

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Literature and psychology have a strong association since they both engage with human beings and their reactions, perceptions of reality, tragedies, hopes, ambitions, fears, issues and consolidations; personal and social problems, employing a variety of concepts, methodologies, and approaches. By raising awareness and understanding, literature allows individuals to discover and challenge their own identities. Literature, according to Noam Chomsky, is one of the most essential sources of information about a man and his history, as well as his unique experiences and values: "... Literature would always teach us more about human personal character more than scientific psychology" (Lodge 2002,10). Both literature and psychology have similarities in analysing personality. The difference is psychology analyses real human behaviour. Meanwhile, literature analyses the character's behaviour. As many people believe, literary psychology does not indicate the resolution of psychological issues. The goal of literary psychology is to figure out what psychological elements that are present in a piece of literature. Authors use literary works to express how they feel, perceive, and deal with environmental situations including human behaviour. Some genres in psychological literature are

psychological thriller, horror, drama, and science fiction. The characters in most psychological literary works have experienced traumas, the majority of which occurred during their childhood which affects their current psychological behaviour in literary works (Aras 2015, 251).

Sigmund Freud in psychoanalysis theory defined trauma as something that is able to cause harm to the psyche of an individual. Such as sexual abuse, neglect, and any other bad memories that happened in the past. Those memories can cause harm to an individual's psyche resulting in the unbalance of their *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. The word '*trauma*' is derived from Greek which has the meaning of wounding. The trauma theory actually developed in the 1980s between the humanities and psychology approaches (Heidarizadeh 2015, 790). Freud stated that sexual assault or sexual abuse that happened early could be one of the causes of traumatic hysteria. In *Studies in Hysteria* (1895), the initial act was not traumatic in and of itself, but only in the experience of the action, according to Freud and Breuer. Therefore, an individual may project a certain behaviour that is derived from their trauma. For instance, someone who experienced abusive behaviour from their family or relatives might flinch whenever someone put their hands on them. Even though what they intended was to joke around (Anderson 2012, 30). The victims of abusive behaviour might recall their traumatic experience of being beaten and their quick response was to avoid them and then result them to flinch. An individual who has childhood trauma and failed in the psychosexual stages might have an uncontrolled *id*, and this often happened in the case of psychopaths, particularly in literary fiction where they portrayed a

psychopath as someone with bad childhood traumatic experience and resulting in the unbalance of the character's *id*, *ego*, and *superego*.

According to Dennis (2013) in the Indian Journal of Social Studies and Humanities, psychopathy is defined as a psychological condition that is characterized by a set of problematic character traits. Some of the characteristics of the psychopath could be seen in Hare's book '*Without Conscience*' on page 34, such as lack of empathy, poor guilt, pathological lying, poor behavioural control and sexual promiscuity.

Psychopathy is often characterized by a tendency for lying, manipulating, and harming others. It is occasionally used equally with sociopathy, which is a psychological condition marked by a lack of empathy and a blunting of other emotions. Though, the term sociopath is usually referred to someone with big crimes. Meanwhile, psychopaths are highly manipulative due to their insensitivity, detachment, and lack of empathy (Hare 1996, 46). Adolescence or early adulthood are the most common times for personality disorders to develop. They can start in childhood, though they are less common (Shiner 2009, 719). Cited to Alfred.edu, there are many cases of children or teenagers attempting to commit crimes nowadays. In particular, the number of school mass shootings committed by students is on the rise in the United States. In most cases, the root of their activities was mental health, particularly because of a poor connection between parents and children.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher used the psychoanalysis defense mechanisms and the tripartite model (*id*, *ego*, and *superego*) by Sigmund Freud. The researcher analysed one of the characters in *The Perfect Child* novel, Janie. *The Perfect Child* was written by Lucinda Berry. Cited from goodreads.com, Dr Lucinda Berry is a leading expert in childhood trauma and a senior clinical psychologist. She now devotes her time on comprehensive writing, where she utilizes her clinical background to blur the lines between fiction and reality. Most of her works are crime fiction, psychological thriller, and thriller. Dr Lucinda Berry likes to put her readers on a journey inside the depths of the human mind. Her work has been translated into different languages. Her first book is *Missing Parts* (2016), a psychological fiction, then followed by *Phantom Limb* (2016), *Appetite for Innocence* (2017), *Saving Noah* (2017) thriller-medical books and *The Perfect Child* (2019). *The Perfect Child* is a psychological thriller novel that tells the story of a family who adopts a child. While living together, Christopher and Hannah, adopted a daughter. The family went through a roller coaster of emotions. Janie's behaviour is out of the ordinary and could be classified as psychopathy. Her actions were rooted in her childhood trauma that derived from her abusive biological mother. After *the Perfect Child*, Lucinda Berry published her next works which are *When She Returned* (2019), *The Best of Friends* (2020), and the latest is *The Secret of Us* (2021).

Unlike most psychological thriller novels, where the psychopath character is usually an adult, Lucinda Berry's novel *The Perfect Child* features a 6-year-old girl who displays psychopathic behaviour. This is significant because there are

few literary-psychology works in which a child is portrayed as an evil. In many situations, psychopathic behaviour in youngsters was misinterpreted as a normal part of childhood development. The researcher was interested to analyse *The Perfect Child* by Lucinda Berry after reading the psychological thriller novel and learning about the psychopathic behaviour shown in serial killer cases. During the time of this research, there has not been any research done on this particular object. In this study, the researcher will analyse childhood trauma that could be the cause of the character's psychopathic behaviour which is shown in Janie, the main character, in *The Perfect Child* novel by Lucinda Berry using Freudian psychoanalysis: defense mechanisms and the tripartite model.

1.2. Statement of the Problems

This research aims to answer questions regarding what has been stated in the study's background:

1. How does Janie's childhood trauma in the novel trigger her psychological behaviour?
2. In what ways the defense mechanisms are reflected by Janie's actions that would categorize as psychopathic behaviour?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1. To find the relation between Janie's actions as signs of psychopathic behaviour derived from her childhood traumatic experience.

2. To figure out how the character's defense mechanisms are reflected through her actions and link them with psychopathy characteristics.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study's findings will hopefully be considered as a reference, particularly for those who are interested in literary psychology, to improve their literary comprehension. This study is also expected to make us more aware of mental disorders, particularly psychopathic behaviour in our society or community. Furthermore, this study can be considered as a reference in analyzing literature that applies a psychoanalysis approach to Freudian defense mechanisms and the tripartite model (*id*, *ego*, and *superego*) of the literary work in the English Department Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Airlangga Surabaya and others.

1.5. Definitions of Key Terms

Some definitions are provided to help clarify the key terms used in this study:

Behaviour : The way in which a person acts or behaves. The activity of an organism in relation to its surroundings (Popescu 2014, 442). The term can be used to describe all activities in general or a specific activity.

Childhood trauma : Trauma or a traumatic incident, according to Freud's definition. Childhood trauma is defined as something that is able to cause harm to the psyche of an individual. Such as sexual abuse, neglect, and any other bad

memories that happened in childhood (Freud 1920, 241).

Psychopathic disorder : Identified as a mental or antisocial disorder in which a person shows irresponsible and antisocial behaviour, a lack of capacity to empathize or form meaningful human relationships, high self-obsession, an inability to learn from experience, and other characteristics linked with the condition (Irtelli and Vincenti 2017, 185)

Psychoanalysis : A method uses for treating mental disorders by examining how the conscious and unconscious mind interact (Sibi, K J 2020, 3).