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The Tranformation of Anxiety into Performance Pressure: A Roland Barthes Semiotic Analysis of Ikhtiar and Tawakal in Inside Out 2

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Abstract. *Adolescent anxiety is closely related to uncertainty, social acceptance, and pressure to meet certain standards of achievement. This study analyzes the representation of anxiety, effort, and tawakal in Inside Out 2 using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach and an Islamic perspective. A qualitative method was employed by analyzing ten purposively selected data units, consisting of scenes, dialogues, expressions, actions, and situations related to anxiety, effort, performance, and self-acceptance. The analysis examined denotation, connotation, and myth, followed by a dialogical interpretation with the concepts of ikhtiar and tawakal in the Qur'an and Hadith. The analysis shows that anxiety in the film is not portrayed as a sudden emotional disturbance, but as a process that unfolds through five stages: mistake, anticipation, performance pressure, loss of control, and self-acceptance. More importantly, effort itself proves to be ambivalent. Preparation and skill development initially signify constructive endeavor, yet they are gradually mythologized as proof of worth once achievement and social acceptance become the standard for evaluating the self. This study therefore contributes theoretically by explaining not only how anxiety emerges, but also how constructive endeavor can turn into pressure when achievement is taken as the basis of self-worth. From an Islamic perspective, this shift can be dialogued with the distinction between human responsibility to strive (ikhtiar) and the limits of human control over outcomes (tawakal). The study also contributes to Islamic Religious Education by showing how popular film can provide a contextual space for discussing effort, human limitations, self-acceptance, and attitudes toward outcomes.*

Keywords: *Anxiety; Inside Out 2; Semiotics Roland Barthes; Endeavor; Tawakal; Islamic Religious Education*

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a developmental phase marked by physical, emotional, social, and identity changes that can create complex adjustment demands. The World Health Organization reports that approximately one in seven adolescents aged 10-19 years experiences a mental health condition, with anxiety, depression, and behavioral disorders among the most common problems (Potterton et al. 2022; Tuaf and Orkibi 2025). In Indonesia, anxiety disorders are also among the mental health problems affecting adolescents (Organization 2024). Therefore, adolescent anxiety needs to be understood not only as an emotional symptom but also in relation to future expectations, social demands, achievement, and responses to situations beyond individual control.

These dynamics are represented in the animated film Inside Out 2 (2024), which follows 13-year-old Riley as she enters adolescence and encounters changes in her emotional and social life. The emergence of Anxiety reflects the tendency to anticipate possible future events and prepare for potential threats. In the film, this anticipatory function initially helps Riley prepare for new challenges, including her desire to be accepted by an older hockey group. However, anticipation gradually develops into excessive planning and an attempt to secure outcomes that cannot be fully controlled (Tang et al. 2024). Thus, Inside Out 2 presents anxiety not merely as fear, but as a process in which concern about the future can develop into pressure to ensure that the future unfolds as expected.

Previous studies have examined Inside Out 2 from several perspectives. Adiwinata and Winduwati (2025), using Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotics, identified various representations of adolescent anxiety, including negative thinking, low self-confidence, negative self-image, and emotional regulation problems (Adiwinata and Winduwati 2025). Maharani and Yulianto (2025) examined anxiety through multimodal discourse analysis and highlighted the role of visual, verbal, and audiovisual elements in constructing emotional meaning (Maharani and Yulianto 2025). Other psychological studies similarly discuss Anxiety as a protective mechanism that can become a source of pressure when anticipatory processes become excessive. These studies demonstrate that anxiety in Inside Out 2 has received considerable attention, but the relationship between anxiety, effort, achievement pressure, and the desire to control future outcomes remains less explored, particularly from an Islamic perspective.

This gap becomes important when Riley's effort is considered in relation to social acceptance. Her preparation and training can initially be understood as constructive efforts to develop her abilities. However, the meaning of effort changes when achievement becomes a condition for acceptance and self-worth. Anxiety then operates not only through fear of failure but also through the desire to guarantee a particular outcome. Recent research indicates that intolerance of uncertainty is closely associated with anxiety among adolescents (Ye et al. 2026). This perspective allows anxiety in the film to be examined as a transformation from anticipation and preparation toward performance pressure and an illusion of control.

This issue can be dialogued with the Islamic concepts of ikhtiar and tawakal. The Qur'an emphasizes human effort in QS. an-Najm [53]: 39, while QS. Ali 'Imran [3]: 159 connects human decision and effort with tawakal to Allah. QS. ath-Thalaq [65]: 3 also emphasizes reliance on Allah after taking the necessary means. Research on tawakal similarly explains that tawakal does not mean abandoning effort but involves entrusting the outcome to Allah after human effort has been

undertaken (Iting, Yusuf, and Haddade 2025). This framework provides a relevant perspective for distinguishing between effort as a human responsibility and the attempt to control outcomes that remain beyond human capacity.

However, Inside Out 2 does not explicitly present the concepts of ikhtiar and tawakal. Therefore, this study does not equate Riley's actions directly with Islamic teachings. Instead, the Islamic concepts are used as a dialogical interpretive framework after the scenes have been analyzed through their narrative and semiotic meanings. This approach allows similarities, differences, and tensions between the film's representation and Islamic principles to be considered without imposing religious meanings on the film.

The novelty of this study lies in reading anxiety as a process of transformation: from mistakes and anticipation, to performance pressure, loss of control, and ultimately self-acceptance. Using Roland Barthes' semiotics, the study examines not only the identification of anxiety-related scenes but also the meanings of effort, achievement, social acceptance, control, and self-identity through denotation, connotation, and myth. The study subsequently dialogues these findings with the concepts of ikhtiar and tawakal and considers their relevance to Islamic Religious Education (PAI). In this way, the study proposes that the central issue represented in the film is not simply Riley's anxiety, but the transformation of constructive effort into pressure when achievement becomes a condition for acceptance and self-worth.

Based on this framework, the study aims to: (1) analyze the representation of anxiety, effort, and the need to control the future in Inside Out 2 using Roland Barthes' semiotics; (2) examine how these representations can be dialogued with the concepts of ikhtiar and tawakal in an Islamic perspective; and (3) identify their relevance to Islamic Religious Education, particularly in developing a proportionate understanding of effort, human limitations, uncertainty, self-acceptance, and attitudes toward outcomes.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis to examine anxiety, effort, and tawakal in Inside Out 2. Data were obtained through repeated observation of scenes, dialogues, expressions, actions, and situations related to anxiety, effort, performance pressure, and self-acceptance. Ten relevant data units were purposively selected and coded D1–D10 with corresponding timestamps for data traceability (Dewi et al. 2026). The data were documented through observation notes and analyzed using Barthes' three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth (Afnira 2023). Denotation identifies the literal meaning of signs, connotation examines their

emotional, social, and cultural meanings, and myth reveals naturalized values related to anxiety, achievement, social acceptance, identity, and control (Amran, Lihawa, and Pakaya 2026).

The findings were then dialogued with the concepts of ikhtiar and tawakal and their relevance to Islamic Religious Education (PAI). The Islamic perspective functioned as an interpretive framework rather than a literal meaning imposed on the film. Data validity was ensured through repeated observation, timestamp recording, and consistency checks among scenes, dialogues, semiotic interpretations, and Islamic values (Revanita and Prafitri 2026). The analysis proceeded from empirical observation to interpretation, ensuring that conclusions concerning anxiety, coping, ikhtiar, tawakal, and PAI values remained traceable to the selected data units.

Figure 1. Concept Mapping of the Research Method

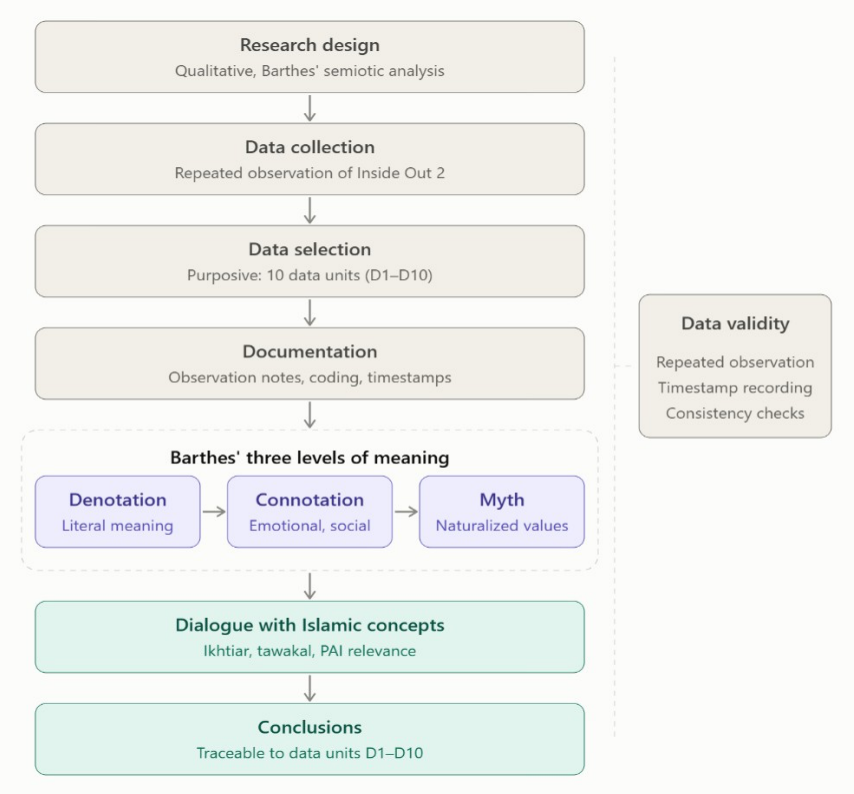


Table 1. Roland Barthes' Semiotic Analysis in *Inside Out 2*

Scene code/time	Dialog/adegan	Denotation	Konotasi	Myth	Coping Islam/PAI
D1 ±00:02-00:07	Riley scored, committed a foul, then entered the penalty box.	Riley was punished after making a mistake.	Fear of failure and disappointment	Teenagers must always succeed.	Anxiety; patience and self-evaluation.
D2 ±00:10-00:15	Riley received an invitation to attend a hockey camp.	Riley got the opportunity to develop.	Expectations and motivation to achieve.	The future is determined by achievement.	Effort; responsibility and hard work.
D3 ±00:15-00:20	Riley prepares to join the camp.	Riley practices and prepares equipment.	Perseverance and determination.	Success is determined only by performance.	Ikhtiar; QS. an-Najm : 39.
D4 ±00:20-00:25	Riley remembers mistakes and is afraid of repeating them.	Riley connects the past with the future.	Worry and avoid failure	Mistakes must be forgotten.	Muhasabah and emotional management.
D5 ±00:27-00:34	Riley tried to impress Val and the Fire Hawks players.	Riley adjusts to the new group.	Social comparisons and needs are accepted.	Youth should follow the group standards.	Self-acceptance and social coping.
D6 ±00:39-00:46	Anxiety imagines Riley failing, being rejected, and losing friends.	Anxiety projects bad possibilities.	Overthinking and anticipatory anxiety.	The future must be controlled.	Tawakal and awareness of limitations.
D7 ±00:46-00:54	Anxiety forms Riley's belief system.	Memory shapes Riley's self-view.	Identity is influenced by fear and social judgment.	Self must be according to the expectations of others.	Identity anxiety and self-acceptance.
D8 ±01:02-01:10	Riley plays aggressively to look perfect and injures Grace.	Riley is trying to overdo it and harm others.	Perfectionism and loss of control.	Success can be achieved by all means.	Unbalanced efforts; morals and self-control.
D9 ±01:10-01:17	Riley entered the penalty box and panicked.	Riley received punishment and was subjected to emotional distress.	Guilt, fear of failure, and panic.	Failure means self-destruction.	Patience, social support, and emotion regulation.

D10 ±01:23-01:28	Riley accepts his various emotions and no longer pursues perfection.	Riley began to accept herself as a whole.	Self-acceptance and relinquishment of control.	Self-worth is not only determined by achievement.	Tawakal after effort; QS. Ali 'Imran : 159.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Anxiety as Anticipation of the Future and Illusion of Control

Riley's anxiety is represented through the transformation of past mistakes into fears about future failure, particularly in D1 and D3. When Riley commits a foul and receives a penalty, the scene denotatively shows a mistake and its immediate consequence. Connotatively, however, the experience becomes a reference for anticipating future failure. A past negative event is therefore no longer treated as completed, but becomes a basis for interpreting future situations as threatening. This finding is consistent with Songco, Hudson, and Fox (2020), who associate adolescent anxiety with negative information-processing biases and attention to possible negative outcomes. Ye et al. (2026) further found that intolerance of uncertainty can predict increases in adolescent anxiety symptoms (Ye et al. 2026). The film thus represents anxiety as a future-oriented process in which uncertainty is transformed into anticipated threat.

This mechanism is more explicit in D6, when Anxiety produces a series of negative possibilities if Riley fails to join the Fire Hawks, including disappointing her parents, losing friends, and being alone. Denotatively, Anxiety visualizes possible future events, while connotatively the sequence represents repetitive negative thinking in which one feared possibility generates another. This corresponds with (Espinosa et al. 2022), who link repetitive negative thinking with anxiety symptoms in adolescence, and (Chiu et al. 2022), who found that anxiety is associated with more negative anticipation of future events. Anxiety consequently functions not only as a response to danger but as a mechanism that continually produces predictions about events that have not occurred.

The consequences of this anticipatory process are also shown physically. As presented in Figure 1, Riley experiences difficulty sleeping because her mind remains occupied by future possibilities.

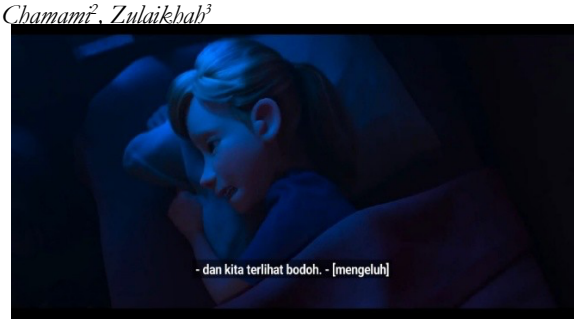

- dan kita terlihat bodoh. - [mengeluh]

Figure 2. Riley experiences sleep disturbance as a psychophysiological effect of anxiety

Denotatively, Riley wakes at night and cannot calm her thoughts; connotatively, the scene indicates that anxiety has begun to interfere with basic rest. Research has similarly associated worry and intolerance of uncertainty with adolescent sleep quality (Xiao et al. 2023), while Haugland et al. (2021) found associations between anxiety symptoms, sleep duration, and insomnia among adolescents (Haugland et al. 2021). At the mythical level, the scene constructs the belief that constant vigilance and preparation are necessary to achieve security. The film therefore reveals a paradox: the attempt to control uncertainty through continuous anticipation can itself produce distress.

The visual construction of Anxiety reinforces this meaning through rapid movements, restless expressions, and the screen used to display future scenarios. These signs connote tension, alertness, and the desire to control uncertain circumstances. At the mythical level, they construct the assumption that security can be achieved by predicting every possible outcome. This interpretation is consistent with research connecting adolescent anxiety with future-oriented thinking and difficulties in managing uncertainty (Lauriola et al. 2023; Tang et al. 2023). Thus, the film presents anxiety as a way of relating to uncertainty in which preparation gradually develops into an illusion of control.

The same pattern appears in D5-D7, when Riley seeks Valentina's recognition and attempts to gain acceptance within the Fire Hawks. Although these actions denotatively represent adaptation and effort in a new hockey environment, their connotation shifts toward pressure to appear capable and worthy of acceptance. (Wolf- et al. 2023) found relationships among popularity, fear of negative evaluation, and social avoidance in adolescence, while (Brookman et al. 2023) linked peer acceptance and evaluation concerns with social anxiety. At the mythical level, the film exposes the expectation that adolescents should be successful, accepted, and able to demonstrate competence without weakness. Riley's anxiety therefore becomes connected not only to athletic performance but also to the social meaning attached to success and failure.

From an Islamic perspective, this representation can be understood through the tension between human effort and the limits of human control. QS. al-Baqarah 2:286 states:

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۗ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ

"Allah does not burden a person except according to his ability. He will receive the reward of what he has earned, and he will bear the consequence of what he has done."

Meanwhile, QS. ar-Ra'd 13:28 states:

الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَتَطْمَىِٕنُّ قُلُوْبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ ۗاَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ تَطْمَىِٕنُّ الْقُلُوْبُ ۙ

"Those who believe and whose hearts find comfort in the remembrance of Allah. Surely, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find comfort."

These verses are not positioned as direct remedies for Riley's anxiety, but as an interpretive framework for understanding human limitations, uncertainty, and emotional regulation. Human beings are encouraged to make effort according to their capacity while recognizing that outcomes cannot be controlled absolutely. This contrasts with Anxiety's pattern of turning preparation into an attempt to guarantee future outcomes and social acceptance. (Ridwan and Utari 2025) similarly relate the Qur'anic perspective on mental health to emotional regulation, spiritual coping, and psychological resilience. Hence, the film's representation of anxiety can be read as a tension between the effort to prepare for the future and the human need to accept the limits of control.

Shifting Effort: From Adaptive Effort to Performance Pressure

RRiley's opportunity to attend the hockey camp provides the initial representation of effort in a relatively adaptive form, as shown in D2 and D3. Denotatively, Riley prepares through practice and develops her hockey skills before entering a new environment. Connotatively, these activities represent perseverance, responsibility, and willingness to improve. Goal-oriented training and competency development are important aspects of adolescents' involvement in sports (Lu, Yu, and Gan 2022; Zhang et al. 2022). At this stage, Riley's effort is primarily directed toward preparation and self-development rather than proving her worth to others. This meaning can be dialogized with the Islamic concept of ikhtiar, in which human beings are expected to pursue their goals through concrete effort. Fikri and Munandar (2026) similarly emphasize that expectations in the Qur'anic perspective need to be accompanied by serious effort (Fikri and Munandar 2026). Thus, the film initially presents effort as a process of developing ability and preparing for challenges within one's capacity.

This orientation is reinforced by QS. an-Najm 53:39:

وَاَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلْاِنْسَانِ اِلَّا مَا سَعٰىۙ

"And that there is not for man except that [good] for which he strives."

The principle is also reflected in QS. ar-Ra'd 13:11, which relates change in human circumstances to changes made by people themselves. In Riley's context, training represents the active dimension of

ikhtiar: using abilities, preparing seriously, and undergoing a process to achieve a goal. This understanding is consistent with Iting et al. (2025), who explain that tawakkal in the Qur'anic perspective is not passive surrender but follows human effort (Iting et al. 2025)

. However, ikhtiar should not be understood as a guarantee of a particular outcome. It represents human responsibility for the process, while the final result remains beyond complete human control.

The orientation of Riley's effort begins to change in Figure 2, when she chooses to retain the ball rather than pass to an open teammate.



Figure 3. Riley retains the ball to demonstrate individual performance

Denotatively, the scene shows Riley continuing to play individually despite the opportunity to pass. Connotatively, the action indicates a shift from developing ability toward demonstrating ability in front of a socially significant group. (Santika et al. 2026) identify social validation as part of Riley's character development in Inside Out 2, while (Sengkey et al. 2025) relate Riley's emotional dynamics to her social relationships and need for acceptance. At the mythical level, the scene constructs the idea that visible individual achievement is a means of gaining recognition. Effort therefore begins to carry a social function: it is no longer only about becoming more capable, but also about proving that one is worthy of acceptance.

This shift becomes more pronounced in D5, D6, and D8, when Riley attempts to impress Valentina and conform to the standards of the Fire Hawks. Her effort eventually takes an extreme form when she plays aggressively and causes Grace to become injured. Denotatively, these actions are attempts to achieve her desired goal; connotatively, they reveal performance pressure arising from the need to maintain self-image and social acceptance. Maharani et al. (2026) similarly identify the relationship between Riley's actions and the pressure associated with social expectations (Maharani et al. 2026). At the mythical level, achievement becomes associated with acceptance, while failure becomes associated with rejection. Consequently, hockey performance is no longer merely an outcome of training but becomes a measure of Riley's perceived value within the group. This is the point at which adaptive effort begins to transform into performance pressure.

The distinction between ikhtiar and performance-driven ambition therefore lies in the orientation of the effort. Ikhtiar emphasizes doing what is beneficial and possible within human capacity, whereas anxiety-driven performance makes a particular result the condition for self-worth. This principle is reflected in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim No. 2664, which encourages believers to pursue what is beneficial, seek Allah's help, and not become helpless while accepting what has been decreed. Jaelani (2021) likewise explains that effort and tawakal are interconnected: humans continue to make efforts while entrusting the final outcome to Allah (Jaelani 2021). (Hidayatullah et al. 2025) further discuss the relevance of ikhtiar and tawakkul in dealing with anxiety, inner conflict, and uncertainty about the future.

Accordingly, Inside Out 2 represents effort as a dynamic process rather than a single positive category. Riley's training initially functions as adaptive effort because it is oriented toward preparation and self-development. As social recognition becomes attached to performance, however, the same effort changes into pressure to succeed, avoid failure, and secure acceptance. The film therefore illustrates how effort can become psychologically burdensome when the process is replaced by the demand to control outcomes. This transformation also connects the representation of ikhtiar with the subsequent need for tawakal: effort remains necessary, but it cannot be used to guarantee outcomes or determine personal worth.

Tawakal, Self-Acceptance, and Release of Control

The peak of Riley's anxiety appears in D8 and D9, when efforts to meet the desired standard result in a loss of control. Riley plays aggressively until Grace is injured and subsequently experiences a penalty and panic. Denotatively, the scenes show the direct consequences of Riley's actions; connotatively, they indicate that effort driven by fear of failure can lose its adaptive direction when the outcome becomes something that must be controlled. This condition is consistent with Marchetti et al. (2025), who found a relationship between intolerance of uncertainty and anxiety in adolescents (Marchetti et al. 2025). The event therefore represents not only a failure in the game but also the consequence of an effort increasingly burdened by the need to maintain a particular self-image and avoid failure.

The culmination of this loss of control is shown in Figure 3.



Figure 4. Riley's anxiety peak during a panic attack

Denotatively, Riley experiences intense physical and emotional distress while Anxiety also loses control within the emotional control room. Connotatively, the scene demonstrates that the anticipatory mechanism initially intended to protect Riley has become a source of emotional chaos. Iannattone et al. (2023) similarly associate difficulties in managing uncertainty and emotional regulation with anxiety in adolescence (Iannattone et al. 2023). At the mythical level, the scene challenges the assumption that complete control can be achieved through constant vigilance: the stronger the demand to control every possibility, the greater the disruption when that control fails. The film therefore presents the loss of control as a consequence of excessive future-oriented control rather than simply as an isolated emotional event.

The turning point occurs when Joy regains control of the emotional system and Anxiety no longer dominates Riley's responses. Denotatively, the emotional control space returns to a more balanced condition; connotatively, this shift represents the restoration of emotional balance rather than the elimination of Anxiety. Emery et al. (2025) found that anxiety dominance in Riley's emotional dynamics can interfere with decision-making, while emotional acceptance contributes to the restoration of control (Emery et al. 2025). Sengkey et al. (2025) likewise relate Riley's emotional complexity to her identity and social relationships (Sengkey et al. 2025). At the mythical level, the film suggests that emotional well-being is not achieved by eliminating unwanted emotions but by allowing different emotions to coexist without one emotion controlling the whole self.

This change becomes clearer in D10, when Riley begins to accept the complexity of her emotions rather than maintaining a perfect self-image. Denotatively, her emotional system becomes more balanced; connotatively, this represents acceptance of herself as an imperfect person with multiple emotions and limitations. At the mythical level, the scene challenges the idea that a person must always succeed, be accepted, and perform perfectly to have value. The narrative consequently shifts from the demand to become the "expected Riley" toward acceptance of the "real Riley." This interpretation is consistent with (Elizabeth et al. 2025), who found that Inside Out 2 can help audiences understand emotional complexity and encourage self-acceptance.

This acceptance can be dialogized with the concept of tawakal, although the two cannot be equated directly. QS. Ali 'Imran 3:159 states:

فَاِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۗاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِيْنَ

"Then, when you have made up your mind, trust in Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who trust."

The verse places tawakal after decision and effort, indicating that trust in Allah does not eliminate human responsibility. (Fikri and Munandar 2026) similarly explain tawakal as surrendering the outcome to Allah after taking the necessary means. In Riley's context, the release of the need to control every possible future contains an element that can be dialogized with this principle. However, the film does not explicitly present tawakal or a relationship with God; therefore, the connection remains an interpretive dialogue rather than a claim about the filmmakers' intention.

Tawakal must also be distinguished from resignation. Riley does not stop making efforts or deny her mistakes. Rather, she accepts her limitations, acknowledges the consequences of her actions, and becomes able to move forward without requiring perfection. Self-acceptance in D10 therefore does not justify her actions toward Grace, but creates space for responsibility, self-control, patience, and improvement. These meanings are relevant to PAI values, particularly responsibility for actions, emotional self-control, patience, and willingness to improve relationships.

The findings therefore show that tawakal in this study functions as a dialogical framework for interpreting the release of excessive control, not as a direct religious message in Inside Out 2. The film's self-acceptance and the Islamic concept of tawakal meet at the recognition of human limitations, but remain conceptually distinct. Riley's journey moves from trying to control the future through performance toward accepting uncertainty and her imperfect self. In Islamic terms, this can be read alongside the principle that humans are responsible for their efforts while the final outcome remains beyond complete human control (Rahayu and Nur 2025). Thus, tawakal becomes relevant not when effort is abandoned, but when effort is accompanied by acceptance of the limits of human control.

The Relationship of Anxiety, Effort, and Tawakal as Integrative Findings

Based on the overall data, this study identifies a transformation of anxiety represented through the sequence mistakes → anticipation → performance pressure → loss of control → self-acceptance. Riley's mistakes trigger fear, which develops into anticipatory thinking and the production of negative future possibilities. This anticipation initially functions as protection but gradually becomes a demand to control future outcomes. Consequently, effort shifts from self-development toward performance pressure when success becomes associated with social acceptance and self-worth. When this control can no longer be maintained, Riley experiences panic and eventually moves toward self-acceptance. This pattern is consistent with (Gu et al. 2020), who relate uncertainty about the future to worry and

anxiety, particularly when individuals have difficulty accepting uncertainty. The findings therefore indicate that the central issue is not anxiety itself, but the transformation of anxiety from an alerting function into an excessive demand for control.

The findings also reveal a distinction between the domain of human effort and the domain of outcomes. Riley can practice, prepare, and improve her abilities, but cannot fully determine the result of the match, Valentina's acceptance, the Fire Hawks' decisions, or other people's evaluations. Anxiety intensifies when these outcomes are treated as conditions that must be secured through effort. In the Islamic perspective, this distinction corresponds with the relationship between ikhtiar and tawakal: humans are responsible for taking available causes and making serious efforts, while ultimate dependence is placed on Allah (Fikri and Munandar 2026). The integration of ikhtiar and tawakkul is also relevant to anxiety, stress, and inner conflict because it maintains human responsibility while recognizing the limits of control over outcomes (Hidayatullah et al. 2025). Thus, effort concerns what a person can do, whereas tawakal prevents the result from becoming the sole measure of success or self-worth.

The main novelty of this study lies in identifying anxiety as a process of changing effort orientation. Rather than representing anxiety only as fear or a collection of symptoms, Inside Out 2 shows how future-oriented anxiety can transform constructive effort into performative control, in which achievement becomes a condition for acceptance of the self. This finding extends previous discussions of anxiety, social pressure, and self-acceptance by connecting them within a single semiotic process. The Islamic perspective further interprets this process through the distinction between human responsibility and the limits of control over results, while remaining conceptually distinct from Barthes' semiotics. Barthes explains how meanings are constructed through signs, whereas ikhtiar and tawakal provide a religious framework for understanding effort, outcomes, and human limitations. The relationship between future anxiety, Islamic religiosity, and self-acceptance identified by (Pratama et al. 2024) supports the relevance of this interpretive connection.

In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), these findings indicate that film can provide a contextual medium for discussing ikhtiar, tawakal, self-acceptance, and emotional challenges. Students can be guided to analyze Riley's actions, the social pressures influencing her decisions, the beliefs underlying her behavior, and the distinction between what humans can control and what they cannot. Qur'anic verses and hadith can then be used to deepen the interpretation rather than being imposed on each scene from the outset. This approach connects film and media literacy with religious literacy while relating Islamic values to students' experiences of effort, failure, social

pressure, and uncertainty. Thus, Inside Out 2 can function as a contextual learning medium for discussing the relationship between human effort, emotional regulation, self-acceptance, and tawakal.

This study has several limitations. First, the analysis focuses on ten purposively selected data units from Inside Out 2, which allows an in-depth interpretation of selected scenes but does not cover every aspect of the film. Second, the study employs Roland Barthes' semiotics and an Islamic interpretive perspective without examining how actual audiences understand or respond to the film. Therefore, future research could explore audience reception among students or adolescents and investigate the implementation of Inside Out 2 as a learning medium in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) through classroom-based research. Such studies could provide further insight into how the film's representations of anxiety, ikhtiar, tawakal, and self-acceptance are understood and applied in educational contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Inside Out 2 represents anxiety as a process from mistakes and uncertainty to future anticipation, performance pressure, loss of control, and self-acceptance. Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis reveals that anxiety is not only related to fear of failure but also to the connection between achievement, social acceptance, and self-identity. The main finding is that effort can shift from constructive self-development to excessive pressure when success is treated as something that must be controlled.

From the perspective of the Qur'an and Hadith, this finding can be dialogued with the relationship between ikhtiar and tawakal. Ikhtiar emphasizes human effort within one's capacity, while tawakal means entrusting the outcome to Allah after making the necessary effort. Riley's self-acceptance is not directly equated with tawakal, since the film does not explicitly present this concept. However, her transformation provides a space to understand the importance of accepting human limitations and releasing excessive demands for control. Thus, the study connects the representation of anxiety in Inside Out 2 with the Islamic values of ikhtiar and tawakal while maintaining the distinction between the film's narrative and the Islamic interpretive framework.

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