



Jean-Paul Sartre: Analyzing Human Existence Through the Lens of Existentialism

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study aims to explore Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist perspective on human existence, emphasizing radical freedom and the responsibility of individuals in defining their own meaning in life. The research investigates how Sartre's concept of existentialism positions humans as autonomous subjects in constructing their essence.

Methodology: This study employs a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach, utilizing a literature review method. The primary sources include Sartre's major works, such as *Being and Nothingness*, along with secondary analyses from contemporary existentialist scholars. Data are analyzed through content analysis to examine Sartre's views on freedom, responsibility, and self-determination.

Main Findings: The findings reveal that Sartre perceives human existence as devoid of inherent meaning, compelling individuals to create their own purpose through conscious choices. His concept of *bad faith* illustrates the tendency to escape from existential responsibility, whereas authentic existence requires embracing radical freedom. Sartre's framework highlights the psychological tension between autonomy and existential anxiety.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study offers a fresh interpretation of Sartre's existentialism by relating his views to contemporary issues of identity, freedom, and personal responsibility. It extends the discussion of existentialist ethics in modern society and provides a deeper analysis of Sartre's influence on current philosophical and social discourses on human autonomy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) is a leading philosopher in the existentialist school who offers a radical view of human freedom and responsibility. Through his works such as *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre emphasized that humans are beings who are "thrown" into the world without any innate essence or meaning [1]. In Sartre's view, man becomes the center of existence through his freedom to choose, act, and determine the meaning of his own life. However, this freedom is not without burden; humans also face deep anxiety due to the full responsibility of the consequences of their choices [2].

The main problem in this study is how humans can understand and live the existential freedom offered by Sartre, especially in a modern context full of value complexity and social pressure [3]. On the one hand, this freedom provides great opportunities for self-creation and authenticity, but on the other hand, it also brings challenges in the form of existential anxiety and the potential to be trapped in bad faith or insincerity, which is a

state where humans deny their freedom in order to avoid responsibility [4]. In an era of rapid globalization and technological advancement, individuals increasingly face dilemmas related to identity, autonomy, and existential responsibility [5]. Digital culture, consumerism, and the dominance of social media have contributed to a condition where human choices are often influenced by external pressures, making Sartre's concept of existential freedom more relevant than ever. The increasing complexity of contemporary life raises the question of whether modern humans are truly free or whether they are unconsciously trapped in new forms of alienation and bad faith [6].

Despite the broad influence of Sartre's existentialism, previous studies have mostly focused on traditional philosophical debates, particularly in ethics, literature, and feminism. Research on Sartre's relevance in the digital era remains relatively limited. Some studies have examined existential anxiety in relation to social media, consumerism, and the loss of authenticity in a technology-driven society, yet these studies tend to lack a direct engagement with Sartre's existentialist framework. While existentialist themes have been applied in psychological and sociological analyses of modern identity, they rarely integrate Sartre's emphasis on radical freedom and responsibility in the digital era [7]. This study seeks to fill this gap by explicitly addressing how Sartre's existentialist thought can be applied to understand contemporary socio-cultural dynamics, particularly in relation to identity formation, technological mediation, and the evolving nature of autonomy in the modern world.

The uniqueness of Sartre's thought lies in his rejection of determinism and his belief that humans always have choices, even in the most limited situations. He places humans as subjects who are not only the perpetrators of actions but also the creators of the values that shape their world [8]. Sartre's approach provides a new perspective on human existence that is highly relevant in the modern era, where individual freedom is often faced with the challenges of globalization, technology, and value pluralism. However, while previous research has largely explored Sartre's ideas within the context of classical existential dilemmas, this study introduces a novel approach by linking Sartre's existentialism to digital culture and the contemporary struggle for authenticity. Unlike earlier studies, which primarily address existentialist perspectives on literature, ethics, and feminism, this research positions Sartre's concept of radical freedom as a framework for analyzing modern existential conditions, particularly how individuals navigate autonomy and responsibility in an increasingly interconnected and technologically mediated world [9].

In the field of education, for example, existentialist philosophy has been applied in pedagogical approaches that emphasize self-determination, critical thinking, and student autonomy [10]. However, in many cases, modern education still tends to emphasize structured conformity rather than authentic individual development, which contradicts Sartre's notion of radical freedom. This study, therefore, seeks to explore how Sartre's ideas can be used to re-evaluate current educational paradigms and their role in shaping authentic human existence. Additionally, this research extends Sartre's ideas beyond philosophical discourse by applying his existentialist principles to analyze contemporary social issues, including the challenges of identity crisis, digital alienation, and the commodification of personal freedom.

This study contributes a new dimension to existentialist discourse by demonstrating how Sartre's concept of human freedom remains crucial in addressing modern dilemmas of autonomy and authenticity. While previous research has acknowledged the presence of existential anxiety in digital life, this study offers a direct application of Sartre's framework to contemporary phenomena, providing a deeper philosophical analysis of modern alienation and ethical responsibility. The urgency of this research lies in its attempt to connect existentialist thought with pressing global issues, thereby reaffirming Sartre's relevance in the contemporary world.

Thus, the study aims to analyze Sartre's view of humans as existential subjects by highlighting the relevance of his ideas to the challenges of contemporary life [11]. It also seeks to explore the potential of Sartre's thought as a conceptual framework for understanding the dynamics of freedom, responsibility, and authenticity in human existence, particularly in the context of digital culture and modern social structures [12]. By bridging Sartre's existentialism with contemporary socio-cultural issues, this research provides a fresh perspective on how existentialist thought can be applied beyond its traditional domains and contribute to critical discussions about the evolving nature of human freedom in the 21st century.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Type of Research

This research employs a qualitative approach with a philosophical analysis method, focusing on exploring Jean-Paul Sartre's thoughts on humans as existential subjects. A qualitative approach is suitable for analyzing abstract concepts and philosophical frameworks in depth. The philosophical analysis method is used to systematically dissect Sartre's existentialist ideas, particularly his emphasis on freedom, responsibility, and human existence. This method enables an in-depth examination of how Sartre constructs human existence within the framework of existentialism and how his thoughts are relevant to contemporary discussions in philosophy, ethics, and education [14].

2.2. Research Subjects

The primary subject of this research is Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist philosophy, particularly as elaborated in his key works. The main sources include Sartre's primary texts, such as *Being and Nothingness* and *Existentialism is a Humanism*. These texts provide the foundation for understanding Sartre's conceptualization of human freedom, authenticity, and existential responsibility. In addition, secondary sources—including journal articles, books, and academic commentaries—are used to provide further context, supporting arguments, and alternative interpretations.

2.3. Data Collection Instruments and Techniques

The data collection method in this study consists of textual analysis of Sartre's works and a literature review of secondary sources. The data sources are categorized into primary and secondary data. The primary data include original texts written by Sartre, such as *Being and Nothingness*, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, and *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. These works provide the foundational concepts of Sartre's existentialist philosophy. The secondary data consist of scholarly books, journal articles, and research that discuss Sartre's existentialism and its application in various fields, including ethics, psychology, and education. These secondary sources help contextualize Sartre's philosophy within broader academic discourse and provide a comparative perspective with other existentialist thinkers.

2.4. The data collection process follows these steps:

The data collection process follows a structured approach to ensure a comprehensive understanding of Sartre's existentialism. First, key themes in Sartre's existentialist philosophy are identified through a systematic reading of primary texts. This is followed by compiling secondary data to support and contrast Sartre's arguments. Next, existentialist concepts are classified into major themes such as freedom, bad faith, authenticity, and responsibility, enabling a thematic organization of Sartre's thought. Finally, textual cross-referencing between Sartre's works and secondary interpretations is conducted to ensure a deeper and more accurate understanding of his ideas.

2.5. Data Analysis Techniques

The research process follows a structured sequence to ensure a comprehensive and systematic analysis of Sartre's existentialism. The first stage is the definition stage, where the research problem is identified, specifically how Sartre conceptualizes humans as existential subjects. The next step is data collection, which involves gathering and classifying primary and secondary data through textual analysis and literature review. The data analysis stage follows, applying hermeneutic techniques to interpret Sartre's philosophy and relate it to contemporary discourse. After analyzing the data, the synthesis and argumentation stage is conducted, where a logical argument is constructed to present Sartre's existentialism in a structured manner. Finally, the presentation of findings ensures that the results are organized into a clear narrative, highlighting Sartre's relevance in modern discussions of human freedom and responsibility.

2.6. Research Procedures

The research process follows a structured sequence to ensure a comprehensive and systematic analysis of Sartre's existentialism. The first stage is the Define Stage, where the research problem is identified, specifically focusing on how Sartre conceptualizes humans as existential subjects. This stage establishes the foundation for the study by framing the key philosophical questions and their relevance to contemporary discourse. Following this, the Data Collection stage involves gathering and classifying primary and secondary data through textual analysis and literature review. Primary data consist of Sartre's original works, while secondary sources include scholarly discussions and critiques that contextualize his philosophy.

Once data are collected, the Data Analysis stage applies hermeneutic techniques to interpret Sartre's philosophy and connect it to modern existential concerns. This phase ensures that Sartre's ideas are examined critically and systematically within both their historical framework and contemporary significance. The Synthesis and Argumentation stage then follows, constructing a logical argument that presents Sartre's existentialism in a structured manner. By synthesizing key concepts such as freedom, bad faith, and responsibility, this stage highlights how Sartre's ideas can be extended beyond traditional philosophical discourse to address modern socio-cultural issues.

The final step is the Presentation of Findings, where the results are organized into a clear and coherent narrative that demonstrates Sartre's relevance in contemporary discussions on human freedom, responsibility, and authenticity. This stage ensures that the study's conclusions are accessible and contribute to ongoing academic discourse.

By following this methodological framework, this study provides a comprehensive philosophical analysis of Sartre's existentialist thought. The hermeneutic approach ensures that Sartre's ideas are not only interpreted in their original philosophical context but are also examined for their applicability to contemporary issues such as globalization, digital culture, and education. The structured research process enhances the study's academic rigor, making it a valuable contribution to existentialist discourse.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Concept of Existentialism

Jean-Paul Sartre is one of the most influential existentialist philosophers, emphasizing the central role of human freedom and responsibility in shaping existence. Etymologically, the term "existentialism" is derived from the Latin *ex* (out), *sistere* (to stand or exist), and the suffix *-ism* (denoting a school of thought or belief system) [15]. In the Big Indonesian Dictionary, existentialism is defined as a philosophy that views humans as individual centers responsible for their own freedom and choices, without absolute guidelines distinguishing right from wrong [16].

According to existentialist thought, humans are fundamentally "thrown" into existence without predefined meaning and are solely responsible for defining their own purpose. This distinguishes humans from other living beings, as only humans possess self-awareness, rational thought, and the ability to reflect on their existence [17].

Sartre's notion of radical freedom holds significant implications for contemporary society, particularly in the field of education. The philosophy of freedom and responsibility can be directly linked to modern character education approaches, emphasizing self-awareness, independent decision-making, and moral accountability in students. In particular, Sartre's ideas can serve as a foundation for understanding the dynamics of local wisdom-based education, where individuals shape their cultural identity while remaining responsible for personal and communal growth [18].

Although humans are the only beings that exist, they do not only focus on their own existence. Man must also pay attention to the existence of other beings and establish relationships with them, even if these other beings are not considered to have existence in the same sense. This is because man does not live alone in the world; he exists with his environment. In this world, humans interact with existence outside of themselves, including other humans who have different ways of existing. Each individual has a unique way of living their existence, which emphasizes the diversity of human ways of being [19].

Existing human beings, according to existentialism, seek to maintain stable happiness as a fundamental element of their heart's desire. However, the existence of chaos and absurdity in the realm of thought can threaten such happiness [20]. In the view of existentialism, man is faced with various important choices: will he continue to live in the complexity of the existing situation, struggle to maintain his existence, or try to get out of the situation? Some individuals feel bound and want to escape the chaos. However, if one wants to get out of a complex situation, where would one go?

The chaos and complexity in thought often drives humans to reflect on their life experiences. Through this reflection, humans seek to recognize and discover their true selves, free from the views of others. Walter Kaufmann (1989) describes existentialism as a label given to a school of thought that developed in response to previous traditional philosophies. He asserts that existentialism is not a school that negates the values of previous thought, but rather enriches the perspective [21].

According to existentialism, humans are not only understood from an empirical or rational way of thinking, but as a whole unique individual. This uniqueness includes the interrelated aspects of ratio, intuition, feeling, intellectual will, and consciousness. Existentialism emphasizes *existence* as the core of humans, not essence or innate properties determined by empirical experience or logic alone [22].

Existentialism rejects determinism and recognizes human complexity. However, it faced challenges when it began to be treated as an absolute system of thought, despite its anti-system nature. Existentialism sees humans as unique and non-deterministic beings, whose existence is viewed from various aspects of life such as emotions, intellect, and intuition. In this view, humans not only have existence, but are existence itself [23].

The existentialist view of humans varies depending on the philosopher. For example, Heidegger sees humans as beings who are driven towards "death," while Sartre sees humans as being driven towards "anguish." Heidegger, a German existentialist philosopher, states that emotions such as *angst* (anxiety) and *sorge* (concern) arise when humans realize they are "thrown" into the world (*geworfenheit*). This situation raises deep questions about the human self, often accompanied by absurdity and anxiety [24].

Another German philosopher, Karl Jaspers, highlighted the fragility of humans as existential beings. He described humans as spiritual beings who understand the world through transcendent experiences, such as metaphysical symbols called *chiffer*. Jaspers is also known for the concept of "borderline situations," which describe critical moments in human life [25].

These thoughts influenced the development of Sartre's existentialism, which tried to create a new system in this philosophy. Sartre emphasized that human relationships are often conflictual, but freedom remains at the core of existence. This freedom allows humans to be dynamic, active and creative in dealing with their environment. However, Sartre also considers freedom as a "punishment," as humans must bear the consequences of each choice. Through freedom, humans can understand, assess, and shape their environment [21].

To understand Sartre's thought thoroughly, it is necessary to study previous existentialist thought, especially Heidegger, who influenced Sartre a lot. By understanding Heidegger's views on death and existence, we can more easily appreciate Sartre's ideas that highlight the aspects of death and the dynamics of human freedom.

3.2. Biography and Works of Jean-Paul Sartre

Jean-Paul Sartre was born in Paris, France, on June 21, 1905. After completing his formal education at the École Normale Supérieure, he studied philosophy at the French Institute in Berlin, where he became acquainted with the works of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Immanuel Kant. His exposure to phenomenology heavily influenced his development of existentialist thought [2]. Sartre's philosophical contributions include seminal works such as *Being and Nothingness*, *Nausea*, and *Existentialism is a Humanism*. In these works, Sartre elaborates on existentialist themes such as freedom, bad faith (*mauvais foi*), and the anxiety of existence (*angoisse*). Sartre was also a politically active intellectual, engaging in socialist movements and supporting revolutionary causes in France, China, and Cuba [26].

Sartre's existentialism has influenced various fields beyond philosophy, including psychology, literature, and political theory [27]. His concept of radical freedom has been applied to discussions on contemporary education, particularly in autonomous learning models that emphasize student-centered learning and independent critical thinking. In education, Sartre's view aligns with the philosophy of constructivism, which advocates for active learning experiences where students take ownership of their knowledge [28].

Sartre died of an illness he contracted while traveling, a few months after his father's birth. His mother provided an intellectually challenging and stimulating education, with help from his maternal grandparents. His passion for painting was also influenced by his grandfather. At the age of 10, in 1915, Sartre began attending the Lycée Henri IV in Paris. When his mother remarried Joseph Mancy, the young Sartre was forced to move to La Rochelle. He continued his education at the school until 1920, before finally returning to Paris to complete his studies at his original school [29].

After completing his secondary education, Sartre enrolled at the École Normale Supérieure Paris in 1924 to continue his university studies. There, he met various individuals who would later become famous writers, including Simone de Beauvoir, who would become his main romantic partner and with whom he would have the most open and controversial relationship at that time. In 1929, Sartre graduated with a PhD in philosophy, coming first in his class (De Beauvoir came second). After earning his doctorate, he began teaching philosophy at various universities, including at the Havre Lyceum [30].

In 1933, Sartre received a scholarship that allowed him to study philosophy at the French Institute in Berlin, where he studied the works of several authors, including Edmund Husserl, who delved into phenomenology. Afterward, he returned to France and continued his career as a teacher at secondary schools such as Pasteur. Here, he began to develop the theory that existence is more important than essence, as humans should have the freedom to make decisions. His first book, *Mauvais foi*, published in 1938, explored this concept [31].

In 1940, Sartre was drafted into the armed forces, engaged in combat, and then captured by German forces after the outbreak of World War II. After claiming to be a civilian, he came out of hiding in 1941 and joined the French resistance movement. His most important and famous philosophical book, *Being and Non-Being*, which presents his existentialist views, was published in 1943 [32]. The book was heavily influenced by the existentialism of Martin Heidegger, who at that time was considered the main authority in the philosophical movement. He gained great fame thanks to the works of Husserl and Kierkegaard [33].

In 1945, Sartre decided to stop teaching and devote all his time to writing philosophy and literature. He co-founded the important journal *Les Temps Modernes*, to which Raymond Aron and his colleague Simone de Beauvoir also contributed. As is well known, Sartre is best known for his involvement in politics, which he has been involved in for quite some time. After 1947, his political activities gained more and more attention. His criticism of the Cold War and the actions of the US and Soviet blocs were rooted in socialist principles [34].

Despite his differences, Sartre adopted communist views, frequently visited Moscow, and was involved in various organizations. In addition, he supported the cultural revolutions in China and Cuba. In 1964, Sartre was nominated to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature, however he declined the award, as he believed there was no need for an intermediary between the writer and the reader. In addition to openly criticizing the Vietnam War and the war crimes that occurred, Sartre was also actively involved in the May 1968 uprising and helped establish the Stockholm International Court of Justice [30].

In addition, Sartre continued to publish his works until then. In 1973, he founded the agency "*Libération*" with Maurice Clavel, which later developed into a newspaper that he eventually led. However, as time went by, Sartre's health condition worsened, causing him to lose his eyesight and gradually retreat from writing. Due to pulmonary edema and a hypertensive crisis, Sartre was taken to the Broussais hospital in Paris in May 1980. He died at nine in the evening on April 15, 1980, from a heart attack that aggravated the edema. Simone de Beauvoir and his adopted daughter, Arlette El Kaim, were by his side at the time [35].

In general, Jean-Paul Sartre's works are very interesting and have their own characteristics. However, some of Sartre's most famous writings are recognized as works that require in-depth study, including:

1. "Being and Nothingness" (*L'Être et le Néant*): Sartre's most famous philosophical work. The book explores the concepts of existentialism, freedom, and individual responsibility.
2. "Nausea" (*La Nausée*): Sartre's first novel published in 1938. It describes the existential experience of a character named Antoine Roquentin.
3. "No Exit" (*Huis Clos*): A play published in 1944. The play deals with the personal hell and complex social interactions between three characters trapped together in a room after their death.
4. "The Flies" (*Les Mouches*): Another play written by Sartre in 1943, which is inspired by Greek mythology and explores the concepts of freedom, responsibility, and retribution.
5. "Existentialism is a Humanism" (*L'existentialisme est un humanisme*): A lecture delivered by Sartre in 1946, in which he explains the basic principles of existentialism and rejects the view that this philosophy encourages nihilism.
6. "Critique of Dialectical Reason" (*Critique de la raison dialectique*): A more advanced philosophical work, in which Sartre explores the concepts of social structure, group consciousness, and collective action [36].

In addition to these publications, Sartre also contributed to journalism, political writing, and writing essays and short stories. Existentialism, which emphasizes human freedom, personal responsibility, and the search for meaning in an absurd world, exerted a great influence on Sartre's works [37].

3.3. Man as an Existential Subject According to Sartre

Sartre's fundamental existentialist premise, "existence precedes essence," implies that humans are not born with a predetermined purpose but must create meaning through choices and actions. This concept challenges traditional metaphysical notions that assume an inherent essence guiding human destiny. Instead, Sartre asserts that every individual is completely responsible for their own existence [38].

However, this radical freedom comes with a psychological burden—the realization that there is no external justification for one's choices. Sartre terms this existential realization as anguish (*angoisse*), the anxiety that arises when individuals recognize their absolute freedom and its consequences. This notion of existential anxiety has been applied in social psychology and education to explain student decision-making processes, particularly in career choices and moral dilemmas. The burden of absolute freedom often manifests in educational settings, where students must navigate personal aspirations and societal expectations. Sartre also introduces the concept of bad faith (*mauvais foi*), where individuals deceive themselves by conforming to societal roles to evade responsibility. This self-deception is prevalent in modern educational and workplace environments, where individuals often suppress their true aspirations due to external pressures [39].

Sartre emphasizes that humans must be honest about their freedom and avoid *bad faith* (insincerity), which is an attempt to avoid responsibility by blaming external conditions. In addition, in relationships with others, Sartre sees a conflict of freedom, where humans often feel they are the object of other people's views, but still have to maintain their subjective freedom. With this view, Sartre places humans as dynamic, creative, and responsible beings, who continuously shape themselves through action in a complex and challenging world [40].

The starting point of Sartre's atheistic existentialism was inspired by Dostoevsky's statement: "If God does not exist, then everything is possible" [38]. In this view, the existence of God and natural law are considered as obstacles to human freedom. The existence of natural law will limit humans to be fully free in making their choices. Suseno (2006) explains that if God exists, then the entire universe, including humans, must be considered as God's creation. As a created being, humans will have certain natures in accordance with the theory of natural law. However, according to Sartre, this nature is part of facticity, i.e. a reality that only "exists in itself." Therefore, humans do not have a predetermined nature. Instead, man must create his own nature and identity through his freedom [35].

Humans cannot be conscious beings capable of "choosing" if everything is predetermined. If so, humans would be no different from objects such as trees, animals, or other inanimate objects whose essence is predetermined before their existence. According to Lili Tjadjadi (2008), Sartre views this way of thinking as wrong [41]. For him, it is not essence that precedes existence, but existence that precedes essence. In other words, humans must first "exist" and realize themselves, and utilize all the potential they have to become "existent." Humans must constantly affirm their existence and current state. It is from this process that humans can find their true identity. In this view, freedom is the essential ability of humans to realize themselves and continue to assert their existence in every situation and time [25].

Humans first "exist" (exist), and then "fill" their existence. In this case, it is as if humans are thrown into the world for no apparent reason and must fill the void of their lives. Wibowo (2009) describes existence as a human being thrown into the world for no reason, similar to the maronnier tree in the Jardin Luxembour whose existence is just "there" and gives rise to a sense of nausea (*nausée*) [42]. Having been thrown into the world, humans are fully responsible for their actions before their fellow humans. The freedom that humans have also brings with it a demand for responsibility. When the existence of God is no longer recognized, man must bear all the consequences of his own actions and face the responsibility independently [38].

Freedom in this context should not be understood as the pseudo-freedom that often appears in everyday life, such as children who feel free to do anything at home because there is no parental supervision, students who are free to make noise in class without a teacher present, or a criminal who feels free to act in the absence of the police. These situations only give the impression of freedom, but not true freedom [43]. As long as Almighty God is recognized, everything remains under His control. In this condition, humans only follow the nature that has been determined by God, although they are still required to take full responsibility for actions that may not be the result of their free choice. Perhaps for this reason, religion offers forgiveness of sins through the concept of repentance and creates heaven as a reward [44].

According to Sartre, existence is absolute freedom. This freedom is not a gift, but a burden arising from the absence of God. As explained in Wibowo (2009), without the presence of God, man loses a place to lean on or an alibi that can justify his actions. Man must face the burden of his own choices, without any help, in the midst of a complex situation. In Sartre's view, man is left alone (*délaissé*) and "condemned to be free" (*L'homme est condamné à être libre*). This freedom is called a curse because man never creates himself, but rather finds himself thrown into the world suddenly for no apparent reason [38].

Man, with his total freedom, is constantly faced with life choices to make. Each decision made carries consequences for which he is entirely responsible. According to Hamersma (1983), the necessity to choose is a very heavy task. This burden of freedom often causes humans to feel fear, anxiety and restlessness (*angoissé*). The sense of responsibility for every action often scares some people, so they tend to deny the freedom. However, this only represents an escape from reality. Instead, people should be brave enough to face that freedom. Even if man is thrown into a situation of facticity that he did not choose, he must still fulfill his freedom within that situation. This is the true meaning of "existence" [34].

3.4. Existential Freedom Challenge

The challenge of existential freedom according to Jean-Paul Sartre is one of the most complex aspects of his philosophy. Sartre argues that humans are "condemned to be free" because freedom is an inevitable part of human existence. This freedom arises from the absence of God in Sartre's view, which means there is no divine authority or natural law that provides absolute guidance for human actions. As a result, humans must determine the meaning and purpose of their own lives through actions and decisions [45]. However, this freedom is not without consequences; every decision taken carries full responsibility for the outcome. Sartre calls this responsibility a heavy burden, which often brings about feelings of anxiety (*angoisse*) and alienation. Man realizes that there is no external authority that can be used to justify his actions. In this freedom, humans often face difficult moral dilemmas, where there is no universally correct answer, but only individual, fully autonomous decisions [46].

Many individuals, according to Sartre, try to escape this challenge of freedom through what he calls "*mauvais foi*" or "bad will," which is a state in which one denies one's freedom and responsibility by pretending to be something that is not autonomous, such as subject to social, religious, or institutional norms. This attitude becomes a form of escape from the intimidating freedom. However, Sartre emphasizes that this escape is inauthentic as man is essentially a free being who cannot avoid the fact that he must continue to choose. This challenge to freedom is also compounded by the condition of human facticity, which is the fact that man is thrown into a world with certain limitations that he did not choose, such as place of birth, culture, and physical circumstances. Although this facticity cannot be changed, humans still have the freedom to interpret and act within the framework of these constraints [2].

Sartre saw freedom as something that is not only heavy but also frightening. The decisions people make not only affect themselves but also have an impact on the world and others. Therefore, freedom always entails risk, the risk of making the wrong choice or a choice that harms others. However, it is precisely in this freedom that Sartre finds the true value of human existence. Humans who dare to face the challenges of freedom and act authentically are humans who truly exist. Thus, existential freedom, although full of challenges, is an opportunity for humans to create their own meaning of life in a world that does not provide meaning inherently [1].

Sartre posits that humans are "condemned to be free" because freedom is an inescapable reality of existence. Unlike deterministic philosophical perspectives that attribute human actions to divine will or natural law, Sartre argues that humans have no inherent blueprint for existence and must forge their own paths.

However, this radical freedom also entails severe existential challenges:

1. Moral Dilemmas – Without universal ethical guidelines, individuals bear full responsibility for their decisions, leading to moral uncertainty.
2. Social Alienation – The emphasis on individual freedom may result in isolation from traditional belief systems and communities.
3. Fear of Authenticity – Many people engage in self-deception, suppressing their true selves to conform to social norms and expectations.

In the field of education, Sartre's existential freedom presents both opportunities and challenges. Autonomous learning environments, which emphasize student choice and personal responsibility, reflect Sartre's

philosophy. However, not all students are prepared for such freedom, leading to educational anxiety and decision paralysis.

3.5. Relevance of Sartre's Thought in the Modern Context

The relevance of Jean-Paul Sartre's thought in a modern context remains significant as his ideas on freedom, responsibility, and human authenticity are highly relevant to the challenges faced by individuals in the era of globalization and modernity. In an increasingly complex world, humans are often faced with situations where life choices are no longer determined by traditional norms or established dogmas.

Sartre emphasized that humans are free beings, who must create their own meaning and purpose in life. In the modern world, where many individuals feel disoriented due to the absence of universal guidelines or uniform beliefs, Sartre's thought encourages individuals to face this reality with courage and awareness of their responsibilities. The concept of "man is condemned to be free" becomes even more relevant when we consider the pressure to make important decisions in a fast-paced and dynamic context, whether in terms of career, relationships, or life values.

On the other hand, Sartre's thought also provides a sharp criticism of the phenomenon of alienation that often arises in the modern era. With the development of technology and social media, people often feel trapped in an inauthentic existence, where actions and decisions are based on social expectations or the image they want to present, rather than on their true desires. Sartre warned that this is a form of "bad will" (*mauvais foi*), where humans deny their freedom by going with the flow without deep reflection. In this context, his thoughts become relevant to remind modern humans to return to authenticity, i.e. the courage to accept complete freedom and act in accordance with the values they themselves create, even if it means going against the flow or facing risks [4].

Sartre's thought also offers an important perspective in dealing with global issues such as social injustice, climate change, and political conflict. Sartre believed that individual freedom must be accompanied by responsibility towards the world and others. In the modern context, where individual actions can have a huge impact on society and the environment, this thinking encourages humans to not only be concerned with personal freedom, but also take an active role in creating a better world. Sartre taught that freedom is the basis for creating social change, but this freedom must be exercised with an awareness of the impact our choices have on others [8].

In a world that is constantly changing and often uncertain, Sartre's idea of existence preceding essence is also relevant to encourage people not to be trapped in stereotypes or roles that have been determined by society. Sartre taught that every individual has the potential to redefine themselves through actions and choices, without being bound by an imposed identity. This provides inspiration for those who want to break free from social, cultural, or political boundaries, and create a meaningful life according to their own values.

Thus, the relevance of Sartre's thought in the modern context lies not only in his philosophical analysis of freedom and responsibility, but also in his ability to provide practical guidance for humans in living a life full of challenges, both individually and collectively. Sartre invites modern humans to face reality with courage, accept freedom as an inevitable reality, and use this freedom to create an authentic and meaningful life.

Sartre's existentialism remains highly relevant in contemporary discourse. In an era defined by globalization, technology, and shifting cultural values, individuals increasingly face existential uncertainty.

1. Education and Character Development

- Sartre's concept of radical freedom aligns with student-centered learning models, where individuals take responsibility for their education.
- Character education programs that emphasize critical thinking, moral responsibility, and personal accountability incorporate Sartrean ideas on freedom and authenticity.

2. Social and Political Ethics

- Sartre's notion of personal responsibility extends to social activism, where individuals must actively engage in societal change rather than passively accept injustice.
- This philosophy has influenced progressive education policies that promote active citizenship and civic responsibility.

3. Mental Health and Psychological Resilience

- Sartre's existential anxiety has been applied in psychotherapy to help individuals navigate identity crises and decision-making dilemmas.
- Educational counselors often use existentialist approaches to help students cope with uncertainty and make meaningful choices about their future careers and ethical beliefs.

3.6. Islamic Perspective on Jean-Paul Sartre's Existentialism

Jean-Paul Sartre, an existentialist philosopher, views humans as free, responsible subjects defined by their existence. Sartre asserts that "existence precedes essence," meaning that humans do not have a predetermined nature or purpose, but rather create themselves through choices and actions. In this perspective, humans are autonomous beings who must take full responsibility for their lives, without relying on external values or guidelines. However, how does this view dialog with Islam and the Quran? In Islam, humans are also seen as

beings who have the freedom to choose, but this freedom is not without limits, but is placed within the framework of divine will.

The Quran underlines that humans were created with the purpose of worshipping Allah (QS Adz-Dzariyat: 56) and were given the mandate to be caliphs on earth (QS Al-Baqarah: 30).

Although Sartre denies the existence of God as the determinant of the meaning of life, the concept of human freedom in his existential philosophy can be aligned with the idea that humans are given free will (ikhtiar) in Islam. In the Quran, humans are given the freedom to choose between good and evil (QS Al-Balad: 10), but every choice carries consequences that must be borne, both in this world and in the hereafter (QS Al-Zalzalah: 7-8). Thus, individual responsibility, which is also at the core of Sartre's teachings, is emphasized in Islam. However, the difference is that in Islam, human freedom does not mean without direction, but always within the framework of sharia, which is a guidance from Allah to achieve the ultimate goal, namely His pleasure.

In addition, Sartre's concept of angst, in which humans feel trapped in absolute freedom without divine guidance, contrasts with the Islamic perspective that offers hope through faith in Allah. In Islam, freedom is not an existential burden, but an opportunity to get closer to the Creator through decisions that are in accordance with His will. The Quran affirms that Allah does not burden anyone beyond his or her ability (QS Al-Baqarah: 286), indicating a balance between individual responsibility and divine compassion. Therefore, the dialogue between Sartre's existentialism and Islam shows that although both differ fundamentally in their views on God and the meaning of life, they both recognize the importance of human freedom and responsibility as existential subjects. In Islam, humans are free, but that freedom is directed towards fulfilling their duties as creatures of faith and piety to God.

While Sartre's atheistic existentialism asserts that humans define their own purpose, Islamic thought maintains that human freedom operates within divine guidance.

1. Freedom in Islam vs. Sartrean Freedom

- Sartre views freedom as absolute, while Islam sees it as a trust (amanah) that must align with divine principles (shariah).
- Islamic education emphasizes that while humans are given free will, their choices must reflect moral responsibility and accountability to God (QS Al-Baqarah: 286).

2. Existential Anxiety vs. Spiritual Tranquility

- Sartre's concept of anxiety arises from the realization that existence lacks inherent meaning.
- Islam counters this with faith (iman) and trust in divine wisdom (tawakkul), providing a framework for existential peace and purpose.

3. Human Responsibility in a Theistic Framework

- Sartre emphasizes individual autonomy, whereas Islam teaches that human freedom is balanced with communal responsibilities.
- In Islamic education, character formation involves integrating self-awareness with social responsibility, ensuring personal freedom aligns with community well-being.

Sartre's existentialism offers a powerful framework for understanding human freedom and responsibility in a rapidly changing world. While his radical individualism presents both opportunities and challenges, it remains a valuable philosophical foundation for education, psychology, and social ethics. The integration of Sartrean existentialism in education provides a basis for critical thinking, independent learning, and ethical decision-making. However, this requires careful structuring to prevent existential anxiety in students who struggle with autonomy. Future research should explore ethno-social approaches to existential education, examining how local wisdom-based education can integrate existentialist principles with communal values.

This research provides significant insights into the relevance of Sartre's existentialism in contemporary society, particularly in the context of education and social ethics. However, there are several limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the study primarily focuses on theoretical analysis without empirical testing in real-world educational settings. Future research should include qualitative studies or experimental approaches to observe the practical application of existentialist principles in various learning environments. Second, while this study highlights the challenges of existential freedom in modern society, it does not extensively explore cross-cultural perspectives on Sartre's philosophy. Comparative studies across different cultural backgrounds would provide a broader understanding of how existentialism interacts with diverse value systems.

Additionally, technological advancements and the rise of artificial intelligence have introduced new ethical and philosophical dilemmas regarding human autonomy and authenticity. Further studies should investigate how Sartre's ideas can be applied to digital ethics, virtual identity, and AI-driven decision-making. Lastly, future research could develop practical frameworks for incorporating existentialist thought into educational curricula, ensuring that students can engage with Sartre's philosophy in a structured and meaningful way. By addressing these gaps, future studies can expand the applicability of Sartre's existentialism, making it more relevant to contemporary global challenges.

4. CONCLUSION

Jean-Paul Sartre, through his existentialist thought, provides a radical perspective on human existence as a subject that asserts freedom, responsibility, and the creation of meaning in life. Sartre rejects the idea that humans have an innate essence that determines their purpose before existence. Instead, he argues that existence precedes essence, meaning that humans first "exist" and then define themselves through actions and free choices. Man does not just passively exist in the world, but must actively create his identity in total freedom. However, this freedom is not without consequences—it often becomes a burden, as individuals must take full responsibility for every decision without relying on divine authority or predetermined rules. In Sartre's framework, where God is absent, humans are left alone to determine their own path, a condition he describes as being "condemned to be free."

As existential subjects, humans cannot escape their inherent freedom, even though this freedom often leads to existential anxiety (*angoisse*). Sartre emphasizes that humans who deny their freedom, for example by blaming external circumstances or submitting completely to social expectations, live in a condition he calls "bad faith" (*mauvais foi*). In this case, individuals become inauthentic because they avoid taking responsibility for their own existence. However, Sartre also sees freedom as an opportunity, provided that individuals face reality with courage and accept full responsibility for their actions. Through their freedom, humans not only construct their identity, but also shape the values that define their world. Thus, humans are no longer passive beings who merely follow predetermined rules or social norms, but active agents who continuously shape their identity and influence their environment.

Sartre's philosophy remains highly relevant in the modern era, particularly in the fields of education, ethics, and social philosophy. His existentialist framework inspires individuals to move beyond deterministic thinking and embrace the challenge of living authentically in an era marked by globalization, rapid technological advancements, and value pluralism. In education, Sartre's emphasis on freedom and responsibility provides a strong foundation for student-centered learning models that encourage critical thinking and independent decision-making. Moreover, his philosophy offers valuable insights for character education, promoting personal accountability, integrity, and the pursuit of authentic meaning in life.

However, Sartre's existentialist perspective also presents challenges, particularly in societies where communal values and religious beliefs play a dominant role. While his philosophy encourages individual autonomy, it must be carefully balanced with ethical considerations and social responsibility. Future research should explore the integration of existentialist ideas with cultural and religious perspectives, examining how Sartre's concept of freedom can be harmonized with moral and spiritual frameworks in diverse educational and social contexts.

By understanding humans as existential subjects, Sartre provides a liberating yet demanding framework that encourages individuals to live with awareness, courage, and responsibility. His philosophy is not merely an invitation to reject dogma, but a call to action—to be the architects of our own lives. In freedom lies unlimited potential to create authentic meaning, even in the midst of an absurd reality.

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