emotional paralyzes. In this case, *Anxious People* provided a powerful exploration of the complex relationship between individuals, society, and emotional experiences.

Backman presented *Anxious People* as a love and empathy letter to all those who are anxious in these anxiety-inducing times. Through this, he highlighted the complexity and multifaceted nature of anxiety, and how it can impact our behaviors and relationships with others. The journey of seeking the notion of paralyzing anxiety, and what is its impact on an individual's well-being allowed the researcher to penetrate the origin of emotions, to understand their meaning from the different points of view of many researchers, and how our mind and body experience these feelings, in addition to determining their importance in the lives of individuals, and investigating the most important reasons that make them paralyzed like deep fear and anxiety.

This work aimed to provide a comprehensive exploration of the complex and multifaceted concept of Emotional Paralysis, and its significant impact on human well-being. The first chapter introduced the term emotion and delved into its various dimensions, including the factors that trigger anxiety and fear of emotions. In the second chapter, the focus shifted to the Constructivism Approach and James R. Averill's theory of Emotions as Transitory Social Roles. Through an in-depth analysis of Averill's diagram of emotions, the chapter examined the three emotional paradigms proposed by his theory, enriching our understanding of how emotions function in a social context. The third chapter used a literary analysis of a novel to showcase how the themes, motifs, symbols, and literary devices contribute to the novel's overall meaning and message. Furthermore, Averill's theory was applied to the characters' emotional experiences, shedding light on their motivations, conflicts, and personal growth and enriching our understanding of the novel's emotional landscape.

The analysis made by the researcher noted that the hypothesis put forward about the possibility of getting rid of social norms and replacing them with personal norms, and values to govern people's

emotions and behaviors, where people feel free to express their emotions without fear of judgment or social criticism, it would lead to disastrous results much tragic than those caused by social factors. The absence of social norms to regulate people's emotions and behaviors make people overwhelmed by their own emotions, eventually, they will act the way it pleases them causing chaos, misunderstandings, and many wounds to heal. The researcher's analysis confirmed the importance of the participation of both personal and social factors to obtain a fair and balanced world to a certain extent, which requires firmness and persistence in some situations, and making concessions in others.

The analysis of Backman's novel from Averill's point of view that emotion is socially constructed syndromes, and transitory social roles suggest that emotions are not inherent and fixed qualities of individuals, but rather are shaped by social and cultural factors, this leads us to a deep sea of transcendental, conflicting, and impulsive emotions, which was apparent in the characters' behaviors and the expression of their emotions, considering how the character's emotions and behaviors change throughout the novel as their social roles and relationships evolve. For example, characters who start as adversaries may develop empathy and understanding for each other as they come to understand each other's experiences. This made us amazed at the number of roles one plays in his life, and sometimes people do not even realize that they are not acting themselves, and hence experience emotional paralysis, which makes it hard for them to stop, and eventually, this affects their psychological health and can ruin their social relationships with others.

In this study, the researcher delved into the fears and anxieties prevalent in contemporary society, as he highlighted the impact of social factors on characters' well-being, how it made them feel trapped in a cycle of trying to meet societal expectations while suppressing their true emotions, how emotional invalidation made them feel guilty and ashamed for experiencing their emotions, and how this fear of judgment or rejection, if they express their true feelings lead them to emotional paralysis. This research also investigated how characters navigate the tension between their desires and societal expectations, how some of them engaged in open dialogue and negotiation with others to find common ground and understanding, or by compromising between their desires and societal expectations, while others just obeyed and followed, and the rest challenged and changed these norms, by prioritizing self-awareness and authenticity and aligning their actions and choices with their true selves which involved breaking away from certain societal expectations and embracing individuality. The emotional struggles of the characters reflected the societal pressures and broader expectations they face.

Overall, this novel served as a reminder that emotions are not isolated experiences but are deeply intertwined with the social fabric of our lives. Averill's *Theory of Emotions* was the suitable approach to use to clarify how social relations are both difficult yet effective in our lives, despite living with the fact that one's emotions, behaviors, and relationships are governed and framed by social norms, and values can be harsh, disturbing, and painful sometimes but realizing that what keeps society organized and protects people's feelings from people themselves, are these norms, may be some kind of condolence, which was manifested in the novel.

By delving into the complexities of these emotions as social roles, one intertwined with other ideas another theme discussed by Backman which is the importance of empathy, understanding, and human connection in addressing this mental health issue, and acknowledged that individuals can develop their own resilience and coping mechanisms by fostering a sense of community and support, while also encouraging personal growth and self-reliance, people can both help each other and develop their ability to overcome challenges.

By focusing primarily on external social contexts, Averill's theory may overlook the complex role of internal factors like innate temperament, dispositional traits, and personal history in shaping emotions. Future research should concider the role of individual differences in emotional experiences to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the process involved. Incorporating temperament, personality traits, and other individual factors into the theory would allow for a more nuanced and inclusive perspective on the nature of emotions.

This research provides a foundation for further investigation into the role of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and coping strategies in managing stress and improving mental health outcomes. This could involve researchers to investigate how individuals with different levels of EI utilize various coping mechanisms, such as problem-solving and seeking social support, to effectively manage stress. It also advises researchers to look at emotional paralysis from different angles using different theories in psychology.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Biography

Fredrik Backman is a Swedish novelist, writer, journalist, and blogger known for his successful writings. He has gained a massive following and has been named by some Swedish critics as one of the most mysterious writers of our time. His novels have topped the bestseller charts in his home country of Sweden and his writings have been translated into more than twenty-five languages.

At first, Backman studied comparative religion but he quit and became a truck driver after. He started his career as a column writer for the free newspaper Xtra in 2006, and in 2007, he began writing for Moore Magazine in Stockholm. Backman started his work as an author in 2012, releasing two books on the same day: *A Man Called Ove,* and *Things My Son Needs to Know about the World.* His second novel*, My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry*, was published in 2013, *Britt-Marie Was Here* in (2014), *Beartown* (2017), *Us Against You* (2018), *Anxious People* (2020), and *The Winners* (2022).

Backman's stories are deeply invested in the emotional lives of his characters, often presenting their harsh realities with a great deal of love and compassion. This unique approach has earned him a loyal following and critical acclaim, with readers falling in love with his novels.

Appendix B: Summary

Anxious People (2020), a novel by Fredrik Backman, explores the theme of anxiety as a driving force behind people's behavior, leading them to make bad decisions or take desperate actions. The narrator employs humor to portray the characters trying their best to cope with the day-to-day challenges despite being overwhelmed by their insecurities. The story revolves around the interwoven narratives of characters from different backgrounds who turn out to be connected. Through this novel, Backman delves into heavy topics such as suicide, depression, survivor's guilt, second chances, and the struggles people face.

Anxious People centers on a bank robbery that went wrong and turned into a hostage situation. A divorced mother in a town in Sweden attempts to rob a bank to pay for rent but ends up robbing a cashless bank instead. While trying to escape the police, she runs into an open house in a nearby apartment building, causing prospective buyers to think they are being held hostage. As the hostages share their stories and anxieties, they find out that they have more in common than they thought and they end up helping each other. After the hostage drama ends, the bank robber disappears, and only what remains was a bloodstain and a gun. A father-son police duo do frustrating interviews with witnesses. At the end of the story, it was revealed that the bank robber had sneaked into another apartment.

The characters of the novel include Zara, a bank director who is emotionally paralyzed by grief and depression, who teaches us the importance of forgiving ourselves for past mistakes. Anna-Lena and Roger, remind us that seeking approval and social acceptance can make us forget important things in our lives and that regret can prevent us from enjoying life. Julia and Ro demonstrate how difficult parenthood can be. The real estate agent seems to only care about selling the apartment, or that is what we only saw. The two police officers teach us the meaning of family and how dealing with our anxieties and insecurities can make us more empathetic toward others. The bank robber shows us the meaning of sacrifice for those we love. The psychologist Nadia teaches us how taking advantage of second chances can change people's lives. Lastly, the old lady Estelle embodies the importance of being nice, understanding, and empathetic towards others, and how this can change people's lives for the better. Together, these characters form a thought-provoking story about the power of human connection and empathy.

Anxious People is a book that echoes those experiencing anxiety in these anxiety-inducing times. It highlights how similar our lives are, and how we all search for something to cling to, to fight for, and to look forward to. Despite having so much in common, we often remain strangers, oblivious to the impact our actions have on others**.**

Glossary

a. Apatheia and Apathy: Apatheia is a Stoicism term that refers to a psychological state where an individual is liberated from his emotions and passions, which allows him to sustain a sense of calm and tranquility. Apathy is indifference about life indicating a carelessness attitude (Krack et al., 2015).

b. Hoarding: It is a mental health disorder marked by the enduring difficulty in getting rid of property, regardless of their actual value or usefulness (Mataix-Cols et al., 2010).

c. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD): is a psychological disorder defined by repeating, unwanted ideas, or emotions that make one feel driven to repeatedly perform certain actions such as, cleaning, counting, checking, or repeating phrase, in an effort to reduce the related anxiety (Stein et al., 2019).

d. BorderLine Personality Disorder: is a disorder in the human mind, characterized by disturbed and unstable emotions and engaging in impulsive behaviors such as substance abuse, binge eating, risky sexual behaviors, distorted self-image, and unstable relationships with others (Lieb et al., 2004).

e. Avoidance Coping: It is a coping strategy that involves avoiding or running away from stressors or negative emotions rather than directly confronting and managing them; for example using substances or other unhealthy behaviors to numb feelings. While coping with avoidance may provide temporary relief, it can lead to more anxiety and other negative outcomes in the long term (Holahan et al., 2005).

f. Emotional Invalidation: It is a type of emotional mistreatment that happens when a person's emotions are lessened, denied, or ignored by another person, which can cause the individual to feel unheard, misunderstood, and outcastes, and it can be intentional or unintentional (Krause et al., 2003).

g. Critical Parent: It refers to the voices in our heads that may be rough, judgmental, and critical, recalling the messages we received from our parents or society around us from childhood to adulthood. These voices can be whether positive and beneficial or negative and harsh, and they can have a notable effect on our psychology and wellness (Tullett., & Inzlicht, 2010