

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In society, family is the primary and most fundamental unit of social relations. Family members provide love, connections, supports, caring, values, protection, and a sense of security to those around them. A family will work together to provide happiness to each of its members and provide facilities for the growth and development of children. Furthermore, a person's character is influenced by his or her family. The relationship between families has a crucial role in determining the attitudes and behavior of children with other people in the future. Although these patterns will change and develop over time, the core patterns tend to remain (Roostin 2018, 5). Since childhood happens within the family context, family plays a significant role in establishing a person's personality and character.

According to the most recent Pew Research Center poll, modern American parents are better at raising and preparing their children for the future because they are more educated. While the majority of parents believe in doing an excellent job taking care of their kids, some still encounter more significant obstacles (Pew Research Center 2015, 27). Financial instability may have an impact on parents' overall well-being as well as their self-evaluation as parents. While the majority of American parents believe that parenting is rewarding and an essential part of themselves, many feel hustled in one's daily lives, and the

majority of parents consider parenthood difficult and frustrating at times (Pew Research Center 2015, 27). Despite feeling rushed in their daily lives, most parents seem to think they spend enough time with their kids. On this matter, mothers are far more likely than fathers to give their time when it comes to spending sufficient and quality time with their children (Pew Research Center 2015, 35). In parenting style, most American parents admit to being overly protective at times, especially mothers. Compared to fathers, roughly seven out of 10 mothers identify as such. One-third of mothers and one-fifth of fathers say they give their kids too much freedom (Pew Research Center 2015, 42).

Unfortunately, a well-functioned family is not something that every person has. There are several families that fall because one or more members of the family fail to carry out their roles and it makes them a dysfunctional family instead. This condition will have a bad impact on their children. According to Benton (2007), a dysfunctional family is a psychological term that defines problems that prevent a family from operating normally. When a normal family recovers from the crisis, a dysfunctional family, on the other hand, is unable to deal with the situation and exaggerates it instead. There are a variety of reasons why families might become dysfunctional, including financial difficulties, domestic abuse, parents who have a mental illness, and many others. In the data recorded by The Indonesian Child Protection Commission (*KPAI*), there were around 6,500 cases of violence against children. Meanwhile, the US Department of Health and Human Services estimates that in 2021, 470,297 children are neglected, and around 101,961 children are physically abused.

Many of the children who were victims of violence were then taken by foster families due to several reasons. Some of them are parental divorce, abusive parents, or being left by their parents because of the economic condition in their household (Craft 2021)

A dysfunctional family is a significant problem in society that can have a serious affect on a child's psychological well-being if the parents are unable to properly resolve the issue. Hence, the purpose of this research is to examine the impact of a dysfunctional family on the main character in the novel and how he copes with it. In accordance with these hypotheses, Al-Ubaidi (2017, 1) also believes that dysfunctional families are likely to affect the family members, particularly the children of the family. The consequences endanger their life whether when they are still children or when they become fully grown adults. In general, the children feel insufficient and lack of self-confidence in their daily lives. Childhood trauma can also increase a person's risk of developing psychological issues such as substance abuse later in life, post-traumatic stress disorder, and depression. To conceal or alleviate conflicts that cause anxiety upon their trauma, individuals may develop psychological defenses known as defense mechanisms. It is a subconscious and automatic psychological way of protecting the individual from mental distress. In this regard, this study intends to apply Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis theory as the main theory focusing on the defense mechanism to analyze the main character's defense mechanism that he used to cope with his family condition,

alongside with Al-Ubaidi's concept of dysfunctional family, and attachment theory by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth.

As previously stated, cases of dysfunctional families are common in today's society. Some authors have expressed interest in turning this matter into the novels. One of them is Jack Cheng in his novel, *See You in the Cosmos*. Jack Cheng is a novelist and writer from Detroit. He mainly writes books for children, publishes a weekly newsletter about being an artist and human, and hosts reading and writing podcasts. In this research, this study will analyze one of the novels by Jack Cheng entitled *See You in the Cosmos*. This book received two awards in 2018, namely the Audie Award for middle grade and the Golden Kite award for middle grade fiction. Jack Cheng's *See You in the Cosmos* Is Published on February 28th, 2017 by Dial Books (goodreads 2017). The book is written as a series of voice recordings made by Alex Petroski. Alex is full of clever thought and incredible knowledge even though he is still at a young age. His purity then led him to go on an adventure with his dog, Carl Sagan. This adventure drives him to a lot of things. Due to his dysfunctional family environment, he has risen to the position of a man of the house; his father has passed away, his mother has a mental illness, and his older brother lives in California, far away from their home. As a result of his family's absence, he eventually developed a profound relationship with his pet dog, Carl Sagan.

In order to better understand Alex's relationship with his dog, this study also chose to examine the topic of attachment to a pet companionship based on John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth's attachment theory. It has become

increasingly popular in recent years to refer to the emotional ties that develops between humans and their pets collectively as attachment relationships, which have been shown to be beneficial to both the animal and the person in terms of health and welfare outcomes in many cases (Meyer & Forkman 2014, 7). Several studies have found that animals can provide children with the characteristics of a secure attachment relationship. According to the research findings on 160 kids, children who have undergone abuse, negligence, or trauma-related loss are four times more feasible to develop a secure attachment to their animal companion than other children, particularly to a cat or dog, than their human caregiver (Julius et al. 2013, 2014). This occurs because pets provide emotional comfort, support, and protection. As a result of their attachment to a pet, children can develop a secure base, sense of security, and stability as they learn more about their surroundings.

We can examine literary works such as short stories, novels, poems, and other pieces to gain a better understanding of how dysfunctional families influence children's behavior and how a human can develop an attachment to their pet. We may learn about what is going on in our society by reading works of literature. We can also learn about a person's psychological state by observing their activities, and much more. Literature depicts human behavior as it relates to overcoming obstacles and interacting with their environment.

Several related studies talking about the effect of a dysfunctional family on children and attachment to a dog can support this study. One of them is a study on the same object entitled *An Analysis of Alex's Resilience in See You in*

The Cosmos conducted by Kiki Kusmayanti in 2019. The researcher examines how Alex has a strong resilience despite his family background. The researcher intends to explain Alex's resilience, uncover the risk factors he experienced, examine the protective factors that contributed to his resilience, and analyze the resilience process that he went through by analyzing the novel using Kumpfer's theory of resilience. Unlike previous research on the same object, this study focused on researching how a Dysfunctional Family is portrayed until it affects Alex Petroski's characteristics and triggers an attachment to his dog.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

After reading Jack Cheng's *See You in the Cosmos*, the interesting issue addressed in the novel provokes several questions. This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How does a dysfunctional family experienced by Alex Petroski shape his psychological state as a child throughout his life?
2. What form of defense mechanisms is used by Alex Petroski to cope with his family condition and how does it lead to an attachment towards his dog?

1.3 Objective of the Study

In connection with the statements of the problem, the objective of the study are:

1. To help investigate how a dysfunctional family experienced by Alex Petroski shape his psychological state as a child throughout his life.
2. To examine defense mechanisms used by Alex Petroski to cope with his family condition and how it leads to an attachment toward his dog.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The writer hopes that this work will lead to a better understanding of Dysfunctional Family. Children's experiences in dysfunctional families undoubtedly influence their behavior, personality development, and the way they choose to live their lives. The affected children will return to various parenting responsibilities rather than enjoying their childhood, and essential aspects of their youth will be missing, eventually harming their adult life. Hopefully, the portrayal of Alex Petroski's life in dealing with his family condition will be considered a positive example to raise awareness for parents who are not yet aware of the negative impact of a dysfunctional family on their children. The writer also hopes that this research will serve as a foundation for future research, particularly for students of Language and Literature Program, The Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Airlangga interested in analyzing and studying Dysfunctional Families, Psychoanalysis, Attachment Theory, and other studies relating to literature and the psychology of literature.

1.5 Definitions of Key Terms

1. Dysfunctional-Family:

A psychological term that refers to the conditions that prevent a family from performing its normal functions. A dysfunctional family is unable to deal with the crisis and problem that has arisen, and as a result, the situation worsens (Benton 1997)

2. Behaviour:

Unconscious mental processes, such as defense mechanisms and conflicts between the id, ego, and superego, as well as external reality, are at the core of human behaviour (Minderop 2013)

3. Personality:

The person's characteristic qualities and attitudes that have, throughout time, coalesced into a structure that differentiates them from other individuals (Krech et al., 1974)

4. Attachment:

The process by which individuals develop emotional securities, their roots in childhood and teenage relationships, the misery produced by their unintentional separation or abnormal development, and the treatment of these problems (Bowlby 1978)