



## **SELF-EFFICACY IN THE NOVEL "A STREET CAT NAMED BOB" BY JAMES BOWEN (2012)**

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### **Abstract**

This research is an analysis of the novel "A Street Cat Named Bob" by James Bowen (2012). The researcher aims to describe how to develop self-efficacy with the help of social support in achieving goals. The Researcher employs Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic theory to explain how the 3 basic human traits namely Id, Ego, and Superego that influence a person in their pursuit of success. This thesis posits that one effective way to achieve goals is by enhancing self-efficacy, which can be supported by social networks. The research explores the elements of the novel, such as tone, setting, characters, point of views, to interpret and argue about the novel. In conclusion, the research reveals that a key factor influencing the character's success is the development of self-efficacy, there are four key factors: experiences encountered, self-belief, stress reducers, and finally, social persuasion. In the end, the researcher successfully identified self-efficacy, closely related to his environment, including Bob, the street cat which has provided social support.

**Key words:** Psychoanalysis theory, Life instinct, Goal, Social Support, Self-Efficacy, Self-Belief.

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The current era is an era that is very complex and tight in terms of competition to achieve a goal. Because of this, a person often experiences pressure and challenges from various aspects, ranging from financial problems to psychological and mental problems. This makes it almost impossible that someone achieves success without the support of the people especially those living near the person. In this context, the role of social support becomes very important for a person in achieving a goal. Every human being has different goals in their life, such as seeking happiness, success, making positive differences, and striving to become a better person. To achieve these goals, individuals must truly understand the desires and intentions of their heart and mind. With these beliefs and intentions, a person's self-confidence will emerge, leading to the development of what is known as self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is one of the important personality aspects that humans have, and it has functions to increase someone's potential

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optimally. Nuzilia (2010: 100) in Efendi (2013) states that self-efficacy takes the form of beliefs, decisions and hopes to assess how far a person can achieve goals. Pressure can arise within an individual due to their confidence in achieving a particular goal, which compels them to strive for success.

Bandura (1994) as cited from his research about self-efficacy states that there are four factors that influence self-efficacy, all of these factors closely related to the role of social support. Sigmund Freud as cited in *A Hand Book of Critical Approaches to Literature* by Wilfred Guerin (2005) argues that there are three important factors of human psychology, namely the id (natural human needs), ego (how humans can get these needs), and superego (how a person can achieve goals based on how society accepts them). Besides to humans, pets are also a source of support that can help alleviate stress. McConnell (2011) states that pets can provide social support for their owners, similar to family and friends. Zega (2023) explains that pets, such as cats and dogs, offer support to their owners in the form of emotional connection, companionship, and assistance. So, the role of social support can come not only from humans but also from animals.

Freud argues that how society's role influences a person in achieving goals and also in changing a person's behavior, because social relations have existed since humans were born on earth. Therefore, this social support has an important roles to a person in the form of material and non-material support that can change his character, habits and also in achieving his goals. The novel "A Street Cat Named Bob" is a work by James Bowen (2012) which is a true story about the writer's life as a homeless man in London who tries to free himself from drug addiction. Bob, a cat who always helps James Bowen in busking, plays a very important role in Bowen's life. With Bob's support and assistance, Bowen is able to live his life better and continue to fight through various challenges. Their relationship demonstrates the importance of friendship and support in facing difficulties. Researcher chose this novel to analyse because the issues of the self efficacy is very interesting to be investigated. Bowen's story has inspired many people and has won many awards as well.

## **B. METHODOLOGY**

The data that researcher use is Psychoanalytic theory from Sigmund Freud's theory. This research is using descriptive qualitative method. Leslie Gelling(2015) explains that descriptive qualitative methods are used to answer questions about experience, meaning and perspective from the point of view obtained from the object being analyzed. The qualitative descriptive method in novels is a research approach that is useful for understanding, describing, and analyzing the elements within a novel. When analyzing a novel, this method is employed to investigate in detail the important aspects present in a novel, such as themes, characters, plot, and the meanings contained in the novel. This research will use qualitative descriptive method to analyze how the main character in the novel *A Street Cat Named Bob* by James Bowen can developed his self-efficacy in order to achieve his goals.

Based on Graue (2015) states that there is four key steps most qualitative data analysis approaches have in common : data collection, data reduction, data displays, conclusion drawing / verification.

## **C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Research Finding**

#### **a. James Bowen’s Goals**

The novel A Street Cat Named Bob by James Bowen (2012) recounts Bowen's journey to achieve his goals to free from drugs and get his social validation from his social environment. Research analysis reveals that the roles of formal and informal social support are important for Bowen in developing self-efficacy. The formal roles of the government, doctors, and psychiatrists help motivate Bowen, which triggers his self-efficacy.

“There’s a famous quote I read somewhere. It says we are all given second chances every day of our lives. They are there for the taking, it’s just that we don’t usually take them.

I spent a big chunk of my life proving that quote. I was given a lot of opportunities, sometimes on a daily basis. For a long time I failed to take any of them, but then, in the early spring of 2007, that finally began to change. It was then that I befriended Bob. Looking back on it, something tells me it might have been his second chance too.”

(Chapter 1, p. 4).

James Bowen, who has always failed at various things he attempted since he was young, struggled to achieve his goals because he couldn’t focus on one thing. One of the factors contributing to his lack of focus was his addiction to drugs, which he had been exposed to from a young age. However, after realizing that he had been trapped in a negative cycle for too long, Bowen was determined to seize the second chance he felt he deserved, as reflected in the quotation from chapter 1, page 4.

Another goal Bowen had was his desire to reintegrate into the social environment, particularly to regain the trust of his biological mother. This is evident in the quotation:

“My mother tried her hardest to get me off drugs. She could see the damage I was doing - and the even worse problems I was going to cause myself if I didn’t kick the habits I was forming. She did all the things mothers do.”

“Mum got me to go to a psychiatrist at one point. They diagnosed me with everything from schizophrenia, to manic depression to ADHD, or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Of course, I thought it was all bullshit. I was a messed-up teenager who thought he knew better than everyone. With the benefit of hindsight I can see that my mother must have been worried sick.”

(Chapter 2, p 21-22).

The quotation above explains Bowen's regret for disappointing his mother in the past due to his inability to focus on one thing and his entrapment in drug addiction. The sentence, "She did all the things mothers do," illustrates how Bowen finally realized that he had only caused pain to his mother, to the point where she stopped caring for him and sent him to London to meet his father. The reason his mother sent him away was Bowen's drug addiction, as she had grown weary of everything he had done. This is evident in the sentence, "My mother tried her hardest to get me off drugs. She could see the damage I was doing—and the even worse problems I was going to cause myself if I didn’t kick the habits I was forming."

#### **b. The Roles of Social Support to Self-Efficacy Development**

The findings obtained by researchers in the novel *A Street Cat Named Bob* (2012) are about how James Bowen succeeded in achieving his goals with the roles of self-efficacy and the role of social support. The author of the novel *A Street Cat Named Bob* (2012), James Bowen, provides a story not only about how he achieved success, but the author also explains how he developed self-efficacy with support from the social environment, both formal and informal, which helped him in changes in his life (Shan Lu. (2020)). The author of the novel *A Street Cat Named Bob* (2012), James Bowen, provides a story not only about how he achieved success, but the author also explains how he developed self-efficacy with support from the social environment, both formal and informal, which helped him in changes in his life (Shan Lu. (2020)). Chapter 1 explains several important roles that social support plays in helping Bowen escape drug addiction and succeed in achieving his goals.

“I was a failed musician and recovering drug addict living a hand-to-mouth existence in sheltered accommodation. Taking responsibility for myself was hard enough.”

(Chapter 1, p. 6).

Chapter 1 directly explains the role of social support from formal sources, such as the government. Bowen demonstrates self-efficacy through the statement, 'Taking responsibility for myself was hard enough.' This sentence highlights that Bowen perceives the support from the government as both challenging and motivating, which encouraged him to strive even harder. The paragraph is further supported by a quotation in Chapter 2.

“I ended up on what’s known as the ‘vulnerable housing’ list, which qualified me as a priority for sheltered accommodation. The problem was that for the best part of the next decade I ended up living in horrendous hostels, B&Bs and houses, sharing my space with heroin and crack addicts who would steal anything that wasn’t nailed down. Everything I had was stolen at some point. I had to sleep with my most important possessions tucked inside my clothes. Survival was all I could think about.”

(Chapter 2, p. 24).

This paragraph further explains how support from the government serves as a formal role of social support, specifically through the “vulnerable housing” program, which helps Bowen escape drug addiction. This program assisted Bowen in finding a place to live and he felt that moving to “sheltered accommodation” was instrumental in escaping the drug-influenced environment he was previously in. The surrounding environment had a significant impact on his drug use. The statement, “Survival was all I could think about,” clearly indicates that Bowen felt the damage caused by drugs and was determined to overcome his addiction. This desire to escape his addiction and confront challenges is a reflection of Bowen's self-efficacy, which is enhanced by moving to a better environment.

The next step is to examine how Bowen receives informal support from those closest to him. This support is crucial for his success in developing self-efficacy and overcoming drug addiction. The first example of this informal support to be discussed is from Bowen’s Mother.

“My mother tried her hardest to get me off drugs. She could see the damage I was doing - and the even worse problems I was going to cause myself if I didn’t kick the habits I was forming. She did all the things mothers do.”

(Chapter 2, p.21).

Bowen's mother's concern is clearly evident in the quote above. The phrase “tried her hardest” illustrates that Bowen's mother made every effort to help him

overcome his drug addiction because she feared that he would fall deeper into addiction if she didn't intervene. This is further supported by the statement, 'She did all the things mothers do.'

“Mum got me to go to a psychiatrist at one point. They diagnosed me with everything from schizophrenia, to manic depression to ADHD, or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Of course, I thought it was all bullshit. I was a messed-up teenager who thought he knew better than everyone. With the benefit of hindsight I can see that my mother must have been worried sick.”

(Chapter 2, p 21-22).

This quotation illustrates how deeply concerned Bowen's mother was for him, as she took him to a psychiatrist to help him overcome his drug addiction, although Bowen did not appreciate this at the time. As he grew older, Bowen recognized his mother's deep concern, reflected in the statement, 'With the benefit of hindsight, I can see that my mother must have been worried sick.' This realization became a motivating factor for Bowen to escape drug addiction. Acknowledging his mother's support, which he had previously overlooked, contributed to Bowen's success in developing self-efficacy, as informed by his past experiences (Bandura, 1994).

The next analysis focuses on the important role of Bob, Bowen's cat. Bob's significance is evident throughout the novel, from the first chapter to the last. He provides informal social support that aids Bowen in achieving self-efficacy. Bob's role is crucial, as he helps reduce Bowen's stress and influences others' perceptions of him (Bandura 1994, pp. 1-3). By shifting these perspectives, Bob helps others see Bowen in a more positive light, which in turn garners Bowen additional support and contributes to his self-efficacy in reaching his goals.

“Outside the block of flats the cat began pulling on the string lead as if he wanted to head off. I guessed that he wanted to do his business. Sure enough he headed off into a patch of greenery and bushes adjoining a neighbouring building and disappeared for a minute or two to heed nature's call. He then returned to me and happily slipped back into the lead.

*He must really trust me*, I thought to myself. I immediately felt that I had to repay that trust and try and help him out.”

(Chapter 1, p. 9).

The quotes above explain how Bob serves as Bowen's initial source of support, helping him build self-efficacy (Bandura 1994, pp. 1-3). This is evident

when "he" refers to Bob, who seems happy with and trusts Bowen, as indicated by the sentence, "He must really trust me." Bob's trust made Bowen feel compelled to find Bob's owner, as Bowen initially believed Bob belonged to someone else. However, it turned out that Bob was not someone else's cat. The concept of "trust" marked the beginning of Bob becoming Bowen's friend and contributing to the formation of his self-efficacy.

### c. Self-Efficacy Development to Achieve Goals

The experiences Bowen has gone through in his life have made him want to change and free himself from his addiction to drugs. Self-efficacy is developed through challenging experiences, support, encouragement, and how Bob helps Bowen relieve his stress. To achieve his goals and form his self-efficacy, Bowen decided to move to a better and normal environment. Chapter 1, page 4, clearly explains Bowen's desire to seize a second chance to become a better person, as illustrated in the following quotations:

“There’s a famous quote I read somewhere. It says we are all given second chances every day of our lives. They are there for the taking, it’s just that we don’t usually take them.

I spent a big chunk of my life proving that quote. I was given a lot of opportunities, sometimes on a daily basis. For a long time I failed to take any of them, but then, in the early spring of 2007, that finally began to change. It was then that I befriended Bob. Looking back on it, something tells me it might have been his second chance too.”

(Chapter 1, p. 4).

The quotations above explains how Bowen believes that "second chances" are real, these words reflect how Bowen developed his self-efficacy from the difficult experiences he had as a drug addict (Bandura 1994, p. 1-3). The sentence " I spent a big chunk of my life proves that quote." It is significant that Bowen made a determined effort to build his own efficacy to achieve his goal of becoming a better person, as evidenced by the sentence, "In the early spring of 2007, things finally began to change."

The self-beliefs that emerged was also bolstered by Bob's help, which consistently drew positive attention to Bowen and Bob during their street performances. The positive responses from others fostered a sense of joy in Bowen, as he had previously been marginalized by his environment. Bob played a significant role in generating this positive public response Self-belief is crucial for achieving self-efficacy. Bowen demonstrates his self-beliefs and understanding of his ability to achieve his goals. This is evident in Chapter 6, page 47 :

‘If this is going to become a regular thing I really am going to have to get you a proper lead,’ I said quietly to Bob, suddenly feeling a bit self-conscious.

But for every person that gave me a dirty look another half dozen smiled and nodded at me. One West Indian lady, weighed down with bags of shopping, gave us a big, sunny grin.

(Chapter 6, p. 47).

The quotations above illustrates how Bowen enhances his self-efficacy through awareness of his abilities, as indicated by the sentence "suddenly feeling a bit self-conscious." The self-beliefs that emerged was also bolstered by Bob's help, which consistently drew positive attention to Bowen and Bob during their street performances. The positive responses from others fostered a sense of joy in Bowen, as he had previously been marginalized by his environment. Bob played a significant role in generating this positive public response, as evidenced by the sentence, "But for every person that gave me a dirty look, another half dozen smiled and nodded at me."

Bowen put a lot of effort into building his self-efficacy, and Bob's role was crucial in that process. Bob helped Bowen develop self-belief and interact with others. The self-beliefs that emerged in Bowen were developed with the help of social support, social persuasion, and the reduction of stress he experienced after reconnecting with his mother

## 2. Discussion

Based on the findings above, it can be concluded that in order to develop self-efficacy in achieving the goals of James Bowen, the role of social support is crucial, starting with Bowen's mother, the social environment, and the support that comes from both formal and informal social support (Shan Lu, 2020). Developing self-efficacy is closely related to support from the social environment, which includes experience, social persuasion, self-belief, and stress relief (Bandura, 1994, p. 1-3). Information taken from the research by Efendi (2013) claims that social support has the highest percentage of the eight factors that support self-efficacy to achieve student goals in an education field. Bandura (1994, p. 1-3) as cited from his research about self-efficacy states that there are four factors that influence self-efficacy, all of these factors closely related to the role of social support.

The findings related to the role of social support in achieving goals are also seen in Ni'mah's (2014) study. This study focuses on how a student can achieve their goals, specifically completing their thesis, by developing self-efficacy. The research emphasizes the important role of social support in developing self-efficacy.

The analysis by Sabrina (2022) discusses how self-efficacy is developed in the main character of the novel *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig. Similarly, the study by Paraswati et al. (2024) addresses the development of self-efficacy to overcome personal anxiety. In this study, the researcher focuses on the individual's development of self-efficacy to achieve their goals, which contrasts with the researcher's study that focuses on how the social environment plays a crucial role as social support, both formal and informal, so that James Bowen can achieve his goal of overcoming drug addiction and gaining recognition as a member of his social community.

The development self-efficacy, such as self-experience from Bowen's experience as an drug addict, Bowen's self-belief that he is confident in the opportunities he has to achieve his goals, social persuasion from the government, doctors, and psychiatrists, and stress reducers which was closely linked to his surrounding environment, including Bob, the street cat who provided social support (Bandura, 1994, p. 1-3). Research findings reveals that the roles of formal and informal social support are important for Bowen in developing self-efficacy (Shan Lu, 2020). Freud (Freud, 2005, p. 156-157) indirectly explained this social support in his psychoanalytic theory. Freud explained that the ego and superego are formed because of the role of society and the environment around a person. The concept of social relations given by Freud leads to interpersonal relationships that have existed since humans were born and the earliest relationships that support this are parents.

#### **D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

The novel *A Street Cat Named Bob* by James Bowen (2012) recounts Bowen's journey to achieve his goal of becoming an author. Research analysis reveals that a key factor influencing Bowen's success was the development of self-efficacy, which was closely linked to his surrounding environment, including Bob, the street cat who provided social support. Bowen's self-efficacy was shaped by his experiences since childhood, which motivated him to avoid repeating past mistakes. This, in turn, led to the development of self-belief necessary to achieve his goals. Additionally, Bowen's ability to focus on his goals was aided by a reduction in stress, this is because of the support from his social environment, which he found to be very beneficial.

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