

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The human mind is reasonably understood to be an extremely complicated maze. When expressing, thinking, or behaving in a certain way, our psyche has the utmost power over our body and practically controls it. For that reason, our thoughts and actions can be considered a product of our psyche. However, one's manner of thinking may differ from another because one's level of subconsciousness with other individuals will never be the same, which distinguishes human beings. Two persons in the same room are unlikely to think the same way in response to the same situation. In general, this study will look at someone's mind when confronted with unpleasant events and how they instantly react to them.

Freud proposed the concepts of subconsciousness and unconsciousness, commonly known as the Id, Ego, and Superego, with each idea holding responsibility for a person's thoughts or actions. The unconscious level would be started by the presence of an Id in somebody's psyche. The Id is the unorganized part of the psyche that contains a human's instinctual drives and is dominated by the pleasure principle that holds the entire unconscious aspect of the psyche (Siegfried 2014, 1). For example, if someone is intoxicated, they may not be able to think clearly or do something correctly, but their psyche will drive them to engage in harmful actions for pleasure. The next, there is the Ego, another level

of consciousness where the component of the Id that is changed as a function of the perceptual system and its near to and access to awareness, despite the fact that the Ego, as the Id, is still unconscious (Siegfried 2014, 2). Because of the combination of conscious and preconscious levels, this area negotiates with the id and superego and executes rationality. Finally, there is the superego, which is viewed as a further differentiation inside the Ego that symbolizes its "ideal" as a result of the Oedipal drama, in which the child assumes the authority and honor of parental figures through rejection or identification (Lapsley and Stey 2012, 1). Since it strives for perfection, this area contains values and morals and operates mainly on a subconscious level.

The process of developing a child's personality begins at a very young age, when the concepts of Id, Ego, and Superego are formed in their psyche. As a result, it is critical for children to grow up in a healthy environment where they are not subjected to abuse. According to UNICEF in the report "Early Childhood Development", early times for children are a time of great opportunity but also a significant risk because they are trained to learn from the environment in creating moments and perspectives on understanding things according to what they acknowledge. A major trauma that occurred in the patient's childhood can have long-term consequences for their improvement (Gaensbauer and Jordan 2009, 948). Trauma has devastating effects on mental wellness that also contributes to the biological changes in the brain. These drastically changing symptoms can affect the physical and mental health of somebody, especially if it is because of childhood trauma (Toof, Wong, and Devlin 2020, 194).

Traumatic experiences in childhood have led to the current scenario in which people develop something to protect themselves and continue living with the agony they only understand. Unfortunate childhood events may impact the future since they may shape how someone acts like an adult. According to Tyson, trauma contains painful memories that can threaten an individual psychologically and may also lead them to anxieties (Tyson 2006, 21). As a result, it appears to be subjectively viewed because all pain and feelings are relative, implying that no one can compare their suffering to greater or less painful than another person.

The term "past events" is frequently used in psychoanalysis. According to Golding, there is a dynamic interaction between present and past time, with the past contained in the present and the present changing into the past (1982, 551). Because everything that happened in the past is responsible for what happens in the future, it is critical to learn what happened in someone's childhood when determining their current behavior. Any traumatic occurrence in the past may contribute to someone becoming triggered when confronted with anything that could harm them. All these create a shield for someone to prevent any harm or something that may activate their fear, which is when one or more types of defense mechanisms are utilized.

When someone becomes anxious about something they do not find pleasant, they immediately engage in defense mechanisms to deal with the anxiety. When people become anxious about something, the Id, which represents repressed feelings, and the Ego, which represents defense, are brought into consciousness,

as Anna Freud argued about defense (Freud 1937, 22). Holding our repressed feelings deep in our minds in order to avoid noticing what we believe we are incapable of handling is called defense (Tyson 2006, 15). It causes difficulty to someone when an internal or external event invades how they think, so it allows the mind and body to create mechanisms that act as a shield against threatening life events (Baumeister, Dale, and Sommer 1998, 1082). The various types of defensive mechanisms are intended to ease the stress created by the fear of someone by carrying out specific actions to restore peace, for example, selective memory, denial, regression, projection, and so on. The purpose of these acts is to help people distance themselves from potential risks or negative feelings.

The portrayal of several forms of defense mechanisms driven by childhood trauma can be seen in this novel by Ottessa Moshfegh with the title *McGlue* published in 2014 by Fence Books (and reissued in 2019 by Penguin Books) publishing. This novel was awarded the Fence Modern Prize in Prose as well as the Believer Book Award. It tells the story of McGlue, a man working as a sailor in the 1850s who lived his life carelessly. McGlue had a best friend who saved him from death and supported him with anything he needed. His name was Johnson. Both come from somewhat different families; Johnson came from a wealthy family with a reputation, while McGlue came from a lower-class community who often committed crimes and enjoyed drinking alcohol. Johnson had always been surrounded by all the good things until he met McGlue on one freezing night and almost died. He saw McGlue as someone who needed his help, and he decided to stick by McGlue's side to learn more about the world.

McGlue by Ottessa Moshfegh, the object of the present study, is heavily centered on the psychoanalysis-themed story. Even though the novel has been out since 2014, there appears to be no previous research that discusses it. However, the writer discovered seven related studies that discuss similar Psychoanalysis issues and concepts, including defense mechanisms, anxiety, childhood trauma, Id, ego, and superego, and personality change. The first related study connects the main character's defense mechanisms and anxiety to create the unreliability trait, in which their words or actions cannot be fully trusted, as described in the dissertation by Lulu Guo in 2018 titled *Repression, Defense Mechanisms and the Unreliability of Steven's Narration in The Remains of the Day*. The second related study that was conducted in 2022 by Nadya Maghira and Moses Glorino Rumambo Pandin with the title *A Psychoanalytic Approach on Marayo's Behaviour as the Impact of Childhood Trauma in Yejide Kilanko's Daughters Who Walk This Path*, investigates the impact of childhood trauma to the change of personality and behavior in adulthood. The third related study focuses on the development of character as the result of child abuse was done by Nurul Hikmah, Burhanuddin Arafah, Herawaty Abbas in 2022 titled *Child Abuse and the Development of Character in Mistress Masham's Repose*.

The importance of parental guidance in children's life is shown in the fourth related study published in 2022 by Natasya Ivana and Arido Laksono *The Portrayal of Sutter Keely's Defense Mechanism During Adolescence in The Spectacular Now*. The fifth related study was published in 2018 by Brian Cesar titled *Main Character's Resistance Against Traumatic Experience in Frances*

Hudgson Burnett's The Secret Garden: Freud's Tripartite Model Analysis. It discusses about the impact of parental neglect on the development of children, such as inhabiting an aggressive behavior. The sixth related study was published in 2022 by Anindya Putri Wisnumurti and Moses Glorino Rumambo Pandin with the title *The Scars of Old Memories Impact on Human Psyche in Paula Hawkins' The Girl on the Train*, explains why people may project their wounds onto others when they are repressed. The last related study was published in 2019 by Nofia Ulfa and Diyah Fitri Wulandari titled *Analysis of Anxiety and Defense Mechanism on the Main Character Reflected in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865) Novel by Lewis Carroll*. It goes over how a person's defense mechanisms can assist in the release of confusion. These related studies will be used to back up the writer's claims in determining the final answer to the questions. Since each related study differs, the writer will attempt to include various perspectives as provided in the related studies.

Freudian Psychoanalysis is used as this study's grand theory because it explicitly involves the idea of anxiety, which comes from repressed feelings that motivate an individual to employ acts of defense mechanisms to conceal the painful trauma. Thus, a child needs to grow up in a positive and healthy environment since their behavior depends on what they learn in childhood. The childhood memory of McGlue consists of the presence of his mother, who always ignored and forgot about him, and his siblings, who never truly cared about him. McGlue developed anxiety is due to the lack of love and care, and he felt he never belonged anywhere. He discovered the solution to his problem: the

alcohol he used to consume when he was younger. His decision influenced his reckless behavior, causing him to become the worst version of himself. Following Freud's theory on defense mechanisms, the writer discovers several defenses used by McGlue. This research will concentrate on several prominent defense mechanisms in the story: selective memory, regression, projection, and denial.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

Based on the background of the study, the writer formulated two questions in order to have an in-depth discussion about the issues that emerged in the text:

1. How are McGlue's defense mechanisms performed in responding to Johnson's death?
2. How do defense mechanisms affect McGlue's current behavior?

1.3 Objective of the Problems

In attempting to achieve the study's aims, the writer expects two objectives to answer the previously mentioned problems. Therefore, this study intends:

1. To discuss the forms of defense mechanism McGlue utilized when confronted with the truth behind Johnson's death.
2. To discover the change in behavior of McGlue after employing defense mechanisms.

1.4 Significance of the Problems

The writer is very interested in conducting this study because it will provide good insight and relevant answers in responding to someone's behavior from a Freudian psychoanalysis perspective. Similar issues to the one presented in this study can be found in society, such as how unstable mental health causes people to struggle in their daily lives. Therefore, the writer feels encouraged to do a thorough analysis and then pour it into academic research to better understand human minds, which can be helpful to those who need it. Society is expected to accept various versions of thinking since it involves countless people from different backgrounds and stories. Thus, we should all believe that maintaining mental health and well-being is as important as taking care of our physical health. The writer also wishes to contribute to English Department Universitas Airlangga by sharing arguments and results of this specific issue to broaden the perspectives and knowledge in Psychoanalysis, especially for future researchers who are invested in this topic.

1.5 Definition of Key Term

Anxiety : Anxiety is a natural human response associated with feelings of worry, tenseness, or fear when confronted with potentially dangerous situations.
(SimplyPsychology.org)

Childhood Trauma : A child's emotional pain or distress as a result of an event, which frequently has long-term mental and physical consequences.

Defense Mechanism : The processes of actions carried out by humans in which the repressed contents are halted, for example: avoidance, denial, selective memory, and selective perception (Tyson 2006).