
An Analysis of Asperger's Syndrome in a Brilliant Young Mind (X+Y) Movie

*Ni Putu Dhea Kirana Setia Widnyani¹⁾, I Gusti Agung Sri Rwa Jayantini^{*2)}, Ida Bagus Gde Nova Winarta³⁾*

¹Universitas Mahasaraswati
dheakiirana46@gmail.com

²Universitas Mahasaraswati
agung_srijayantini@unmas.ac.id

³Universitas Mahasaraswati
idabagusnova@unmas.ac.id

Received: 14th March 2022 | Revised: 11th May 2022 | Accepted: 15th December 2022
Email Correspondence: agung_srijayantini@unmas.ac.id

Abstract

This research investigated the Asperger's Syndrome experienced by Nathan in *A Brilliant Young Mind (X+Y)* (2014) movie. Nathan is a nine-year-old boy who grew up with Autism Spectrum Disorder types called Asperger's Syndrome because he has shown two out of three main characteristics in the movie with six sub-characteristics included. With these characteristics, Nathan tends to have difficulties in mingling with society. The aim of this study is to identify the characteristics of Asperger's syndrome that shows in *A Brilliant Young Mind (X+Y)* (2014) movie. The data in this research were taken from *A Brilliant Young Mind (X+Y)* (2014) movie and script directed by Morgan Matthews. In analyzing this movie, the theory formulated by Mesibov et al. (2001) was used to analyze the characteristics of Asperger's Syndrome that Nathan suffered. This research used the qualitative method. The finding shows that there are six sub-characteristics of the Asperger's Syndrome that Nathan has; impairment in multiple nonverbal behaviors, difficulty in building a friendship, a lack of sharing pleasure, readability, or achievement with others, having social or temperamental retaliation, routines or ritual which never changes, and having an interest in a particular subject.

Keywords: *autism spectrum disorder, Asperger's syndrome, Asperger's syndrome's characteristics, psychoanalysis*

1. INTRODUCTION

Humans can establish their thought or ideas in literary works. Literary work itself can be defined as written, artistic works, but not only in a writing form (Rexroth, 2020). It also can be a movie, recording, and anything else that can deliver beneficial information, mainly those with high and lasting artistic value. As mentioned previously, one of the literary works is a movie. Basically, a movie is a story that is recorded using technology such as a camera as the visual recording and is usually shown in theatre or television. It can attract people because it provides the viewer with the combination of visualization, music, dialogue, lighting, sound, and special

effects, so the viewer would be easy to imagine and get the point of the whole story. In this era, there are scriptwriters that inspired to make or adapt a movie from the autism spectrum disorder phenomenon. Based on the Autism Research Institute stated that autism is a developmental illness that can be seen by the symptom during the beginning three years since born. Its official diagnostic, namely autism spectrum disorder or ASD. This disorder is a neurodevelopment nuisance that affects language development and a children's capability to communicate, interact, behave as well. Autism Spectrum Disorder also includes Asperger Syndrome, autistic disorder, and Pervasive Developmental Disorders, Not Otherwise Spectrum (PDD-NOS).

Nowadays, most people may not know how to distinguish between these three ASD types, including Asperger's Syndrome, Autistic Disorder, and PDD-NOS, because they have similar characteristics. This present research is aimed to deliver the information regarding this syndrome and to find out the characteristics of Asperger's syndrome, which is shown in the movie. One of the examples of the movie that adapted an autism spectrum disorder, especially Asperger's Syndrome, is *A Brilliant Young Mind (X+Y)* movie. *A Brilliant Young Mind (X+Y)* movie is a movie about a young boy named Nathan that has a weak ability to communicate with people, which impacts his social life. Nathan was diagnosed with autism, and his father was the only person who could make Nathan comfortable to communicate normally, but when he was nine, his father and he was in a car accident, which made his father was dead and made him traumatic. Since that day, he only talked when he wanted to. But, besides his weakness, he is a really brilliant young man who has a superior IQ. He loves mathematics so much and was taken by his mother to the mathematics Olympiad camp when he was a child. Nathan begins his journey when he was young in China to follow IMO (International Mathematics Olympiad), in which he deals with an unexpected obstacle which he never thought of before, and met his first love. That is a brief synopsis of the movie that be the data source.

Based on the synopsis, the researchers would like to identify the characteristics of Asperger's syndrome shown in the movie. The reason why the researcher used this movie as the data source is that it provided all the data that was needed, and this movie was the first movie that the researcher watched and thought that *A Brilliant Young Mind (X+Y) movie* was appropriate to analyze.

There are also three previous studies which compared with present research, and those are: the first research is entitled *Asperger's Syndrome as Seen in Christopher Boone's Characterization in Mark Haddon's The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* written

by Satyarini (2009), which she focused on the characterization and the emphasize of the Asperger's Syndrome, while the research present is focused in the characteristics of the Asperger's syndrome. And then, in the previous study, the previous researcher is focused on analyzing the characterization of the main character, which can be the guide for the researcher because the research has a similar problem. The second research is entitled *A Psychological Problems Suffered by Anna and Sara in Jodi Picoult's novel My Sister's Keeper (A Freudian Psychoanalysis)* (Padilla, 2015). In her research, the researcher focused on how the main characters solve their psychological problems. The present researcher used this thesis as the review of related literature because the previous research was analyzed the psychological problems which the research present is focused on describing characteristics of Asperger's syndrome. The third is an article entitled *The Analysis of The Face Threatening Act Delivered by Asperger's Syndrome in Adam Movie (Analisa Tindakan Mengancam Harga Diri Yang Disampaikan Oleh Penderita Sindrom Asperger Dalam Film Adam)* (Anwar et al., 2013), which discussed analyzing the difficulties in pragmatics aspects that the Main Character has. They analyze it through the face-threatening that shows in the movie. The differences between the previous research with present research are in the data sources used and the problems that are used in the present research. The previous study analyzed the pragmatics aspect and used qualitative and quantitative methods. The present research is focused on discussing the characteristics of Asperger's syndrome, as well as using the qualitative method only. And then, in previous research, the researcher focused on the syndrome of the Main Character, which could be the lead for the present researcher when researching using similar theories.

This research used the theory from (Mesibov et al., 2001) to identify the characteristics of Asperger's Syndrome, which Nathan as the Main Character has. Characteristics are a quality that makes people or things or groups different from each other. Same as Asperger's syndrome, which has several characteristics which can be the media to identify about this syndrome. "Some characteristics of Asperger Syndrome are: less social activity, fewer friends, no interest in friends, unable to express emotions, do not expose eyes, less expression on the face". Myles and Simpson (2002) also stated that there are several characteristics of people that suffer from Asperger's Syndrome, among others; social, behavioral, and temperamental, restricted range of interest, intellectual and cognitive, academic, sensory, and motor characteristics of a student with Asperger's syndrome. As well as (Mesibov et al., 2001) statement that stated: "for a diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome, at least two social characteristics and at least one of the behavior/interest

characteristics must be met."Those social characteristics and behavior/interest will be drawn below:

1.1 Qualitative Impairment in Reciprocal Social Interaction

People with "impairment" doesn't mean that their behavior is fully absent, but it is only restricted to common people. There are four characteristics of social interaction as mentioned below:

1.1.1 Impairment in Multiple Nonverbal Behavior

In this characteristic, People with Asperger's syndrome rarely display facial expressions. When happy, people with this disorder will find it difficult to smile or cannot laugh even though they receive funny's jokes as well as using restricted body language such as pointing, head nodding, etc.

1.1.2 Difficult to Build a Friendship

People that suffer from Asperger's syndrome will deal with difficulties in making a friend or even developing a friendship because they are not interested in having a friend and are confused about how to start socializing. Frequently, people that suffer from this syndrome are left devastated and depressed (Emmons et al., 2005, pp.133-135). It is caused by the disorder of the nervous system that influences people's capability to communicate and making interaction with others

1.1.3 A shortage of Sharing Pleasure, Readability, or Achievement with Others

In this characteristic, people with AS are not interested in sharing what they like or what achievements they have made. For instance, when people with Asperger's syndrome see their favorite objects or something that they like, they are mostly not interested in sharing it with other people and just want to keep it for their selves. While normally, people generally love to share their interests with others.

1.1.4 Lack of Social or Emotional Reciprocity

Lack of social or temperamental retaliation means people with this syndrome have problems in taking and giving in social interactions. They generally faced difficulty in maintaining this interaction. For example, people with AS might not know the excitement while describing a beautiful weekend that was presented by their friends or classmate.

Because of that, they are failed or even cannot respond to it, which makes they are considered less sensitive.

1.2 Restricted Repetitive and Stereotyped Patterns of Behavior, Readability, and Activities

This diagnostic criterion involves clearly unusual behavior rather than impaired or limited skills (Mesibov et al., 2001). There are several elements of behavior/interests as mentioned below:

1.2.1 Abnormal Restricted Patterns of Readability either in Intensity or Focus

People with Asperger's syndrome, which is not too severe, are usually interested in playing with only one thing, frequently with unusual things, for instance, sticks, rubber gloves, or pantyhose, or they love to play with their toys in a different way. At the same time, older people with Asperger's syndrome love to learn about very limited topics, for instance, weather maps, zip codes, etc.

1.2.2 Routines or Ritual which Never Change and Inflexible

Repeating their routines every day is one of the characteristics of this syndrome. Routinely doing the same thing repeatedly and not accepting changes in the surroundings is a hallmark of people with Asperger's Syndrome. One of the most visible signs is liking to eat the same type of food for some time (Myles et al., 2002). People with Asperger's syndrome might become resentful if there is a change in their daily routine.

1.2.3 Always do a Repetitive Motor Mannerism

This characteristic means that children or adults who suffer from Asperger's syndrome (AS) have behavior that repeatedly did. One of the behaviors that they usually do is hand-flapping. However, hand-flapping is usually used when people are excited about something, but in this case, people with AS will do the hand-flapping repeatedly.

1.2.4 Interest in a piece of some Objects

This is one of the most often characteristics observed in the autism field. People with AS have the interest to smell their toys, repeatedly slamming the door, etc. In odd moments, some of them are the focus of thinking about small parts of their universe, for instance, mathematical calculations, and the others. Those characteristics may identify

people with Asperger's syndrome.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The data source in this research is taken from the movie entitled "*A Brilliant Young Mind (X+Y)*". This movie was released on 5th September 2014 and directed by Morgan Matthews. The duration of this movie is 1 hour, 51 minutes. The researcher chose this movie as the data source instead of using another movie that exists because this movie is the first autism spectrum syndrome movie that the researcher watched, and this movie can provide the data that needed to solve the problems that exist because of those reasons, the researcher decided to use this movie as the data source. This research is used a qualitative method to analyze the problem. According to (Fossey et al., 2002), qualitative research aims to address questions concerned with developing an understanding of the meaning and experience dimensions of humans' lives and social worlds. The data collections used in this research are according to the library research. There are several steps used by the researcher when collecting the data as follows. First, the researcher collected the data by watching the movie repeatedly while analyzing and matching it with the script. And then, the researcher focused on all the dialogue utterances uttered by the Main Character and highlighted which dialogue that shows the types of autism spectrum disorder and the characteristics of Asperger's syndrome to make it easy to analyze as well as did the screen capture of the movie that shows the data which needed to analyze.

After collecting the data, the research did the analysis of the data using the qualitative method. The analysis of the data, for instance: the researchers matched the script with the dialog in the data source, as well as took a screen capture as the documentation that supported the analysis of the problems using (Mesibov et al., 2001)'s theory and described each data to explain the data in detail, based on the theories that used. The formal and the informal method is applied in presenting the data to describe the data analysis. The formal way is used to present the data through screen capture, and table and the informal way used to present the data result which collected according to the identification of the characteristics of this syndrome to the Main Character and be described using detailed explanation on each data and accompanied by documentation (screen capture).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researcher will convey the discussion about the characteristics of

Asperger's Syndrome, which Nathan, as the Main Character in A Brilliant Young Mind (aka "X+Y") movies, suffered. Nathan is reflected as a brilliant child who earned a place in United Kingdom's math team. But he cannot socialize with others, etc. Based on the previous chapter, this chapter contains the answer to the research question such as *What is the characteristic of Asperger's syndrome that shows in the movie* using (Mesibov et al., 2001)'s theory.

3.1 Characteristics of Asperger's Syndrome, which Nathan has

Asperger's syndrome has two main characteristics and four sub-types at each characteristic. Regarding Nathan's characteristics, he only has eight characteristics which are divided into four sub-types at Qualitative Impairment in Reciprocal Social Interaction and two sub-types at Restricted Repetitive and Stereotyped Patterns of Behavior, Interests, and Activities. Here is the several severe evidence which draws the characteristics of Nathan's.

Table 1 Data of Characteristics of Asperger's Syndrome Found in Nathan

NO	DATA	CHARACTERISTIC
1	Richard was announced the winner who earned a place in UK's math team, and Nathan is one of them. Different from other students that qualified, which shows that they're happy and cheered up with their friends, Nathan just shows a flat facial expression because he doesn't know how to respond to it.	Impairment in Multiple Nonverbal Behavior
2	Mr. Humphreys came to Nathan's house and asked Nathan to invite him in because Nathan just let Mr. Humphreys stand outside his house.	Shortage of Social or Temperamental Retaliation
3	Nathan wrote anything about math in his book, while a 9-year-old boy does not understand the mathematical formulation yet, but Nathan understood it when he was a child.	Interest in a piece of some Objects (Math)

3.1.1 Qualitative Impairment in Reciprocal Social Interaction

Asperger's syndrome can identify with at least there are two of the following characteristics in people's social interaction. People with "impairment" doesn't mean that their behavior is fully absent, but it is only restricted to common people. Nathan, as the

Main Character, only has two out of four sub-characteristics which will be drawn below.

1. Impairment in Multiple Nonverbal Behavior

This characteristic shows that people with this syndrome are facing difficulty smiling, crying, or difficult laughing even though they receive funny's jokes. In this movie, this characteristic shows when Nathan earned a place in UK's math team, and he just shows flat expression.

Data 1



Figure 1, Nathan Successfully Earned Place In United Kingdom's Math Olympiad's Team

Richard : "Right! No point in dilly-dallying, I suppose. I'll pin your scores up on the board in a second. The five outstanding students guaranteed a place at the IMO in Cambridge this year is... Isaac. Lee Jing. Rebecca. Pav. And Ben. The last place was very tight between Nathan and Luke. Both scores are somewhat disappointing, but one of you will have to go to Cambridge. So, by the smallest fraction of a point, the last place on the team goes to Nathan. The six of you will be hosting the Chinese team at your own homes, and I'll see you all in Cambridge next week. Onward, Christian soldiers."

(A Brilliant Young Mind (X+Y), Minutes 01:13:37)

According to the picture and the dialogue, Nathan didn't show any facial expression when Richard as the leader of the team, announced the students that successfully earned a place in UK's Math Team. Nathan just shows a flat expression in a happy situation, which shows that Nathan has difficulty in expressing his feeling through facial expression. At the same time, common people will reflect smile when they succeed in doing something. It can be identified as the Asperger's Syndrome type.

2. Shortage of Social or Temperamental Retaliation

People with Asperger's syndrome have difficulty in taking and giving in social interactions. They generally faced difficulty in maintaining this interaction. Because of that, they are failed or even cannot respond to some interaction which makes they are considered less sensitive. Nathan, as the Main Character, shows these kinds of sub-characteristics as follows.

Data 2

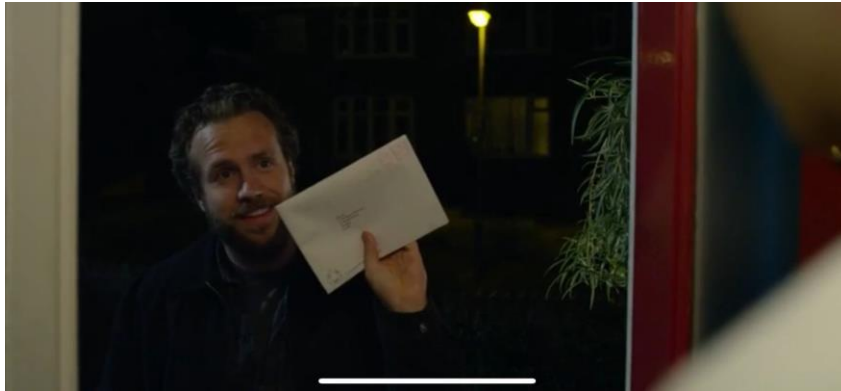


Figure 2, Mr. Humphreys comes to Nathan's house.

- Mr. Humphreys : "As promised, I come bearing news. Are you sure it's okay if I stand out here? I don't wanna put you out."
Nathan : "Yeah."
Mr. Humphreys: "Invite me in, Nathan."
Nathan : "Come in."
Mr. Humphreys : "Thank you very much."

(A Brilliant Young Mind (X+Y), Minutes 00:20:39)

The dialogue above shows that Nathan didn't let Mr. Humphreys into his house when Mr. Humphreys brought a letter. Mr. Humphreys said, "*Are you sure it's okay if I stand out here?*" in purpose to persuade Nathan to let him in, but Nathan said, "*yeah.*" It showed that Nathan didn't understand how to greet guests by letting them outside his house without offering them to come in.

3.1.2 Restricted Repetitive and Stereotyped Patterns of Behavior, Interests, and Activities

The autistic disorder can identify with at least there is one of the following characteristics in people's behavior/interactions. This diagnostic criterion involves clearly unusual behavior rather

than impaired or limited skills (Mesibov et al., 2001). In this movie, Nathan only shows one sub-characteristic as mentioned below:

1. Interest in a piece of some Objects (Math)

This is one of the most often characteristics observed in the autism field. People with Asperger's Syndrome have the interest to smell their toys, repeatedly slamming the door, etc. In odd moments, some of them are the focus of thinking about small parts of their universe, for instance, mathematical calculations, etc. In this case, Nathan, as the Main Character, has an interest in mathematical calculation.

Data 3



Figure 3, Nathan type about mathematic formulation in his book

- Julie : "That looks complicated. That's not schoolwork, then? Wait, why don't you try and explain it to me? I might be able to help you."
Nathan : "You can't."
Julie : "Why not?"
Nathan : "You're not clever enough."

(A Brilliant Young Mind (X+Y), Minutes 00:06:57)

Based on the picture above shows that Nathan has been interested in math since he was a child. It is evidence that Nathan is different from other children because a nine-year-old boy can calculate a mathematical calculation. Nathan drowns everything about math in his book, and he can understand it. Julie (his mom) said, "That looks complicated. That's not schoolwork then?" it means that his mother which older than him is difficult to understand what he wrote.

4. CONCLUSION

According to the result of the analysis, the researcher found that Nathan, as the Main Character in A Brilliant Young Mind (X+Y) movie has two characteristics of Asperger's syndrome such as Qualitative Impairment in Reciprocal Social Interaction and Restricted Repetitive and Stereotyped Patterns of Behavior, Readability, and Activities which each character has several sub-characters which each character has their own four sub-characteristics.

In this movie, Nathan, as the Main Character is, suffers from a total of three sub-characteristics shown in the movie, such as in Qualitative Impairment in Reciprocal Social Interaction, Nathan suffered from two sub characteristics, for instance in impairment in Multiple Nonverbal Behavior. In this sub-characteristic, Nathan shows that he struggles to show a facial expression when he is happy or sad. And he also cannot maintain an interaction which is shown when Mr. Humphreys came to his house, and he just let Mr. Humphreys outside his house until Mr. Humphreys told Nathan to let him in.

In the second characteristic, which is Restricted Repetitive and Stereotyped Patterns of Behavior, Readability, and Activities, Nathan only shows one sub-characteristic such as Nathan really Interest in Parts of some Objects such as mathematics which drawn by the picture that Nathan wrote anything about math on his book when he was nine.

REFERENCES

- Anwar, A. M., Anam, S., & Wisasonko. (2013). *the Analysis of the Face Threatening Act Delivered By Asperger. I*(November), 89–95.
- Emmons, P. G., & Anderson, L. M. (2005). More About Asperger's Syndrome. In *Understanding Sensory Dysfunction: Learning, Development and Sensory Dysfunction in Autism Spectrum Disorders, ADHD, Learning Disabilities and Bipolar Disorder* (pp. 133–135). Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Fossey, E., Harvey, C., Mcdermott, F., & Davidson, L. (2002). Understanding and Evaluating Qualitative Research. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*.
- Mesibov, G., Shea, V., & Adams, L. (2001). Asperger Syndrome and High Functioning. In *Order A Journal On The Theory Of Ordered Sets And Its Applications* (pp. 25–30). Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Myles, B. S., & Simpson, R. L. (2002). Asperger Syndrome: An Overview of Characteristics. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 17(3), 132–137. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10883576020170030201>
- Padilla, Z. Z. (2015). *Psychological Problems Suffered by Anna and Sara in Jodi Picoult's Novel My Sister's Keeper (a Freudian Psychoanalysis)*.

Rexroth, K. (2020). Literature. In *Britannia*.

Satyarini, E. (2009). *Asperger's Syndrome as Seen in Christopher's Boone's Characterization in Mark Haddon's the Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*.