

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Trauma is a painful moment that difficult to be forgotten. Many people in the world face trauma as the reaction of their unhappy memory in the past. People who faced trauma usually show reaction when they remember their unhappy moment. They may show unpredictable emotion, flashback, or physical symptoms. This condition makes people suffer. Esther Giller, the president of Sidrant Institute, in a Workshop Presentation at the Annual Conference of the Maryland Mental Hygiene Administration said that trauma is extreme stress that overwhelms a person's ability to cope (Giller). Giller said that a traumatic event or situation creates psychological trauma when it overwhelms the individual's ability to cope, and leaves that person feeling death, annihilation, mutilation, or psychosis (Giller). It means that trauma leaves bad impact to people who experienced it.

The traumas of losing someone we love, especially parents make us suffered and shocked. The impact of the abandonment of parents can cause trauma to someone who faces it. It is because parents, especially mother is the closest person in someone's life. The trauma that stems in childhood can influence someone's life in the future. It is because childhood is the crucial moment in someone's life. Childhood is the phase where children get full love from their parents. According to Strupp, this period far overshadows later stages,

particularly, the oedipal period, which has gained much wider currency in the public's mind (24). The closest person in the childhood is parents, especially mother. Generally, Mother becomes the closest person for children since she is the one who takes care and gives attention to children all time. Losing mother makes children face heavy moments. Strupp mentioned that the mother's attitudes towards the child, and her well-being as well as her response, almost from the first day of life, set up a pattern of interaction which is of basic significance in later life(23). They may face trauma due to the abandonment of parents. The trauma that the children face may cause low self confident, stress, and many other impacts. They may bring their trauma until them getting older.

When people face trauma, they will try some options to deal with the trauma itself. Some people who are stuck in traumatic events consciously or unconsciously will form defense mechanism. According Freud, defense mechanism happened when the ego deals with the demands of reality, the id, and the superego as best as it can. When the anxiety becomes overwhelmed, the ego must defend itself. It does so by unconsciously blocking the impulses or distorting them into a more acceptable, less threatening form (qtd. Boeree 7). The defense mechanism can appear in many ways. They may become positive defense mechanism, or they may become negative defense mechanism. There are many kinds of defense mechanisms, one of them is sublimation.

According to Freud, sublimation is the transforming of an unacceptable impulse, whether it is sex, anger, fear, or whatever, into a socially acceptable, even productive form (qtd. Boeree 8). In other words, sublimation is a defense

mechanism where people tend to change their unhappy memories into positive ways. For example someone with a strong willingness to destroy something tend to be a builder, technician, and mechanic. Someone with powerful sexual desires may become a photographer, painter, artist, or novelist. In sublimation, people do not harm other people in distributing their unhappy memories, but they try to change it into positive things.

Trauma and anxiety become the main issue in the novel *Fangirl* by Rainbow Rowell. *Fangirl* novel tells about trauma faces by the main character, Cather Avery due to the unhappy moment that she faces when she was child. The trauma is caused by the abandonment of the mother. Cather's mother left her and her family when Cather was in the third grade and never comes back. Laura, Cather mother, left and abandons her children because she is not ready to be a mother. The trauma that the main character faces in her childhood shapes anxieties in her later life. There are some anxiety like fear of abandonment, fear of betrayal, fear of intimacy, and low self esteem. To deal with trauma and anxieties that the main character faces, she forms defense mechanism. Defense mechanism that the main character uses is sublimation.

*Fangirl* novel is Rainbow Rowell's third novel. Her first novel, *Attachment*, is about romantic comedy novel, published in 2011. In 2013, she published two young adults' novels, *Eleanor & Park*, and *Fangirl*. The New York Times chose both of her novels as being some of the best young adults' novel in a year. Her novels always get good appreciation by the readers. Her first draft of *Fangirl*, was chosen as the inaugural selection for Tumblr's reblog book

club in 2011. Her fourth novel is a contemporary adult's novel, *Landline*, released on 8 July 2014. Mostly, her novels talked about fandom, romance, the realistic life, different background of people, and people who talk a lot.

Based on those understanding, *Fangirl* novel is chosen since the main character in the novel *Fangirl* has the psychological problem due to the abandonment of the mother, and sublimation is her way to reduce her trauma. From the unwanted children's problem, the writer would like to find out the influences of the trauma in Cather Avery's life. Then, the writer will analyze the construction the defense mechanism works in the story. The writer believes that the research will be very useful for the readers in understanding further about the importance of childhood experiences and the process of human psyche in negotiating trauma and other unwanted memories, which are buried in the unconsciousness world.

There are some related studies that the writer uses. Those related studies help the writer in finding the gaps. Related studies that become the writer's references are First is Setya Oktaviyani's thesis entitled *Sublimation of Charlie in Stephen Chbosky's The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. Second is *The Complex Nature of Exposure to Early Childhood Trauma in the Psychoanalysis of a Child* by Judith M. Chertoff. The third is Orna Cohen and Ricky Finzi Dottan's Journal article about *Defense Mechanisms and Negotiation as Predictors of Co-Parenting among Divorcing Couples: A Dyadic Perspective*. Those related studies mostly have the similar issues like the writer's issue. They also use similar defense mechanism like the writer's defense mechanism, about sublimation. The

differences between the writer's analysis and their analyses are the writer analyses the novel firstly find the trauma and anxieties that the main character's faces in the novel, then find the solution that make the main character use in order to deal to her trauma and anxieties, that is sublimation. Different with the writer's analysis, some of the related studies analyses use different defense mechanism. Some of the related studies are only analysis about sublimation in depth, so that the writer wants to analyze sublimation clearer.

In doing the analyses, each writer strengthen their analyses with evidence. Those related studies helps the writer in understanding more about what should do in analyzing the novel using psychoanalysis theory. The writer paraphrase, and summarized some ideas, generalization, and principles in the related studies and include them in the writer's analysis, so that the writer's analysis could be better.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problems**

The background of the study leads to statements that are going to be analyzed. The following statements are formulated to make a clear focus on the analysis.

1. How is Cather's trauma and anxiety experienced in the novel?
2. How does Cather deal with her trauma through sublimation as her defense mechanism?

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

In organizing the analysis, there is an objective that the writer wants to reach. The objective is to answer the statements of the problems mentioned above. The writer wants to answer those questions in order:

1. To reveal Cather's trauma and anxiety in the novel *Fangirl*.
2. To find out the way Cather deal with her trauma through defense mechanism, that is sublimation

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

There are two significances in this study. The First is to give the importance of the knowledge about trauma, anxiety and defense mechanism. The second is to give people knowledge about the importance period in children's life, knowledge about trauma and anxiety and how to reduce it. The third is to motivate people that trauma and anxiety that people face in life can be reduced if we have strong willingness to do that. By using positive defense mechanism, people who has trauma and anxiety in life can also be successful. Hopefully, this study can help the audience to learn that having trauma is not a bad thing, everyone face it. There are many ways to reduce or even forget the trauma, one of them is sublimation. Not all people who have trauma and anxiety in their life ends with bad things, they can be success also. Becoming successful or not in facing their trauma and anxiety depend on every people's mind and willingness. Just like the main character in the novel. Even the main character is being abandonment by her mother, and facing trauma after that incident, she still can be successful woman. She wins many prizes for her writings, and faces her life happily. Moreover, this study is expected to be related study for similar or different study.

#### **1.5 Scope and Limitation**

The analysis focus on the major issue that is sublimation, as defense mechanism that the main character uses in order to deal with the trauma and

anxiety that she face, and how the trauma and anxieties that the main character has influences her life. The writer focus on how is Cather's trauma and anxiety experienced in the novel and how does Cather deal with her trauma through defense mechanism.

## **1.6 Theoretical Framework**

*Fangirl* will be analyzed by using psychoanalysis theory since this theory contains ideas which are related to the conscious and unconscious mind that influenced on the development of the main character's defense mechanism. Psychoanalysis theory was introduced by Sigmund Freud. According to Freud, psychoanalysis is a term that he used to describe a specific method of investigating the mental process.

This theory will focus on the traumatic and anxiety that influenced the main character's life and defense mechanism that the main character uses in facing her trauma. According to Freud, anxiety is our natural response to helplessness in the face of danger –real or anticipated- warning us to prepare our defense (qtd in. Strupp 36). In his theory, Sigmund Freud also talks about defense mechanism. For Freud, defense mechanism is the mental process that enables the mind to reach compromise solutions to conflicts that it is unable to resolve. In other words, they are the processes by which we keep the repressed in order to avoid knowing what we feel we cannot handle knowing (Tyson 18). Defense Mechanism has two characteristics. First is for denying or confusing the reality. Second is working in the unconscious level (Hall 124). There are seven defense mechanism that Freud mentioned, but the writer is going to analyze about one of

them, that is sublimation. According to Freud, sublimation is the transforming of an unacceptable impulse, whether it is sex, anger, fear, or whatever, into a socially acceptable, even productive form (qtd in. Boeree 8). Sublimation is chosen since it helps the main character to deal with her trauma and anxiety.

In doing the analysis, the writer starts from the memory of Cather Avery as unwanted child. Cather's traumatic experience represented in the novel *Fangirl*, then, the writer will analyze the form of defense mechanism as a consequence of the traumas that the main character face and the process of the main character in compensation her trauma.

### **1.7 Method of the Study**

This study is focused on how the defense mechanism done by Cather Avery in the *Fangirl* novel by Rainbow Rowell affect her life. Qualitative method is used in analyzing the data.

The first step done by the writer is reading the novel that is *Fangirl* by Rainbow Rowell to gain clearer understanding in order to acquire the important parts related to the issue in this study. Then, collecting data from the novel itself, various books, journals articles, and internet sources to support and complete the study. The third step is analyzing the parts of the novel which is related to the issue of defense mechanism in order to answer the statement of the problem. The collected data is read and analyzed to support and make a deeper understanding toward the study in order to answer the statement of the problem. The last step is arranging the conclusion as the final part that is aimed to give more understanding about the result of this study.

In beginning the analysis, the writer will search for some parts of the story related to the issue by reading the book, taking notes, and highlighting the parts. After collecting the parts needed, the writer will relate the findings with the theory, in this case is psychoanalytic theory about sublimation, defense mechanism, trauma and anxiety. Because the issue is about trauma and anxiety that the writer face, then, the writer has to find out first the way Cather Avery deals with her trauma using defense mechanism that she has chosen. After that, the writer find what are the traumas experienced by Cather Avery. As the trauma causes the anxiety, and in anxiety we can reveal core issues, the writer found out the core issues experienced by Cather Avery. After found all of the supporting parts, the writer searched for the defense mechanism-related parts and matched them with the findings in other related sources such as books and journal article.

### **1.8 Definition of Key Terms**

**Defense Mechanism** : Unconscious psychological strategies brought into play by various entities to cope with reality to protect the mind/self/ego from anxiety (Feist 40).

**Sublimation** : The transformation and expression of sexual or aggressive energy into more socially acceptable forms, differs from all other defense mechanism in that it can be truly constructive. (Freud)

**Trauma** : A very difficult or unpleasant experience that causes someone to have mental or emotional problems usually for a long time. (Merriam-Webster)

Anxiety : Our natural response to helplessness in the face of danger  
-real or anticipated- warning us to prepare our defense  
(Feist 36)