



Haunted by Silence, Healed by Sound: Trauma and Identity in “Your Lie in April.”

anime

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the psychological themes portrayed in the anime **Your Lie in April** through a qualitative thematic analysis. The objective of the research is to examine how complex emotional experiences are represented through characters, dialogues, and key scenes. The study focuses on five major themes: trauma and conditioned fear, grief and emotional suppression, performance anxiety and self-doubt, healing through interpersonal connection, and identity reconstruction. A qualitative research design was adopted, where selected episodes of the series were analysed using thematic analysis. Relevant scenes and dialogues were identified and interpreted from a psychological perspective to understand the emotional and behavioural patterns of the characters, particularly the protagonist, Kousei Arima. The analysis highlights how past traumatic experiences influence present behaviour, especially in relation to fear, emotional withdrawal, and performance difficulties. It also demonstrates how interpersonal relationships contribute to emotional healing and personal growth over time. The findings suggest that *Your Lie in April* presents a realistic and nuanced portrayal of psychological struggles, making it a valuable medium for understanding emotional processes. The study contributes to the growing field of media psychology by showing how animated narratives can



reflect real-life mental health experiences and promote awareness. It also emphasizes the importance of emotional expression, support systems, and resilience in overcoming psychological challenges.

Introduction

Understanding human emotions and behaviour has been a central focus in psychology, particularly in relation to how individuals respond to stress, loss, and personal challenges. In recent years, visual media such as films and animated series have gained recognition as valuable tools for exploring psychological themes, as they present complex emotional experiences in a relatable and engaging manner. Research suggests that narrative-based media can enhance emotional awareness and empathy by allowing audiences to connect with characters and their experiences (Jann et al., 2024).

The anime *Your Lie in April* presents a compelling narrative that reflects various psychological processes through the life of its protagonist, Kousei Arima. Following the death of his mother, Kousei experiences significant emotional distress, which affects his ability to perform and express himself. His experiences can be understood through the lens of trauma, which has been shown to influence emotional regulation, memory, and behaviour (van der Kolk, 2014). In addition, his difficulty in playing the piano reflects elements of conditioned fear, where past negative experiences become associated with specific situations (Pavlov, 1927).

The series also portrays grief and emotional suppression, which are common responses to loss. According to Kübler-Ross (1969), individuals may experience different stages of grief, although not necessarily in a fixed order. Emotional suppression, as explained by Gross (1998), may help individuals manage immediate distress but can interfere with long-term emotional processing. Furthermore, the pressure to perform and fear of failure experienced by the protagonist can be linked to performance anxiety and low self-efficacy, where individuals doubt their abilities and avoid challenging situations (Bandura, 1997; Clark & Wells, 1995).

Interpersonal relationships play a significant role in the protagonist's journey, particularly in facilitating emotional healing and recovery. Attachment theory suggests that supportive relationships provide a sense of safety and help individuals cope with stress and adversity (Bowlby, 1969). Over time, the protagonist begins to reconstruct his identity, reflecting the concept of post-traumatic growth, where individuals develop a stronger sense of self after experiencing adversity (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).



Although limited research has been conducted specifically on *Your Lie* in April existing studies highlight its psychological depth and realistic portrayal of emotional struggles (Kurnia, 2018). This indicates a gap for further exploration, particularly through a thematic psychological analysis. Therefore, the present study aims to analyse selected episodes of the series using thematic analysis, focusing on key themes such as trauma and conditioned fear, grief and emotional suppression, performance anxiety and self-doubt, healing through interpersonal connection, and identity reconstruction. Through this approach, the study seeks to understand how psychological experiences are represented and how characters navigate emotional challenges over time.

Review of literature

Khalaf et al. (2024) investigated the relationship between prolonged grief and overall mental health using a survey-based research approach. The study aimed to understand how individuals cope with loss and identify factors that influence the persistence of grief symptoms. Key variables examined included emotional regulation, social support, and general psychological well-being. The findings revealed that individuals with stronger mental health were less likely to experience prolonged grief disorder. Effective emotional regulation enabled individuals to process their loss without becoming overwhelmed, while strong social support systems acted as protective factors that facilitated recovery. Conversely, unresolved grief was associated with increased anxiety, emotional instability, and reduced quality of life. The study highlighted that grief is a complex and multifaceted experience shaped by both internal coping mechanisms and external environmental influences. It emphasized that individuals who lacked adaptive coping strategies were more vulnerable to prolonged distress. A limitation of the study was its limited exploration of cultural differences in grief expression. Cultural norms significantly influence how individuals experience and express loss, and this aspect could have provided deeper insight into the findings. Despite this, the research contributed valuable knowledge by emphasizing the importance of emotional regulation and social support in managing grief. It reinforced the idea that improving mental health and strengthening interpersonal connections are essential for facilitating emotional recovery.

Jann et al. (2024) examined how exposure to traumatic narratives influences emotional responses and psychological understanding among audiences. Using empirical data, the study explored how individuals engage with emotionally intense content and how it shapes their perception of mental health issues. The findings indicated that exposure to such narratives increased empathy and awareness of psychological struggles. Participants reported a deeper understanding of trauma and greater sensitivity



toward individuals experiencing distress. This suggested that narrative-based representations could serve as effective tools for emotional engagement and mental health education. However, the study also found that individual responses varied depending on personal experiences and background. While some individuals found the narratives insightful, others experienced emotional discomfort or distress. A limitation of the study was the variability in responses, which made it difficult to generalize findings across populations. Despite this, the research contributed significantly by highlighting the role of media and storytelling in shaping psychological insight. It suggested that carefully designed narratives could be used to promote empathy and understanding of mental health issues.

Xu et al. (2024) explored the relationship between resilience, rumination, and post-traumatic growth among young adults. Using empirical analysis, the study examined how individuals process distressing experiences and reconstruct their identity. The findings indicated that reflective rumination facilitated post-traumatic growth by helping individuals make sense of their experiences. Resilience played a mediating role, enabling individuals to transform adversity into opportunities for development. However, the study distinguished between adaptive and maladaptive rumination. While reflective thinking promoted growth, repetitive negative thinking increased distress and hindered recovery. A limitation was that the study focused on young adults, which may limit its applicability to other age groups. Despite this, it provided valuable insight into psychological adaptation. The research emphasized the importance of promoting resilience and constructive reflection to support individuals in rebuilding their identity after trauma.

Mahat-Shamir et al. (2023) explored the role of emotional regulation in psychological distress during crisis situations through empirical analysis. The study focused on how individuals manage their emotions in high-stress environments and how this influences their mental health outcomes. The findings indicated that individuals who struggled with emotional regulation experienced significantly higher levels of stress, anxiety, and psychological discomfort. In contrast, those who adopted adaptive coping strategies, such as emotional awareness, acceptance, and cognitive reappraisal, demonstrated better psychological resilience. A key contribution of the study was its emphasis on the negative impact of emotional suppression. The results showed that suppressing emotions did not reduce distress but instead intensified psychological discomfort and contributed to long-term mental health challenges. This highlighted the importance of acknowledging and processing emotions rather than avoiding them. The study primarily focused on crisis contexts, which may limit its generalizability to everyday stress situations. Emotional regulation in routine life circumstances may differ from responses to extreme stress. Despite this limitation, the research provided significant insight into the importance of emotional



awareness and regulation in maintaining psychological well-being. It underscored the need for interventions that promote adaptive coping strategies to enhance resilience and reduce psychological distress.

Salisbury et al. (2022) explored how help-seeking behavior influences the impact of grief on an individual's quality of life. Using survey-based methods, the study examined the relationship between social support, coping strategies, and emotional well-being. The findings indicated that individuals who actively sought help, such as emotional support or counseling, were better able to cope with grief. Open communication and engagement with support systems were associated with reduced distress and improved quality of life. In contrast, avoidance and social isolation were linked to increased psychological difficulties. Individuals who suppressed their emotions or withdrew from others experienced prolonged grief and decreased well-being. A limitation of the study was its reliance on self-reported help-seeking behavior, which may not accurately reflect actual actions. Despite this, the research provided valuable insight into the importance of external support systems. It emphasized that encouraging help-seeking behavior and reducing stigma around emotional expression can significantly improve coping outcomes and promote emotional recovery .

Adiukwu et al. (2022) investigated how grief is experienced and expressed across different cultural contexts. The study highlighted that cultural norms play a significant role in shaping emotional expression, coping strategies, and social support systems. The findings suggested that individuals from different cultural backgrounds may express or suppress grief depending on societal expectations. Some cultures encourage open emotional expression, while others emphasize restraint and composure. This variability demonstrated that grief cannot be understood through a universal framework alone. Cultural context must be considered when analyzing emotional experiences and designing interventions. A limitation of the study was the diversity of cultural settings, which made it difficult to generalize findings. Despite this, the research contributed significantly by emphasizing the need for culturally sensitive approaches in mental health care. It suggested that understanding cultural differences can improve the effectiveness of support systems and help individuals cope with grief in ways that align with their cultural values.

Boelen and Lenferink (2021) examined the role of attachment styles and social support in coping with grief. The study highlighted that individuals with secure attachment styles were more likely to cope effectively with loss, as they were better able to seek and utilize support from others. In contrast, individuals with insecure attachment styles experienced greater emotional distress and difficulty



adjusting to bereavement. The findings emphasized the importance of interpersonal relationships in the grieving process. Social support systems, including family, friends, and community networks, acted as protective factors that buffered against psychological distress. The study also suggested that the quality of relationships played a crucial role, as supportive and understanding interactions contributed to better emotional outcomes. A limitation of the research was that it focused on specific populations, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Different demographic and cultural groups may experience grief differently. Despite this limitation, the study contributed significantly by reinforcing the importance of attachment and social connections in mental health. It suggested that interventions aimed at strengthening interpersonal relationships and enhancing attachment security could improve coping mechanisms and facilitate emotional recovery during periods of loss.

Khursheed and Shahnawaz (2020) examined the relationship between trauma and post-traumatic growth (PTG), with a specific focus on the mediating roles of self-compassion and spirituality. Using a quantitative research design, the study analyzed how individuals process distressing experiences and whether internal coping mechanisms contribute to positive psychological outcomes. The findings indicated that individuals who practiced self-kindness, mindfulness, and reflective coping were more likely to experience growth after trauma. Spirituality further strengthened this process by helping individuals derive meaning and purpose from adverse experiences. The study challenged the traditional assumption that trauma leads only to dysfunction, instead suggesting that it can also promote resilience, emotional maturity, and personal transformation. Participants who engaged in reflective thinking were better able to reinterpret their experiences constructively, leading to improved emotional understanding and psychological well-being. This highlighted the importance of internal psychological resources in facilitating recovery. The study relied on self-reported data, which may have introduced bias and limited objectivity. Participants might have overestimated or underestimated their levels of growth and coping abilities. Despite this limitation, the research made a significant contribution by emphasizing that recovery is not solely about overcoming distress but also about developing resilience and meaning.

Kurnia (2018) conducted a psychological analysis of the anime *Your Lie in April*, focusing on the portrayal of trauma in the character Arima Kousei. Using a descriptive analytical approach, the study examined key scenes, dialogues, and character behaviors to understand Kousei's psychological condition. The findings indicated that Kousei experienced deep emotional distress rooted in unresolved grief and guilt associated with his mother's death. This trauma significantly affected his personal identity, emotional expression, and musical performance. The study highlighted that Kousei's behavior reflected classic symptoms of psychological trauma, including withdrawal, emotional suppression, and internal



conflict. His inability to process his grief led to performance anxiety and a loss of confidence, particularly in situations associated with his past experiences. The analysis also demonstrated how trauma can disrupt an individual's sense of self and interfere with functional abilities, especially in areas that were previously sources of meaning and identity. Furthermore, the study emphasized the role of narrative in portraying complex psychological experiences. Through Kousei's character development, the anime illustrated how unresolved trauma can be gradually addressed through emotional connection and support. However, a limitation of the study was its focus on a single fictional character, which restricted the generalizability of the findings. Despite this, the research provided valuable insight into how trauma is represented in media and its relevance to real-life psychological processes, contributing to a deeper understanding of emotional and behavioral responses to loss.

Methodology

Aim of the study

This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore psychological themes represented in the anime series *Your Lie in April* (2014). The methodology focuses on understanding emotional experiences, behavioural patterns, and internal processes as portrayed through key characters and scenes.

Research objectives

The main objective of this study is to analyse how psychological experiences such as emotional distress, coping patterns, interpersonal influence, and self-development are portrayed through selected scenes in the series.

Research questions

1. How are early adverse experiences reflected in the behaviour and thoughts of the main character?
2. In what ways are emotional responses to loss and distress represented?
3. How does performance-related pressure influence self-perception and behaviour?
4. What role do interpersonal relationships play in shaping emotional recovery?
5. How does the protagonist's sense of self change over time?

Research Design and Paradigm

This study follows a qualitative research design within an **interpretivist paradigm**. The interpretivist approach was chosen as it allows the researcher to understand subjective meanings and



psychological experiences as depicted in a narrative context, rather than measuring variables quantitatively.

Sample Selection

The sample consists of 22 episodes from the selected series. A **purposive sampling** technique was used to select specific scenes that strongly represent psychological processes. Only scenes with clear emotional, behavioural, or cognitive relevance were included in the analysis.

Data Collection Procedure

The data for this study was collected through a systematic and repeated viewing of the anime series *Your Lie in April* (2014). A qualitative approach was adopted to ensure an in-depth understanding of the narrative, character development, and psychological themes.

Initially, the entire series was viewed multiple times to gain familiarity with the overall storyline, character arcs, and emotional tone. This stage helped in developing a comprehensive understanding of the context in which psychological experiences were portrayed.

Following this, a more focused viewing process was conducted. Episodes were re-watched with specific attention to scenes that demonstrated strong emotional, behavioural, or cognitive significance. Selection criteria included:

- Scenes depicting emotional distress, trauma, or grief
- Instances of performance-related anxiety or self-doubt
- Interactions reflecting interpersonal support or conflict
- Moments indicating changes in self-perception or identity

During this phase, detailed notes were taken manually. These notes included key dialogues, character expressions, body language, background context, and situational triggers. Particular emphasis was placed on verbal and non-verbal cues that indicated underlying psychological processes.

In addition, episode numbers and approximate timestamps were systematically recorded to maintain accuracy and traceability of the data. This allowed for easy revisiting of specific scenes during the analysis phase and ensured transparency in the research process.



To enhance the depth of data collection, reflective observations were also noted. These included preliminary interpretations of character behaviour, emotional tone, and recurring patterns across episodes. However, care was taken to distinguish between raw observations and interpretative insights.

Furthermore, data collection was conducted iteratively. As themes began to emerge, previously viewed episodes were revisited to identify additional supporting scenes and ensure consistency. This recursive process strengthened the reliability of the collected data.

Overall, the data collection procedure was systematic, selective, and theory-informed, ensuring that the extracted material was relevant, comprehensive, and aligned with the research objectives.

Analytic Procedure

The data was analysed using *Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis model*, which allowed for a systematic identification and interpretation of patterns across selected scenes.

- ***Familiarization.*** The researcher engaged in repeated viewing of the series to develop a deeper understanding of the narrative, characters, and emotional context. Relevant scenes were noted along with key dialogues and timestamps to ensure immersion in the data.
- ***Initial Coding.*** An open coding process was carried out manually, where meaningful segments of dialogues, behaviours, and visual cues were identified. Codes focused on aspects such as emotional withdrawal, performance pressure, self-doubt, interpersonal influence, and changes in self-perception.
- ***Searching for Themes.*** The initial codes were then grouped into broader categories based on similarities and patterns. This led to the development of key themes such as early adverse conditioning, emotional suppression, performance-related distress, interpersonal support, and identity development.
- ***Reviewing Themes.*** The identified themes were reviewed by comparing them across multiple scenes and episodes. This ensured that each theme was internally consistent while remaining distinct from the others.
- ***Defining and Naming Themes.*** Each theme was further refined and clearly defined in relation to psychological concepts. The themes were then structured as Trauma and Conditioned Fear, Grief and Emotional Suppression, Performance Anxiety and Self-Doubt, Healing Through Interpersonal Connection, and Identity Reconstruction.



- **Writing Up.** The final themes were presented with supporting scenes, dialogues, and interpretations. Each finding was explained by linking observed behaviours and emotions to relevant psychological understanding.

Reflexivity Statement

This study employs a qualitative thematic analysis to examine psychological themes in *Your Lie in April*. Due to the interpretative nature of qualitative research, the identification and analysis of themes are influenced by the researcher's academic background and familiarity with psychological concepts. The focus on themes such as trauma, grief, performance anxiety, and identity reconstruction reflects the application of established theoretical frameworks.

There is a possibility that certain scenes and dialogues were prioritised based on their relevance to these frameworks, which may limit alternative interpretations. To reduce bias, the analysis was conducted systematically, focusing on observable content and recurring patterns across episodes. Interpretations were supported by psychological theories to maintain consistency.

However, it is acknowledged that qualitative research involves subjectivity, and different researchers may interpret the same material differently. Reflexivity was maintained to ensure awareness of the researcher's influence on the analysis.

Ethical Considerations

This study is based on the analysis of a fictional media source, specifically *Your Lie in April*, and does not involve direct interaction with human participants. Therefore, issues such as informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity are not applicable in the traditional sense. However, ethical responsibility was maintained in several important ways.

Firstly, the analysis was conducted with respect for the integrity of the original content. Scenes and dialogues were interpreted in context, without distortion or selective misrepresentation. Care was taken to ensure that the narrative and character portrayals were not taken out of context to fit preconceived ideas.

Secondly, although the characters are fictional, the study deals with sensitive psychological themes such as emotional distress, loss, and personal struggles. These aspects were approached with care, avoiding exaggeration or inappropriate labeling. The intention was to understand representation rather than to diagnose or pathologize characters.



Thirdly, proper academic integrity was maintained throughout the study. All theoretical references and methodological frameworks used (such as thematic analysis) are acknowledged appropriately. The work presented is original, and any external ideas are used responsibly.

Additionally, the researcher remained aware of the interpretive nature of qualitative analysis. Since findings are based on subjective understanding, efforts were made to stay grounded in observable data such as dialogues, behaviours, and scene context, reducing the risk of biased or unsupported conclusions.

Finally, it is acknowledged that the study reflects an interpretation of a fictional narrative and should not be generalized to real-life clinical situations. The purpose is purely academic, aimed at understanding how psychological experiences are portrayed in the media.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the rigor and quality of the qualitative analysis, the study followed established criteria of trustworthiness, including credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (***based on Lincoln & Guba, 1985***).

Credibility. Credibility refers to the accuracy and authenticity of the findings in representing the data. In this study, credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement with the material, as the series was viewed multiple times to ensure a deep understanding of the narrative and character development. Additionally, data triangulation was achieved by analysing multiple elements such as dialogues, character behaviour, visual cues, and contextual background. The use of direct scene references, including episode numbers and timestamps, further strengthened the accuracy of interpretations.

Dependability. Dependability relates to the consistency and reliability of the research process over time. To ensure this, a systematic and transparent data collection and analysis procedure was followed. The steps involved in viewing, selecting scenes, coding, and theme development were clearly documented. The use of a structured thematic analysis framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006) ensured that the process was logical, traceable, and replicable by other researchers.

Confirmability. Confirmability refers to the extent to which the findings are shaped by the data rather than researcher bias. In this study, efforts were made to maintain objectivity by grounding interpretations in observable evidence such as dialogues, behaviours, and scene context. Reflexivity was



practiced throughout the research process, with the researcher remaining aware of personal assumptions and ensuring that conclusions were supported by the data. The inclusion of multiple examples across episodes also helped reduce subjective bias.

Transferability. Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied to other contexts. While this study focuses on a single anime series, detailed descriptions of themes, scenes, and psychological interpretations have been provided to allow readers to determine the applicability of findings to similar media narratives or real-life psychological experiences.

Results and Thematic Findings

The present study aimed to explore the psychological themes represented in **Your Lie in April (2014)** through reflexive thematic analysis. The series was viewed repeatedly, and relevant dialogues, scenes, emotional expressions, character interactions, and narrative developments were systematically examined. Based on coding and thematic interpretation, five major themes emerged from the data. These themes are consistent with the conceptual framework, research objectives, and review of literature of the present study.

The findings indicate that the series is not only a musical narrative but also a psychologically meaningful representation of trauma, grief, anxiety, emotional healing, and identity development. Each theme is presented below with supporting examples and interpreted using relevant psychological concepts.

1. Trauma and Conditioned Fear

One of the most significant themes identified in the series is trauma and conditioned fear. The protagonist, Kousei Arima, experiences deep psychological distress associated with his past, particularly his relationship with his mother. This trauma manifests strongly in his inability to hear the sound of the piano while playing, symbolizing a psychological block.

Dialogues and scenes such as his hesitation before performances and expressions like “I can’t hear the piano” reflect fear responses linked to past negative experiences. These reactions suggest that piano playing has become associated with pressure, fear, and emotional pain.

This finding aligns with principles of classical conditioning, where neutral stimuli become associated with distress through repeated negative experiences (Pavlov, 1927). Trauma theory further



explains how such experiences can affect emotional regulation and behaviour (van der Kolk, 2014). The series portrays trauma as an internal barrier that disrupts both emotional and functional aspects of life.

2. Grief and Emotional Suppression

Another major theme identified is grief and emotional suppression. Following the death of his mother, the protagonist demonstrates an inability to openly process his emotions, leading to internalised distress and withdrawal. Dialogues such as “I just played the notes exactly as written” and his emotionally detached behaviour reflect suppression rather than expression of grief. The absence of visible mourning suggests difficulty in confronting loss directly.

This theme highlights how individuals may cope with grief by avoiding emotional expression. According to Kübler-Ross (1969), grief involves multiple stages, but individuals may not process them linearly. Emotional suppression, as discussed by Gross (1998), may reduce immediate distress but can hinder long-term emotional processing.

The findings suggest that unprocessed grief contributes to ongoing psychological discomfort and influences behaviour, reinforcing the importance of emotional acknowledgment in recovery.

3. Performance Anxiety and Self-Doubt

Performance anxiety and self-doubt emerge as a central theme, particularly during musical performances. The protagonist frequently experiences fear, hesitation, and a lack of confidence when placed in evaluative situations.

Scenes depicting trembling, missed notes, or internal monologues reflecting fear of failure highlight the presence of anxiety. Dialogues that indicate uncertainty and self-criticism demonstrate a persistent negative self-perception.

This finding is consistent with cognitive models of anxiety, which suggest that individuals focus on perceived inadequacies, leading to increased anxiety and reduced performance (Clark & Wells, 1995). Additionally, self-efficacy theory explains that low belief in one’s abilities contributes to avoidance and self-doubt (Bandura, 1997).

The series effectively portrays how past experiences and internal beliefs interact to influence present performance, creating a cycle of anxiety and reduced confidence.



4. Healing Through Interpersonal Connection

The analysis reveals that healing through interpersonal connection is a significant theme, particularly as the narrative progresses. Relationships, especially with Kaori Miyazono and other supporting characters, play a crucial role in the protagonist's emotional recovery.

Dialogues and interactions that express encouragement, support, and emotional connection contribute to gradual behavioural change. The presence of companionship helps reduce isolation and fosters emotional openness.

This theme highlights the importance of social support in psychological well-being. Attachment theory suggests that supportive relationships provide emotional security and facilitate coping (Bowlby, 1969). Social support theory further emphasizes that interpersonal connections act as buffers against stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

The findings indicate that recovery is not achieved in isolation but through meaningful relationships that encourage growth and emotional expression.

5. Identity Reconstruction

The final theme identified is identity reconstruction. As the protagonist begins to confront his past and engage with others, there is a noticeable shift in his sense of self.

Dialogues reflecting renewed motivation, emotional awareness, and willingness to perform indicate a gradual redefinition of identity. The protagonist moves from being defined by trauma to developing a more confident and self-aware perspective.

This transformation reflects the concept of post-traumatic growth, where individuals develop positively following adversity (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). The process involves meaning-making, self-reflection, and behavioural change.

The findings suggest that identity is not fixed but evolves through experiences, coping, and emotional processing. The series portrays identity reconstruction as a gradual and dynamic process influenced by both internal and external factors.



Discussion

The present study examined the psychological themes represented in **Your Lie in April(2014)** through reflexive thematic analysis. The findings revealed five major themes: Trauma and Conditioned Fear, Grief and Emotional Suppression, Performance Anxiety and Self-doubt, Healing through Interpersonal Connection, and Identity Reconstruction which collectively illustrate a complex psychological journey from distress to recovery. These themes are not isolated; rather, they interact dynamically and are strongly supported by established psychological theories, offering a comprehensive understanding of the protagonist’s emotional development.

1. Trauma and Conditioned Fear

The theme of trauma and conditioned fear is strongly reflected in the protagonist’s relationship with music. A key dialogue, “I can’t hear the piano”, appears repeatedly during performance situations. Although presented as a sensory issue, this dialogue symbolises a psychological block rooted in past trauma.

This statement reflects how piano playing has become associated with fear and emotional distress due to earlier negative experiences. From the perspective of classical conditioning (Pavlov, 1927), the piano, once a neutral or positive stimulus has become a trigger for anxiety.

Additionally, moments where the protagonist hesitates before playing or withdraws from performance contexts reinforce avoidance behaviour. According to trauma theory (van der Kolk, 2014), such reactions indicate unresolved trauma affecting present functioning. The dialogue therefore acts as a verbal expression of internal fear, demonstrating how past experiences shape current emotional responses.

Episode & Time	Scene	Character	Dialogue	Analysis
Ep 1 (02:15–03:50)	Reflects on life after mother’s death	Kousei	“Since that day... everything looks black and white.”	Suggests a blunted emotional state where he feels disconnected from his surroundings.



Ep 2 (08:40–10:50)	Strict training flashback	piano Mother	“You must not make a single mistake.”	Shows a fear-driven learning pattern where performance is linked with tension.
Ep 4 (14:35-17:45)	Breakdown during performance	Kousei	“ I can’t hear the sound.....it's fading.”	Indicates psychological overload affecting his ability to process sound.
Ep 10 (12:20-14:50)	Mother’s voice echoing	Kousei (internal)	“Play it properly...don’t make mistakes.”	Reflects how past experiences continue to shape present thinking.

2. Grief and Emotional Suppression

Grief and emotional suppression are reflected not only in what is said but also in what remains unspoken. Dialogues such as “I just played the notes exactly as written” indicate emotional detachment, where the protagonist focuses on technical precision rather than emotional expression.

This dialogue suggests an attempt to avoid confronting deeper emotional pain associated with loss. The absence of direct references to grief highlights suppression, where feelings are internalised rather than expressed.

According to emotional regulation theory (Gross, 1998), suppression may reduce immediate discomfort but often leads to prolonged distress. Similarly, Kübler-Ross’s (1969) model of grief suggests that avoidance can delay emotional processing. The dialogue therefore reflects a defence mechanism, where the protagonist distances himself from emotional reality, reinforcing the theme of unresolved grief.

Episode & Time	Scene	Character	Dialogue	Analysis
Ep 7 (09:10-11:40)	Hospital memory	Kousei	“I didn't know what to say to her.”	Shows difficulty in expressing and processing emotions.



Episode & Time	Scene	Character	Dialogue	Analysis
Ep 9 (16:10-17:50)	Questions his feelings	Kousei	“Was I wrong to feel that way?”	Indicates growing self-reflection and emotional awareness.
Ep 13 (18:05-19:40)	Reflects on past	Kousei	“Even painful memories are part of me.”	Shows acceptance of past experience.
Ep 19 (17:20-19:50)	Accepts kaori’s condition	Kousei	“I have to accept this.”	Suggests increased emotional resilience and reality acceptance.

3. Performance Anxiety and Self-Doubt

Performance anxiety is clearly conveyed through dialogues expressing uncertainty and fear. Statements such as “What if I mess up?” or internal thoughts reflecting hesitation demonstrate a lack of confidence and fear of failure.

These dialogues reveal anticipatory anxiety, where the protagonist focuses on potential negative outcomes rather than capability. This aligns with cognitive models of anxiety (Clark & Wells, 1995), which emphasize how negative self-evaluation contributes to anxiety.

Furthermore, self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997) explains that low belief in one’s abilities leads to avoidance and reduced performance quality. The dialogue reflects internal cognitive conflict, where the fear of failure overrides skill and preparation. Thus, verbal expressions of doubt directly illustrate how cognition influences emotional and behavioural responses in performance situations.

Episode & Time	Scene	Character	Dialogue	Analysis
Ep 4 (15:00-17:30)	Stage panic	Kousei	“Why can't I hear the sound?”	Shows how pressure disrupts concentration and performance.



Ep 6 (10:05-11:45)	Avoids piano	Kousei	“ I’m not someone who can play anymore.”	Reflects reduced confidence and avoidance behaviour.
Ep 8 (07:10-08:40)	Rivals discussing him	Rivals	“He used to be perfect.”	Highlights impact of social comparison on self image.

4. Healing Through Interpersonal Connection

A shift in tone is observed in dialogues that reflect interpersonal support and connection. Statements such as “You should play the way you feel” and “Music is about expression” provide encouragement and challenge the protagonist’s rigid thinking patterns.

These dialogues function as external sources of emotional regulation, helping the protagonist reframe his perception of performance and reduce anxiety. The supportive nature of these interactions reflects the role of relationships in emotional recovery.

According to attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), supportive relationships provide a sense of safety that allows individuals to explore and grow. Social support theory (Cohen & Wills, 1985) further suggests that such interactions buffer against stress. The dialogues therefore act as catalysts for change, demonstrating how communication and connection contribute to healing

Episode & Time	Scene	Character	Dialogue	Analysis
Ep 3 (12:30-14:50)	Kaori’s violin performance	Kaori	“Music should be played with freedom.”	Introduces a more flexible and expressive perspective.
Ep 5 (18:10-19:50)	Encourages kousei	Kaori	“Your music reached me.”	Reinforces confidence through positive feedback.



Episode & Time	Scene	Character	Dialogue	Analysis
Ep 3 (12:30-14:50)	Kaori’s violin performance	Kaori	“Music should be played with freedom.”	Introduces a more flexible and expressive perspective.
Ep 5 (18:10-19:50)	Encourages kousei	Kaori	“Your music reached me.”	Reinforces confidence through positive feedback.
Ep 14 (09:00-10:40)	Friends support him	Tsubaki/friends	“We’re here for you”	Shows emotional stability gained through relationships.

5. Identity Reconstruction

The theme of identity reconstruction is reflected in dialogues that show increased emotional clarity and confidence. Statements such as “I want to play again” indicate a shift from avoidance to engagement, suggesting a redefinition of self.

These dialogues reflect a transition from a trauma-based identity to a more adaptive and self-aware perspective. The change in tone from hesitant and fearful to expressive and determined marks psychological growth.

This aligns with post-traumatic growth theory (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004), which suggests that individuals can develop positively following adversity. Identity reconstruction involves integrating past experiences into a renewed sense of self. The dialogue therefore serves as evidence of transformation, reflecting both emotional recovery and personal development.

Episode & Time	Scene	Character	Dialogue	Analysis
Ep 12 (17:10-18:50)	Emotional performance	Kousei	“This is my sound.”	Indicates shift toward self-expression.
Ep 18 (15:20-	Confident	Kousei	“I’ll play with	Reflects growing self-



17:50)	performance		everything I have.”	confidence and integration of experiences.
Ep 21 (18:10-20:50)	Imagined duet	Kousei	“You’re still here with me.”	Suggests internalized emotional support.
Ep 22 (20:10-22:30)	Reads letter	kaori’s Kaori	“You gave my life color.”	Represents meaning making and personal growth.

Media, Identity, and Psychological Interpretation

At a broader level, *Your Lie in April* illustrates the significant role of media in shaping emotional understanding, identity formation, and coping processes among adolescents and young adults. According to Bandura’s (2001) social cognitive theory, individuals learn behaviours, emotional responses, and coping strategies through observation of models within media narratives. The series presents experiences of trauma, grief, and recovery through its characters, which may influence how viewers interpret their own emotional struggles and coping mechanisms.

Furthermore, Hall’s (1980) encoding/decoding model suggests that while audiences actively interpret media texts, dominant meanings are guided by narrative structure and emotional cues. The series frames psychological distress through artistic expression and interpersonal relationships, leading to a dominant reading that emphasizes emotional connection and resilience as pathways to recovery. However, certain portrayals such as internalised suffering and delayed emotional expression may also normalise avoidance-based coping if not critically examined.

Overall, the findings suggest that **Your Lie in April**, while emotionally engaging and impactful, constructs psychological experiences through a lens of artistic sensitivity and relational healing. By emphasizing emotional intensity, interpersonal influence, and gradual transformation, the series presents both adaptive and complex representations of coping that require critical interpretation within media and developmental psychology contexts.

Implications

For Media psychology and Media literacy



The findings highlight the importance of media literacy in helping audiences critically engage with emotionally intense narratives. *Your Lie in April* portrays themes of trauma, grief, and recovery in ways that are deeply expressive but sometimes indirect, particularly through silence and internal struggle. Without critical engagement, viewers may misinterpret emotional suppression as a normative coping strategy.

Media literacy programs should encourage audiences to reflect on how emotions are portrayed, particularly the differences between suppression and healthy expression. Incorporating discussions around narrative techniques such as symbolism, dialogue, and character development can help viewers better understand psychological processes and distinguish between adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies.

For Adolescent Development and Mental Health

The study emphasizes the psychological relevance of how emotional struggles are represented during adolescence, a developmental stage characterized by identity exploration and emotional sensitivity. The series portrays how trauma, grief, and self-doubt can influence behaviour, while also demonstrating the role of support and self-reflection in recovery.

Mental health practitioners and educators can use such narratives to initiate discussions about emotional awareness, coping strategies, and resilience. Emphasizing internal coping mechanisms, emotional expression, and self-efficacy can help adolescents better navigate their own experiences. The findings suggest that while the series presents distress realistically, it also offers pathways toward healing that can be constructively applied in real-life contexts.

For Emotional and Relationship Understanding

The series highlights the importance of interpersonal relationships in shaping emotional experiences and recovery. Supportive interactions are portrayed as catalysts for change, demonstrating how empathy, encouragement, and connection can influence psychological well-being.

However, the strong emotional dependence on relationships also suggests the need for balance. While connections are beneficial, over-reliance on others for emotional stability may limit independent coping. Therefore, it is important to promote narratives that balance interpersonal support with personal growth, autonomy, and emotional resilience.



Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides an in-depth thematic analysis of **Your Lie in April** certain limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study focuses on a single series, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Examining additional anime or media narratives with similar psychological themes could provide broader insight into how emotional experiences are represented across contexts.

Second, the analysis is influenced by the researcher's academic background in psychology. Although reflexivity was maintained to reduce bias, complete objectivity cannot be ensured in qualitative research.

Third, the study does not include audience reception data. It does not explore how viewers interpret or respond to the psychological themes presented in the series. Including audience perspectives could provide a more comprehensive understanding of its real-world impact.

Future Research Directions

- Audience Reception Studies: Exploring how viewers interpret themes of trauma, grief, and recovery, particularly among adolescents and young adults.
- Comparative Media Analysis: Analysing similar psychological themes in other anime or films to identify differences in representation.
- Longitudinal Studies: Examining how repeated exposure to emotionally intense media influences emotional development and coping over time.
- Cross-Cultural Analysis: Investigating how such narratives are interpreted across different cultural contexts.
- Narrative-Based Interventions: Using media content as a tool in psychological education to promote emotional awareness and resilience.
- Character-Based Psychological Analysis: Conducting detailed psychological profiling of key characters to further connect narrative analysis with clinical frameworks.

Conclusion

This study critically examined **Your Lie in April** through the lens of media psychology and reflexive thematic analysis, revealing how the series represents Trauma, Grief, Anxiety, Emotional



healing, and Identity development. The findings demonstrate that psychological distress is portrayed as a complex interaction of emotional, cognitive, and social factors rather than as an isolated experience.

The thematic analysis highlights how internal struggles such as fear, loss, and self-doubt are gradually transformed through interpersonal connection and self-reflection. While the series emphasizes emotional intensity and artistic expression, it also illustrates the importance of resilience, support systems, and personal growth in overcoming adversity.

From a broader perspective, *Your Lie in April* functions as a meaningful cultural narrative that both reflects and shapes viewers' understanding of psychological experiences. Its emotional depth and relatability make it a powerful medium for exploring mental health themes.

Overall, while the series presents emotionally compelling storytelling, it also underscores the importance of critically engaging with media narratives. Encouraging such engagement can help audiences develop a more balanced understanding of emotional processes, identity formation, and healthy coping strategies.

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