INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES BULLETIN
ISSN: (E) 3007-1917 (P) 3007-1909
Volume 3, Issue 10, 2025

THE ENDLESS STRUGGLE WITHIN: INTROVERSION AND THE IDENTITY OF A YOUNG GIRL IN *FANGIRL*

Khushbu Ramzan[*1], Tasmeet Nazakat[2], Safa Naveed[3], Jaweria Muzammil[4], Sibgha Sarfraz[5], Iman Ghulam Mustafa[6], Laiba Siddique[7]

[*1,2,3,4,5,6,7]*Undergraduate Students, University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Lahore*

Corresponding Author: *
Khushbu Ramzan
DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17403977

Received	Revised	Accepted	Published
11 July 2025	30 August, 2025	08 October 2025	21 October 2025

ABSTRACT

The article examines how introverted individuals face their problems and presents alternative resolutions. The research investigates how Cath functions as the leading role within the Rainbow Rowell novel Fangirl while emphasising this point. The previous articles explained why introversion exists in people, together with society's common misinterpretation that quiet behaviour makes someone shy or lazy. The current research demonstrates how introverted individuals solve their problems, along with their responses in specific situations. The storyline of Cath reveals that introversion does not represent a form of weakness. Introduced research proves that being genuine to oneself leads to success for introverted people. Writing Simon Snow fanfiction serves Cath as an important mechanism to flee from her life difficulties. Through writing, Cath both communicates her emotions and meets fellow creative individuals who value her work. Writing enables Cath to develop awareness of her inner feelings, which builds up her self-esteem. The study examines how the relationships between Cath and others shape her personal development. The role Levi serves her is providing support without putting pressure on her. Due to his guidance, Cath develops both her writing talent and her ability to confront her fears while increasing her self-confidence. People should embrace their characters while utilizing their distinctive talents of creativity, together with self-awareness and emotional intelligence abilities, to navigate the outside world. The development of Cath demonstrates that introversion exists as a strength, not a weakness, while introverts can achieve success by remaining authentic to their personalities.

Keywords: *Introverted individuals, Simon Snow fanfiction, Personal Growth, Coping mechanisms, fear of confrontation, Relationships*

INTRODUCTION

Rainbow Rowell is a contemporary American author who is best known for producing young adult and adult fiction. She became popular with her bestselling books such as Eleanor & Park and *Fangirl*. Known for her moving and lifelike stories, Rowell created Cath, a fanfiction writer and a shy freshman in college whose major is English.

Personality traits modify the way people engage with their environment and thus affect the ways they perceive themselves as well as their relationships and ways of dealing with stress. Natural shyness and social anxiety, along with perceived social incompetence, form the basis for society's confusion about introversion, which they incorrectly identify as a weakness. Extroversion stands at the forefront of public admiration because society links it to leadership abilities, with confidence and success indicators. The dominant social norms force introverts to match extroverted characteristics, which serve to show them as socially defective or lacking competency. Introversion represents a unique manner of comprehending the world,

yet people do not recognize it as a normal personality trait. Introverted individuals take time for contemplation while using their imagination to create innovative ideas, and they find worth in deep discussions instead of superficial chit-chat, yet they need time alone in contrast to being constantly around other people. The media presents introverted individuals as if they need to defeat their basic personality traits to achieve societal success. Novels show this tendency by showing central characters who become more socially engaged versions of themselves to indicate their personal development.

The story of *Fangirl* by Rowell (2013) showcases a different perspective on personal growth since it does not demand that introverts surrender their nature. The story follows Cath Avery, a college freshman who battles with personal anxieties and changes and issues within her family. Writing fanfiction enables Cath to express herself creatively while finding solace through interaction with other enthusiasts of the fanfiction community. Cath's exploration in the novel focuses on the mastery of different world responses without needing to change her inherently introverted nature.

Through literature, people find a dual function as it provides them with an opportunity to see themselves and the outside world. The novel stands unique among its peers because it shows introverted behaviours in their real entirety among teenage characters. *Fangirl* diverges from conventional coming-of-age narratives because its protagonist becomes successful and confident when she explores her thoughts, develops her creativity, and accepts herself as she is.

The study concentrates on *Fangirl* as the book provides a genuine depiction of introversion that connects to real-life experiences. Many works of fiction either: Introversion receive inaccurate portrayals through media, which depict these personalities as unable to socialize or content that tries to fix their personality. Leadership roles in stories should represent a variety of personalities, including both introverted and extroverted characters. Introducing transformational elements to introverted characters while establishing success criteria through the medium of social engagement.

The narrative of *Fangirl* proves different because its main character succeeds without adopting extroverted behaviour. She develops confidence without abandoning her preference for introversion. Through her experience, Cath gains new meaningful relationships while developing better writing ability, along with the ability to confront challenges her way. *Fangirl* shows excellence as a literary work for interpreting contemporary introversion, together with coping strategies and personality development.

The research scope requires clear definitions of the main concepts for complete comprehension. The personality trait of introversion marks people who feel most comfortable spending time alone while deep thinking and forming meaningful relationships. Extroversion and shyness share similar traits, although introverts make a distinct choice instead of experiencing social anxiety due to their introversion. Human beings deploy coping mechanisms as systematic approaches to deal with stressful emotional situations and life problems. Through fanfiction writing, Cath finds both emotional release and mental rest, which play dual roles as ways to cope. The story of Cath in the book *Fangirl* reveals how introverted people can grow while rejecting traditional extroverted social norms. Online fan cultures through fan practices introduce introverts to a safe space where they cannot only explore their creativity but also establish interpersonal connections. Through their fanfiction, Cath discovers herself while connecting with audience members who share her appreciation for the story.

Many scholars have studied *Fangirl* from diverse interpretive angles, but the specific influence of introversion on Cath's advancement remains understudied in academic research. Studies about *Fangirl* lack a comprehensive investigation of Cath's introversion and her personal development methods. Research about Cath primarily investigates her social anxiety but avoids analysing her introverted method of coping. Very little research exists about how Cath deals with various situations by using behaviours that reflect her introversion. The emotional support capacity of fandom culture to introverts requires additional investigation, in addition to studies mapping

the identity development patterns. A more detailed analysis must be performed to understand how fanfiction serves Cath both as an escape and a means to increase her confidence. Literature about Cath's journey mainly concentrates on her insecurities while inadequately studying the value of supportive connections, such as Levi and Wren, for her development. The introverted traits within Levi and Wren contribute to shaping Cath's self-perception in different ways. Most literary examinations of personal growth depend on increased social connectivity in their analysis. The narrative of *Fangirl*, demonstrates that Cath grows confident while still embracing traits of introversion. The research examines Cath's introversion to discover its effect on her coping techniques alongside creative output and personal advancement.

The main goal of this research investigates how reserved people adjust to obstacles by attaining personal progress through methods distinct from emerging as extroverted. The study aims to answer six specific research questions as its core objectives. The introverted personality of Cath directs the development of her coping approaches. We need to examine how composing fanfiction enhances Cath's emotional strength alongside building her self-assurance. What influence do Levi, Wren and her professor have on her process of accepting herself? *Fangirl* fights against the cultural norm that prescribes introverts to shift their personalities to succeed in life. The research answers these questions to deliver better insights regarding introversion throughout contemporary literature.

The study holds great importance because it confronts the conventional societal belief that achievement requires extraverted personality traits. The study establishes that introverts have no requirement to expand their outgoing behaviour to attain confidence or reach success. Instead, they can: Build your resilience capacity through exploration of your inner self and by using imaginative ways. People with introversion must build authentic bonds with others who appreciate the way they need room to grow and connect deeply. Each person shall accomplish their path toward achieving personal growth. This article uses Cath Avery to create insights about introverts who develop themselves without abandoning their intrinsic characteristics. The study results will strengthen university research about literary personalities while simultaneously validating introverted lifestyles outside academic environments.

The portrayal of introversion in *Fangirl* by Rowell (2013) creates an empowering display that demonstrates how introverted people handle difficulties when building self-assurance and growing independently from themselves. The study investigates how Cath handles challenges and analyses fanfiction as a mental health tool, plus examines her interactions with others during this period. The research evaluation shows introversion functions as a unique method toward success because it respects authentic self-reflection and self-consciousness.

Literature Review

Several studies have done psychological and literary analyses based on *Fangirl* by Rowell (2013) involving the character Cath Avery, her emotions, her introverted nature, and her family life. Nevertheless, most of such studies also portray introversion in black and white terms and depict it as a vice or a deficiency or fail to notice that introversion also has the potential to be a channel of growth. This literature review observes some academic articles and determines important gaps that the current research would like to fill, in this case, how *Fangirl* reflects introversion as a complex and changeable characteristic.

Hersi Intan Tarsila (2016), in the article, "The Struggle of Cath Avery Against Her Introvert Personality on *Fangirl* by Rainbow Rowell," also introduces the trait of introversion as something wrong with Cath that she needs to fight against to become a socially functioning person. The critique is presented in a form that focuses on conflict resolution, where Cath is said to come out of a state of being introverted and achieve success. This interpretation, however, overlooks the fact that the introvert nature of Cath is not a form of limitation, but something that helps provide the character with the capacity to be focused, deep and robust emotionally. This paper fails to address the adaptiveness of Cath, who has an introverted personality, in the aspects of fanfiction creation

and the aversion to overstimulating environments.

By the same token, the article "Anxiety as Reflected in Rainbow Rowell's *Fangirl* Novel (2013): A Psychoanalytic Approach," by Ardelia Davy Inggrita (2020), attempts to conclude that the character of Cath is obsessed with anxiety and trying to be defensive out of being wounded emotionally. Although the inclusion of anxiety is factual in Cath's story, the fear angle is being used to explain everything that Cath does. Her loneliness is deliberate, whereas she would use the moments to self-process and to be creative. This perspective undermines the merits of the psychological behaviour of introversion, which includes contemplation, emotional control, and slow-walking social interaction.

In the article "Cath's Anxiety in Rainbow Rowell's *Fangirl*" by Musdalifa Rumatiga and Tri Pramesti (2023), Cath's behaviour is simplified to a complex of people with social phobia by labelling her discomfort with going to events on campus or eating in a dining hall as avoidance reasons. This equation of introversion with anxiety does not take into account a quite important difference between the two, no matter how similar they may be: introversion is an attribute of the personality, whereas anxiety is a disorder. The fear of social environments is not her main concern, as she prefers gradual, more intimate interaction like the one she has with Levi. This omission of the psychological understanding of the character by the article is because of not consider this angle of thought.

In "Causes and Consequences of Introvert Personality: A Study in Rainbow Rowell's *Fangirl*," the author M. Arockia Lancia Joyce (2024) explores the causes and consequences of introverted personality, but this study is rather superficial. Although it identifies some of her external demons, like family issues as well as academic and academic stress, it does not discuss how these are processed internally, as well as how her introversion helps her emotional fortification. The coping mechanisms embraced by Cath, such as self-reflection and emotional expression in fanfiction, are not described, even though they are the main elements of her growth in the novel.

The article by Hat Pujiati, Irana Astutiningsih, & Maya Novita Sari (2015) is connected to fandom culture, which is devoted to the communitarian and expressive aspect of writing fanfiction. The work sheds light on the neurotic component of the fan base but gives little consideration to issues of Cath at an emotional level and how fanfiction can be a coping tool to help her. The act of writing is not only a cultural practice but is to Cath a personal practicum of survival, healing and self-reclamation.

In the article "On Writing and College Life: Rainbow Rowell's *Fangirl* as a Campus Novel" by Petr Antene (2022), the consideration of the setting related to the academic and institutional context is used to classify *Fangirl* as a campus novel. It examines how Cath manages her life at the university, but it does not technically examine her writing as therapeutic. It appears in the analysis that creativity in writing helps Cath to emotionally take control of her life, cope with the trauma of the past and identify herself despite the weight of her problems.

When compared to other works that focus on the personal features of Cath, Dianisa Cintami Anandithа and Anik Cahyaning Rahayu (2023) concentrate on the emotional turbulence in the Avery family. Using a Bowen Family Systems Theory, they observe such symptoms of dysfunctional issues, as emotional neglect, lack of effective communication, and reversal of roles. The Avery family is classified by them as a mixed type of pathological, chaotic, and chronic conflict type of family. The article is good in giving us a picture of how the family trauma affected the psychological condition of Cath. Yet, it does not make explicitly clear how these relations link to the introversion of Cath or her writing habits. Their study forms part of the basis of this research, in which the retreat into fanfiction and solitude by Cath was interpreted as a deliberate coping mechanism, both temperamental and traumatized.

These sources of information help to have an admirable reflection on Cath Avery in combination with her concerns and character. Nonetheless, a lot of them present introversion as an issue to correct, or they simply define it as a symptom of anxiety or malfunctioning. They do not realize how introversion helps in being creative, emotionally sensitive, and sturdy. Moreover, not many talk about how fanfiction

is both an emotional and a healing window to Cath, regardless of its importance in her understanding and development.

This study addresses those voids by providing a more moderate and strong-empowering reading of introversion in *Fangirl*. Literary mixture of psychological theory and analysis will demonstrate that introverted characters Cath and her inward-looking nature, as well as her responses and creative expressions to the trauma in the family, are all part of an integrated process of self-discovery and development.

Description

This research studies the complicated connection between introversion and personal growth by carefully analysing the novel *Fangirl* by Rowell (2013), using both psychology and literary analysis. The main purpose is to show that introversion should not be reduced to being seen as a social handicap or a sign of some psychological problem. Instead, it describes introversion as a detailed and changing trait that, despite being misunderstood, can lead to maturity, self-understanding and growth. The study then explains the development of Cath Avery, the central character and looks at how her introverted nature guides her choices and how she relates to people.

The major aim is to explore why *Fangirl* shows introversion as something beneficial, rather than something limiting. Another response is to study Cath's escape into making fanfiction and her solitary ways, which both act as copying mechanisms and help her understand who she is. *The Introvert Advantage* by Martin Olsen Laney (2002) is incorporated into this research. It brings together psychological studies and critical analysis of novels to present a fair and encouraging view of introverts in literature. The study aims to address things that were missed so far in studies on introversion by analysing seven scholarly articles and paying close attention to the main plot moments in *Fangirl*.

It is meaningful, but little to consider how Cath's being introverted helps her to deal with emotions and create things. Her behaviour, which is typically referred to as signs of anxiety or not fitting in, is often misunderstood and not fully understood by both critics and the public. For this reason, people usually attribute Cath's shyness about cafeteria meals to social phobia.

She finished getting ready with plenty of time to eat breakfast, but didn't feel up to braving the dining hall; she still didn't know where it was, or how it worked. (Rowell, 2013, Chapter 2). It appears to me at first like avoidance, but below this lies a clear act of agency. Cath doesn't avoid others just out of fear, but also wants to be by herself to avoid stimulation and better understand herself, which are typical introverted traits. "Introverts feel "just right" with less stimulation, as when they sip wine with a close friend, solve a crossword puzzle, or read a book" (Cain, 2012, Introduction).

The research examines the path taken by Cath by looking into seven key articles on *Fangirl* and discovering that there are common methodological and interpretive flaws. Tarsila (2016) portrays introversion as something Cath has to overcome through conflict. This simple outline of "battling versus achieving success" hides the unique strengths of introverts in Cath, for instance, her qualities of patience, depth, focus and resilience. What is more, writing fanfiction greatly influenced Cath's feelings, but is not analysed by the author. She finds in writing a way to make sense of what happened in her life, build a sense of self and reach out to others in the same way she does best writing.

Cath's introversion is once again interpreted by Inggrita (2020) as caused solely by a series of anxious defences. The paper does detect anxiety in the story, but it overlooks the deeper development of Cath's thinking and emotions, which end up boosting her confidence. Reducing introversion to a set of symptoms hides the idea that introversion can also have positive effects.

Thinking deeply allows introverts to develop creative ideas and strong emotions, which Cath's fanfiction and personal life demonstrate. "Introverted people who balance their energy have perseverance and the ability to think independently, focus deeply, and work creatively" (Laney, 2002, Chapter 1). Some experts say that introversion can be easily mixed up with social anxiety.

The article by Rumatiga & Pramesti (2023) labels Cath's social challenges as signs of a phobia, without realizing that choosing the

calm setting and being choosy about socializing fits better with introversion. Introverts do not always feel anxious or afraid and are different from shy people; they usually prefer and enjoy the closeness of one-to-one conversations. The way Cath and Levi build their relationship in *Fangirl* demonstrates this argument well. By not jumping into many overwhelming social events, Cath lets a gentle and secure connection happen, which respects who she is and gives her contentment.

Joyce (2024) categorizes Cath as an introvert, but the analysis is limited and does not go into depth. She briefly describes what Cath faces, like family problems and external problems in her life, yet does not comment on how these affected her unique abilities. The piece ignores that Cath does not just retreat, but also uses inward thoughts to build her identity and remain in control of her life. Cath takes time to focus on her emotions, and these periods often result in creative work like her Simon Snow fanfiction, which takes her out of her troubles and lets her control the events she creates. On another note, the article by Pujiati, Astutiningsih, & Sari (2015) looks at Rowell's writing and sees fanfiction communities as open and encouraging places. However, the story highlights how the group of active fans operates rather than explores Cath's thinking about the subject.

To Cath, fanfiction is more than a pastime or something she shares with others; it helps her cope emotionally. Being part of the fandom inspires structure, supports her confidence, provides a strong sense of belonging and supports her privacy. When fandom is regarded only as a subculture or style of discussion, its therapeutic benefits are not noticed.

Writing fanfiction about Simon Snow can then be seen to help Cath firm up her identity, better define emotions and restructure a sense of agency. To further this point, Anandittha & Rahayu (2023) present new information by exploring the dysfunctional construct of the Avery family that was created by emotional neglect and ineffective communication and role reversal of parents. According to the authors, introvertedness is not the only aspect of the psychological state of Cath, as she is also a response to the long-term family trauma. Cath is isolated, and experiencing bipolar disorder, her father and abandonment issues on the part of her mother make her introversion her survival tactic. The article clarifies that the fanfiction that is written by Cath is a robust method to cope with the wounds of emotions that cannot be healed. It makes it important to emphasize that Cath does not use writing as an escapist measure; simply, it is her way of healing and building an identity as she feels unsafe and now needs a place that would make her feel safe. This is an insightful way of revealing her aloneness and how introversion became a defence

tool as well as the means of self-expression through creativity.

Several literary analysis, for example, Antene's (2022) study the setting and youthful themes in *Fangirl* but typically see Cath's fanfiction as an academic piece. However, such claims overlook the ways her writings support her psychological healing and boost her sense of self-worth. For Cath, writing fiction is a way for her to prove her strength, her worth who and who she is. Her difficult relationship with her family and uncertainty about her studies make this function very important.

Conclusion

This paper is a revisionist account of the concept of introversion in young adult literature through the lens of *Fangirl*. The behaviour, thoughts and decisions of Cath Avery help readers to see that introversion is not the passive social withdrawal or pathology but the active mode of being in the world that prizes reflection, emotional honesty and depth over social performance.

The significant inference here is that introversion of Cath is an emotional mooring in the face of college life and a dysfunctional family. Even her isolation as a coping tool is done wilfully, and fanfiction writing is not an escapist activity but more of a form of emotional work and empowerment. These findings destroy the extrovert-centered principles in literature and education, in which speaking and socialization skills are usually overrated. Fanfiction is a creative and empowering place that helps Cath to experiment with alternate identities, gain confidence, and also have a voice. The fact that she advanced to original writing, being

mentored by Professor Piper, demonstrates that introversion, plus creativity and discipline, can grow into practical success. Deeper self-understanding, emotional capability, and significant relations characterize Cath's development instead of her becoming more sociable.

The comparison with the twin sister of Cath, Wren, also portrays the legitimacy of introverted coping. The extroverted solving techniques of Wren: partying and avoidance, tend to lead to an unstable life; the introverted technique of Cath, on the other hand, leads to a stable and well-built sense of identity. The supportive role played by Levi illuminates the benefits of relationships and respecting the boundaries and pace of introverts, which is congruent with the research on personality psychology. His forbearance allows Cath to make emotional leaps at her own timing, so the implication is that the consideration and acceptance of introvert needs are crucial in interpersonal care.

Pedagogically, this research paper highlights the significance associated with the acknowledgment of varied modes of participation and presentation. Written and reflective advantages should be appreciated in educational settings as much as verbal and social engagement. Books such as *Fangirl* help us not to forget that emotional intelligence and self-knowledge are essential developmental products.

The research implies several topics of possible future investigations. Future comparative studies can be conducted on whether the pattern of coping and development applied by introverted main characters in other young adult novels, including Charlie in The Perks of Being a Wallflower or Frances in Radio Silence, is the same, determining whether *Fangirl* is a part of a larger literary phenomenon.

The next step could be interviewing or surveying introverted readers on how the representation of Cath affected their self-perception and empowerment, to be able to superimpose literary analysis with psychological and social impact.

Further, the investigation of fanfiction and fandom communities as introverts or socially anxious people therapy areas could help to clarify how these places offer a low-stress atmosphere to express emotions and creativity. Finally, this work contributes to the research on personality reflection in the literature and advocates the importance of being genuine in character development. The case of Cath Avery shows that introverts do not have to adapt to extrovert principles to thrive; on the contrary, by respecting their inner worlds, creating imagination and developing nourishing relationships can pursue genuine self-realization. *Fangirl* is, therefore, not only a coming-of-age story but a story of the subdued strength that is self-understanding and acceptance.

References

Anténe, P. (2022). On Writing and College Life: Rainbow Rowell's *Fangirl* as a Campus Novel. *East-West Cultural Passage*, *22(1)*, 100–114. https://doi.org/10.2478/ewcp-2022-0005

Joyce, M. A. L. (2024). Causes and Consequences of Introvert Personality: A Study in Rainbow Rowell's *Fangirl*. *Shanlax International Journal of English*, *12(S1-Feb)*, 126–129. ahttps://doi.org/10.34293/english.v12is1-feb.7461

Cain, S. (2012). Quiet : the Power of Introverts in a World That can't Stop Talking. Broadway Books, An Imprint Of The Crown Publishing Group, A Division Of Random House, Cop.

Cintami Ananditha, D., & Cahyaning Rahayu, A. (2023). Dysfunctional Family in Rainbow Rowell's *Fangirl*. *Proceeding of Undergraduate Conference on Literature, Linguistic, and Cultural Studies*, *2(1)*, 318–326. https://doi.org/10.30996/uncollcs.v2i1.2527

Inggrita, A. D. (2020). *Anxiety as reflected in Rainbow Rowell's Fangirl novel (2013) : A psychoanalytic approach.* (Undergraduate Thesis). Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta.

Laney, M. O. (2002). The introvert advantage : how to thrive in an extrovert world. Workman Pub.

Rumatiga, M., & Pramesti, T. (2023). Cath's Anxiety in Rainbow Rowell's *Fangirl*. *Austronesian: Journal of Language Science & Literature*, *2(3)*, 126–142. https://doi.org/10.59011/austronesian.2.3.2023.126-142

Pujiati, H., Astutiningsih, I., & Sari, M. N. (2015). The representation of fandom discourse in Rainbow Rowell's *Fangirl* . *Publikasi Budaya*, *3(2)*, 52–62.

Rowell, R. (2013). *Fangirl*. St. Martin's Griffin.

Tarsila, H. I. (2016). The struggle of Cath Avery against her introvert personality on *Fangirl* by Rainbow Rowell. *LANTERN: Journal on English Language, Culture and Literature*, *5(4)*, 145–160.

IEER
Institute for Excellence in Education & Research