

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

On a warm summer day in June 15th of 2016, Joseph Keogh, a Mountain View High School graduate from Stafford, Virginia, went for a car ride with his sister Allison, to pick up Maddie, one of Allison's friends from Jason's house. Jason was a junior of Joseph's in the same high school and he is dating Maddie, a freshman who is also a friend of Allison. Joseph was kind of know about Jason quite much since Joseph described him as 'the center of his social group'. When they arrived at Jason's house, Joseph noticed that Maddie was sitting on the porch, not waiting inside the house. When the three of them was about to head home, Joseph noticed a figure holding a shotgun in the doorway of that was not there before. When he took one last look at the house, Joseph saw that figure, who turned out to be Jason, was bending over with a shotgun on his hand and out of the blue, Joseph and the girls realized that they just witness Jason shot himself. For Joseph, the experience of witnessing his own classmates was traumatic and life-altering that he and his sister need to receive an *Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing* (EMDR) therapy afterward. Later, he was also diagnosed with a PTSD (*post-traumatic stress disorder*) breakdown.

This experience of Joseph Keogh was presented by himself in TEDxPSUBehrend conference, which took place on April 8th, 2017 at Erie, Pennsylvania. The video talk is available in TEDx Talks YouTube channel and has been watched by more than 3 million viewers. The video has also raised people awareness, especially among the viewers of the video, that the existence of mental illness is real. In 2019, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported 11.2% of adults age 18 and over in the U.S. regularly feel nervousness, worry, and anxiety, while 4.7% of them feel depressed (Boersma, et. al. 2020). Therefore, people need to know and realize that mental illness is equally as dangerous as physical illness. It is been a long time since our society always underestimate both the existence of the illness, the sufferers, and the survivors. Even though the sufferers always look like they

are physically healthy and never show any physical symptoms, it does not mean that they are not suffering from it. In some cases, as well as the one which has been mentioned before, mental illness might lead the sufferers into their own death, for example, by suicide. Even when one's life ended when he decided to commit suicide, it does not mean that the suffering will end there. The end of someone's life will also affect the life of the other people around them, for example, their family and friends who are still alive. Moreover, just like in Joseph Keogh's case, it must be really traumatic to witness someone, especially someone you know, committing suicide in front of your own eyes.

When one experienced some undesirable experiences during some times in his life, it will unconsciously become his trauma. The trauma itself means a deeply distressing or disturbing experience in the past. The exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence at any point in the life course could be involved as any trauma experience (Bifulco 2020). Furthermore, experiencing trauma might affect who we are today in the present and also who we are later in the future.

There are several things that might become the effects of someone's trauma. It might influence someone's capability to form any social interaction and/or relationship with other people. It might lead to how someone look at the other people or how someone view the world. On the extreme level, it might affect someone's mind into a conclusion that the other people, or even the world, might hurt him so bad that he could not even believe anyone or anything. It is also relating on how someone feel about their own selves. To cope with his own trauma, one usually does something unconsciously to make them feel much better than before. It is such a normal effort that might be done by human beings to protect their own selves from being hurt.

*The End of The F***ing World* is a 2011 graphic novel written by Charles Forsman. The story follows an outcast teenager named James who admitted that he was kind of 'hard to be around'. He thought that he had no sense of humor and barely felt anything until he met Alyssa, another outcast teenager. At first, James pretended to fall in love with Alyssa so that he could kill her to, somehow, fulfill his emptiness. Later, it was revealed that James had been feeling that

way ever since his mother killed herself when James was only 4 years old. After spending some times with Alyssa, James could finally feel things and he decided not to kill Alyssa, instead he saved Alyssa from danger and even ended up dying for her.

Published in the form of graphic novel, *The End of The F***ing World* emphasizes the story of an outcast teenagers in a black and white format with deeper meaning. Graphic novel is a publication format for comics which came to prominence in the 1990s and generally refers to a comic that is published in its entirety and will later be collected into trade paperbacks (Kukkonen 2013, 84). These days, the chance of any graphic novel as a choice to become the object of any formal research is pretty much rare. However, in this study, the writer is going to prove that any kind of contemporary literature such as digital literatures or graphic novels can be used as the object of a formal research as well.

In *The End of The F***ing World*, witnessing the suicide of his own mother was the major reason of James's childhood trauma. This unpleasant experience led James to his inability to feel things. To make him able to feel things again, he took it out on something else, which then led him to kill animals and stuck his own hand into the garbage disposal. Not feeling enough, James planned on doing something much bigger than just killing animals or harming his own hand: killing an alive human-being.

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First published in 2011, Charles Forsman's *The End of The F***ing World* graphic novel had been nominated for and achieved 2013 Ignatz Award for Outstanding Minicomic category (McMillan 2013). Smart from The Guardian declared the graphic novel as "a modern ballad of angst and murder", due to its' sentimentality with funny account of a damaged childhood (Smart 2018). Clough from The Comic Journal evaluated Forsman's style in drawing as gritty, simple, and basic (Clough 2013). Clough also added that the way Forsman decided to give the two main characters alternate narrating each chapter is quite simple and effective in ensuring the readers to not get too attached to just one limited point of view. 4 years later in the year of 2017, the award-winning graphic novel has been adapted into critically acclaimed television series with the same title on UK's Channel 4. The hit dark comedy drama series was later distributed internationally by Netflix on January 5th, 2018. The two main characters of James and Alyssa were played by well-known English actors Alex Lawther and Jessica Barden. The programme was renewed for the new season with entirely fresh and new plot of the story two years later in 2019, not based on the original graphic novel anymore. The hit television series has been praised internationally that it won several prestigious awards such as 2018 British Screenwriters' Awards, 2018 Music Week Sync Awards, 2019 Peabody Awards, 2020 ReFrame, and 2020 The Webby Awards. It was also nominated in other awards such as 2018 & 2020 Primetime Emmy Awards, 2018 BAFTA Awards, 2018 Broadcasting Press Guild Awards, 2018 Gotham Awards, 2018 Hollywood Post Alliance US, 2018 International Online Cinema Awards (INOCA), 2019 Guild of Music Supervisors Awards, 2019 Hollywood Music in Media Awards (HMMA), 2019 Writers' Guild of Great Britain, 2018 & 2020 Royal Television Society UK, and 2020 Bafta TV Craft (Internet Movie Database, 2020).

Currently, there is no any formal study which has been found using graphic novel *The End of The F***ing World* as the object yet. However, there are some previous studies with the same theory and the same character's background that have been collected to be considered and might

help the writer doing the analysis. The first study is conducted by Ulfa & Wulandari (2019), where they had done a research analyzing about Alice, the main character from Lewis Carroll's novel titled *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. The study found that Alice suffered from reality anxiety, moral anxiety, and neurotic anxiety. The study also revealed some forms of repression, intellectualization, displacement, regression, reaction-formation, and introjection as Alice's defense mechanism. The second previous related study is done by Saputra (2020), which revealed avoidance and selective memory as the defense mechanisms done by Marayo, the protagonist in Yejide Kilanko's *Daughters Who Walk This Path*. The research resulted that Marayo's defense mechanism are strongly associated with her anxiety of a sexual abuse she happened to encounter to when she was only 12, that later make her grew some defense mechanism forms of avoidance and selective memory. The last study is conducted by Lin-juan (2020). He investigated about Jack, the main character in the novel *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding. This study revealed the different states of id, ego, and superego reflected in the character Jack, and how it stressed to the civilization on the barbarism of human nature. What makes this study different from the previous three studies that have been mentioned before is the object itself, and also the result of the study which focuses more on what had happened and the condition of the main character after the traumatic childhood experience he had been through.

The study of psychoanalysis is developed by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). The term psychoanalysis itself could be divided into three distinctive meanings, according to Rajeevan (2011). One of them is it is defined as a base of psychology which emphasizes the psychic determinism and dynamics. It is also highlighting the importance of past childhood experiences in forming someone's personality and behavior in the future.

Tripartite model is a three psyche model that was also developed by Sigmund Freud. It consists of three different parts, of id, ego, and superego. Id is the repository of our libido that always trying to satisfy our hidden hunger for pleasure and operates in our unconsciousness without any thought of consequences (Tyson, 2015). In contrast, superego is the exact opposite of id. Superego is the part of the psyche that operates according to the applied norms in the

society represses the socially unacceptable desires from id to go back to the unconscious (Tyson, 2015). To mediate the contradictory between id and superego, ego is here to become the mediator. Apparently, ego is more acceptable in society, since it could control both the id to seek one's deepest pleasure, while at the same time, also obey the applied norms in the society just like what superego always take into consideration (Nurhayati, 2017).

These three psyche model are exactly existing in every individuals, we ourselves are no exception. Every single individuals have their own ways to control these three different parts of tripartite model. There are people who could control their hidden pleasure of id by following their ego and manage to act and behave as their superego wants to. However, there are also people who failed to do so and for the consequences, they have to receive the consequences of the applied laws in the society.

Freud stated that every individuals developed a psychological development during their childhood which takes place during five psychosexual stages of oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital. Each stage of these psychosexual stages need to be resolved before every individuals could advance to the next stage. In the phallic stage, or during the age of 3 to 6 years old, the children become aware of their own sex, in which it also leads to jealousy, rivalry, and fear called the Oedipus complex for the boys and the Electra complex for the girls. The superego also developed for the first time at this point. According to Freud's psychosexual stages, what need to be resolved by a child in phallic stage is the adopting of characteristics from the same sex parent, for example, a son imitates on how his dad behaving all day. Freud also stressed that the first five years of the childhood where these psychosexual earlier stages took place are very crucial to the personality formation when we become an adult later. Therefore, if there were any stages that was not successfully resolved by an individual during his or her childhood, a fixation might occur. For example, when a boy did not successfully resolve his phallic stage, he might remain stuck in the stage, become mother-fixated, and suffers from an Oedipus complex (Tyson 2015).

Defense mechanism occurred when the id or the superego in someone started to become too demanding. Defense mechanism is one of the psychoanalytical theories constructed by Freud

that describes a conceptual operation that occurs on an unconscious level. The function of which is to modify the conscious experience of thought or affect (Cramer, 2006). To simplify, defense mechanism is a normal effort of human being to change the interpretation towards reality at the unconscious level. Displacement, or the act of “taking it out” on someone or something else that is less powerful than the real person or subject, is one of several acts of defense mechanism.

In this study, the issue of how a single traumatic experience in the past might affect someone’s personality is going to be analyzed from both the narrative aspects (of the story and the formal elements) and the non-narrative aspects (captions, facial expressions, and speech bubbles). *The End of The F***ing World* emphasizes the story of an outcast teenagers in a black and white format with deeper meaning.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

Based on the background of the study, the statements of the problem are:

1. How does the loss of his mother affect James’ personality in the graphic novel?
2. How does James’s defense mechanism work to cope with his trauma through the graphic novel?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the statements of the problem, this study aims to:

1. Reveal how the loss of his mother affects James’ personality in the graphic novel.
2. Analyze how does James’ defense mechanism work to cope with his trauma through the graphic novel.

1.4 Significance of the Study

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1.5 Definition of Key Terms

Defense mechanism: a psychological effort of human-being that occurs on an unconscious level which function is to protect one from any undesirable thoughts or feelings (McLeod 2020).

Graphic novel: a publication format for comics which came to prominence in the 1990s and generally refers to a comic that is published in its entirety and will later be collected into trade paperbacks (Kukkonen 2013, 84).

Oedipus complex: an important aspect during phallic stage of psychosexual development, when a child experiences a universal pattern of loving and hating wishes and urges toward its' parents (McLeod 2019; Boag 2020).

Psychosexual development: a personality development which is expressed in different parts of the body and takes place during childhood through five psychosexual stages of oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital (McLeod 2019).

Unstable sense of self: the lack of ability to maintain a sense of personal identity, a sense of understanding who someone actually is (Tyson 2015).