Anxiety Disorder in Josh Malerman's Bird Box

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Abstract

The aims of this study, were to find out what kinds of anxiety are felt by the main character and how the main character overcome her anxiety. This data was taken from a novel, the title is "Bird Box" by Josh Malerman. This research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive method to describe a phenomenon and its characteristic that related to the topic of this research. Moreover, the researcher applied the psychoanalysis approach to analyze the data. Analyzed anxiety of the main character, showed that she has her own self-defense mechanism in reducing her anxiety. Furthermore, the researcher used theory based on classic psychoanalytic and types of defense mechanisms for anxiety by Freud. The result of this study, the researcher founds that the main character was felt three kinds of anxiety according to Freud, they are reality anxiety, neurotic anxiety, and moral anxiety. The researcher also found that the main character used three types of self-defense mechanisms by Freud, namely: repression, regression, and rationalization. It can be concluded that the researcher founds 18 sentences that the main character showed three kinds of anxiety and 7 sentences in the novel founds about types of defense mechanism for reducing the main character's anxiety according to the theory of Freud.

Key words: Anxiety, mechanism, self-defense.

Introduction

In general, all of the people want to live as quiet and pleasant without any once and problems in their life. Anyhow, it is undeniable every human being has some problems which cover their life. Those problems can be caused by many things around them such as family, friends, job, and environment. There is no wonder that the problem often makes people so frustrated, despairing, worry and frightened about something worst whereby is certainly called anxiety. Freud said that anxiety in an erective condition motivates someone to do something, the function is for giving a warning about something dangerous, namely a signal forego that will be increased continuously if someone does not take the suitable action for reducing the anxiety. Anxiety should not be ignored since it can bring anxiety disorder and also eternal unpleasant feelings. In avoiding impacts, everyone has to solve anxiety immediately. They have to do a kind of protection by employing an effective way to make them more calm and comfortable in life. In the psychological world, it is called a self-defense mechanism which is believed as protection to reduce anxiety. The term self-defense mechanism refers to someone's unconscious mind to save him from anxiety, this mechanism protects him from external threatening or save him from anxiety, this mechanism protects him from external threatening or impulse which appears from internal anxiety by distorting with some ways [1].

Without the appearance of literary psychology, it might produce misunderstanding about what is interesting about the literary work. Literary psychological is purposed to analyze literary work which is believed as a reflection of psychological processes and activities [2]. It also helps the readers to understand the characters inside the work thereby they can learn about life and how the way the characters solve problems can be an inspiration for them in serving happiness, therefore, psychology is an important aspect that needs to be analyzed. By the existence of the relationship between psychological in literary work, hence, it is important to analyze the works which give an intensity to the psychological novel. Remembering that novel is a long literary work that reflects the author's imagination in creating an interesting plot, story, theme, characterization, etc. It is also believed that the novel has the complexity of characters' problems which are described in detail. Furthermore, the main characters also show some characterization and attitudes that are concerned with psychic and psychological experiences as in real-life by analyzing a psychological condition that can be analyzed.

Theoretical Reviews

Anxiety Disorder

There are several opinions by the experts about the meaning of anxiety. They said that anxiety disorder is the most prevalent class of mental disorders and collectively they impose a substantial public health burden on society [3]. This burden is reflected among persons with the disorder in elevated rates of a general medical disorder, high healthcare utilization and cost, loss of worker productivity, increased risk of suicide attempts and suicidal ideation, and poor health-related quality of life.

Freud states that anxiety is an ego function to admonish someone about something dangerous so he can prepare an adaptive reaction that is appropriate. Anxiety is a fear that has no clear object and no clear reason. In normal people, there is often normal anxiety [1]. Moreover, anxiety is a changing mood, a change in itself arising from within without any stimulation from outside [4].

The kinds of anxiety

There are several kinds of anxiety. He classified the kinds of anxiety into three forms [5], including :

Reality or Objective Anxiety

Realistic anxiety is the result of fear in the external world. Anxiety originates from the fear of danger that threatens the real world. Anxiety like this for example fear of fire, tornadoes, earthquakes, or wild animals. This anxiety leads us to behave how to deal with danger. Not infrequently the fear that comes from this reality becomes extreme. A person can be very afraid to leave the house for fear of an accident on his own or afraid to light a match for fear of fire.

Neurotic Anxiety

Neurotic anxiety is the fear of being overwhelmed by the id's instincts. This anxiety has its basis in childhood, in the conflict between instinctual gratification and reality. In childhood, sometimes several times a child experiences punishment from parents for fulfilling the needs of an impulsive ID Especially those related to fulfilling sexual or aggressive instincts. Children are usually punished for over-expressing their sexual or aggressive impulses. Anxiety or fear for it develops because there is hope to satisfy certain Id impulses. The conflict that occurs is between the Id and the Ego that we know has a basis in reality.

Causes Anxiety

There are a number of experts' opinions about the causes of the anxiety, [6], there are several causes of anxiety, namely :

Environment

The environment or the vicinity of residence affects the way individuals think about themselves and others. This is due to unpleasant experiences in individuals with family, friends, or colleagues. That the individual feels insecure about their environment

Suppressed Emotions

Anxiety can occur if the individual is unable to find a way out for his own feelings in this personal relationship, especially if some people suppress anger or frustration for a very long period of time.

Physical Causes

The mind and body always interact with each other and can be caused by anxiety. This is seen in conditions such as pregnancy, during adolescence, and when recovering from an illness. During these conditions, changes in feelings are common, and this can be caused by anxiety.

Types of Defense Mechanism for Anxiety

There are several opinions by the experts about types of defense mechanisms for anxiety. According to Freud's perspective, there are many kinds of self-defense mechanisms that can be done by human beings in life, including, [6].

Repression

In Freud's terminology, repression is the involuntary release of something from consciousness. Basically, it is an unconscious attempt to reject something that is uncomfortable or painful.

Reaction formation

Formation reaction is how to change an impulse that is threatening and inappropriate, and unacceptable social norms are changed into a more acceptable form.

Projection

Projection is the defense mechanism of an individual who considers an impulse that is not good, aggressive, and cannot be accepted as not his own but the property of others.

Regression

Regression is a defense mechanism when an individual returns to the initial period of his life which is more pleasant and free from the frustration and anxiety currently faced. Regression is usually associated with the return of individuals to a stage of psychosexual development. The individual returns to the time he feels safer from his life and is manifested by his behavior at the time, such as childishness and dependent behavior

Rationalization

Rationalization is a defense mechanism that involves re-understanding our behavior to make it more rational and acceptable to us.

Displacement

A defense mechanism by moving impulses against other objects because objects that can satisfy Id are not available.

Sublimation

Unlike displacement that replaces an object to satisfy an Id, sublimation involves a change or replacement of the Id's own impulse

Isolation

Isolation is our way of avoiding unacceptable feelings by releasing them from the event they are supposed to be bound to, repeating it, and reacting to the event without emotion.

Undoing

In undoing, individuals will perform ritual behaviors or thoughts in an effort to prevent unacceptable impulses. For example, in patients with obsessive-compulsive disorder, doing hand washing repeatedly releases sexual thoughts that interfere.

Intellectualization

often together with isolation; individuals get more distance from their emotions and cover it with an abstract intellectual analysis of the individual itself.

Psychology and Literature

Psychology plays an important role in analyzing a literary work by looking at the psychological point of view, while from point of view of the author, the character, or literary work itself. Literary psychology is the study of literature that views work as a psychological activity. The projection of one's own experiences and life experiences around the author will be imagined projected into literary texts. The purpose of literary psychology is to understand the psychological aspects contained in literary work. There are three ways you can do to understand the relationship

between psychology and literature, there are: a) Understand the psychological elements of the author as a writer, b) Understand the psychological elements of fictional characters in literary works, and c) Understand the mental elements of the reader [7].

Methodology

Research Design

In conducting research, we need research design. The researcher used the qualitative descriptive method. The qualitative descriptive method is to reveal the events or facts, phenomena, variables, and circumstances that occur when research takes place by presenting what really happened [8].

Sources of The Data

In this research, the researcher took the data from the novel Josh Malerman's "Bird Box" as the main object of the research. To support the research, the writer reviewed the reference material such as books, thesis, journal articles, and some literary theories.

Procedures of Collecting Data

The procedures of collecting the data in this research are first reading the novel repeatedly to understand the novel. Second, collecting all the information associated with the topic that the researcher wants to analyze. Third, searching and reading text such as books, thesis, journal articles, and some literary theories about anxiety theory based on classic psychoanalytic.

Techniques of Data Analysis

The researcher used the psychoanalysis approach and classic psychoanalytic theory by Sigmund Freud. Psychoanalysis is created and developed by Sigmund Freud. According to him, psychoanalysis has no aim except for knowing and understanding the unconscious mind in mental life [9].

Findings and Discussion

Findings

In this chapter, the researcher was taken the data from Josh Malerman's "Bird Box" for research to finish two problems in this study. In this novel, there are 260 pages. The researcher found that the main character of this novel used 3 kinds of anxiety according to the theory of Freud, namely reality anxiety, neurotic anxiety, and moral anxiety. Moreover, the researcher also found that the main character used 3 types of defense mechanisms to overcome her anxiety, namely repression, regression, and rationalization. Furthermore, the researcher focuses on the main character of this novel to analyze. There are twelve characters in this novel, they are Malorie, Shannon, George, Jules, Tom, Felix, Don, Cheryl, Olympia, Boy, Girl, and Gary. The main character of this novel is Malorie.

Malorie is a mother who fights to protect her children and guides them to survive the fight against terror from unknown forces. The story begins when a mysterious force nullifies almost the entire world population, leaving Malorie and her two children frightened every day. As time goes by, they learn how to survive: don't look. If you see it, you will die. after losing her friends one by one, Malorie had to muster up the courage to run away with children to a place that could give them protection. But to do it, they have to take a very risky journey for two days by closing their eyes. In the "Bird Box" character Malorie looks cold, but she merely shows that her children see a brave figure in Malorie. Behind her cold attitude, Malorie has a strong sense of love to look after her children and survive in the midst of world chaos.

The kinds of anxiety used by the main character (Malorie) in Josh Malerman's "Bird Box".

Reality Anxiety. It is anxiety caused by fear or something dangerous that threatens in the real life. It is called "fear". For example, fear of fire, tornado, earthquake, or wild animals. This anxiety makes us feel so afraid to go outside from home because he feels afraid of something dangerous that might be threatening him.

Extract 1 :

The excitement she feels is unnameable. It's much more like hysteria. Stepping from one room to another, Malorie checks for things, small items they might need. Suddenly, she feels horribly unprepared. She feels unsafe, as though the house and the earth beneath it just vanished, exposing her to the outside world entirely. Yet, in the mania of the moment, she holds tight to the concept of the

blindfold. No matter what tools she might pack, no matter what household object might be used as weapon, she knows that the blindfolds are their strongest protection. (p. 14)

Based on the extract above, the sentence "*She feels unsafe, as though the house and the earth beneath it just vanished, exposing her to the outside world entire*" shows that the world is no longer safe, there is something dangerous out there. According to Freud, reality anxiety makes us feel so afraid to go outside from home because he feels afraid of something dangerous that might be threatening him as in the sentence above, she prepared a weapon before leaving the house.

Extract 2 :

As Malorie speaks, she looks from one blindfolded face to the other.

"When we leave this house, we'll hold hands and walk along the path to the well. We'll go through the small clearing in the woods behind our house. The path to the river is overgrown. We may have to drop hands for a step, and if we do, I want you both to hold on to my coat or each other. Understand?" "Yes" "Yes" "Do they sound scared?" (p. 8)

Based on the extract above, the sentence "*When we leave this house, we'll hold hands and walk along the path to the well*" shows that scared when she wants to get out of the home, which means that there is something dangerous if they go outside from home. According to Freud, realistic anxiety makes us feel so afraid to go outside from home because he feels afraid of something dangerous that might be threatening him.

Neurotic Anxiety. This anxiety appears when there is a dependence ego on the id. It is a kind of frightening feeling about id or instinct which cannot be controlled. Generally, someone who feels this anxiety will worry about something that is unrealistic and unknown, he does not know about what his frightened is. According to Freud, this anxiety can be divided into three parts; anxiety which appears because of an adaptation to the environment, irrational anxiety (phobia), and another frightening because nervous, stammers [11].

Extract 1 :

Malorie knows that four years can easily become eight. Eight will quickly become twelve. And then the children will be adults. Adults who have never seen the sky. Never looked out a window. What would twelve years of living like veal do to their minds? Is there a point, Malorie wonders, where the clouds in the sky become unreal, and the only place they'll ever feel at home is behind the black cloth of their blindfolds? (p. 3)

Based on the extract above, the sentences "And then the children will be adults. Adults who have never seen the sky. Never looked out a window. What would twelve years of living like veal do to their minds?" are neurotic anxiety. According to Freud, neurotic anxiety has a basis in childhood. The sentences show that the children from childhood had been taught to use a blindfold.

Extract 2 :

Riverbridge is twenty minutes away. Shannon saw something outside, and it killed her. Mallorie must get herself and her child to safety. Suddenly, her heavy breathing gives way to an endless flow of hot tears. She does not know what to do. She has never been this afraid. Everything within her feels hot like she's burning. (p. 30)

Based on the extract above, the sentence "She does not know what to do. She has never been this afraid. Everything within her feels hot like she's burning." showed that she experience neurotic anxiety. According to Freud, this anxiety can be divided into three parts: anxiety which appears because of an adaption to the environment, irrational anxiety (phobia), and another frightening feeling because of nervousness and stammers. Moreover, she has irrational anxiety (phobia). Psychopathologists define phobia as a disturbing rejection mediated by fear disproportionate to the danger posed by objects or based on the situations [12].

Moral Anxiety. This anxiety comes from the conflict between ego and superego. It is constituted as worried about something that comes from the heart's voice. When someone is motivated to express instinctual impulse or has done something that is contradictory with the moral value of the superego, it makes him feel so shame and guilt. It is said that what id wants and what ego does is conflicting with what superego's pretension, looking at the imperfect thing then superego will produce a guilt emotion in someone's feeling. Briefly, moral anxiety can be seen by someone's guilt emotion or shame Extract 1 :

Could she even do it? Could she protect them another ten years? Could she guard them long enough for them to guard her? And for what? What kind of life she protecting them for? You're a bad mother, she thinks. (p. 4)

Based on the extract above, the sentences "You're a bad mother, she thinks" are shows that she feels guilty about becoming a mother. According to Freud, moral anxiety is constituted as being worried about something that comes from the heart's voice. Briefly, moral anxiety can be seen by someone's guilt emotion or shame.

Extract 2 :

For not finding a way to let them know the vastness of the sky. For not finding a way to let them run free in the yard, the street, the neighborhood of empty homes and weathered parked cars. Or granting them a single peek, just once, into space, when the sky turns black and is suddenly, beautifully, spotted with stars.

You are saving their lives for a life not worth living. (p. 4)

Based on the extract above, the sentence “*You are saving their lives for a life not worth living*” shows that pressure occurs on the individual because her fear can’t make her child live normally. According to Freud, basically, moral anxiety is the fear of an individual’s own conscience.

The types of defense mechanisms for anxiety used by the main character (Malorie) in Josh Malerman’s “Bird Box”.

Repression. As a result of repression, the person is not aware of his own anxiety-producing impulses or does not remember deeply emotional and traumatic past events. Repression is an unconscious rejection of something that is uncomfortable or painful.

Extract 1 :

As the Girl steps back into the bedroom, Malorie thinks of how pathetic it is, that bicycle horns are her children’s greatest entertainment. They’ve played with them for years. All their lives, honking from across the living room. The loud sound used to put Malorie on edge. But she never took them away. Never hid them. Even in the throes of early, anxious motherhood, Malorie understood that in this world, anything that brought the children to giggle was a good thing. (p. 6)

Based on the extract above, the utterances “But she never took them away. Never hid them. Even in the throes of early, anxious motherhood, Malorie understood that in this world, anything that brought the children to giggle was a good thing.” shows that the horn blaring loudly made Malorie tense but in order to make her child happy, she tried to resist her anxiety. According to Freud, repression is an unconscious rejection of something that is uncomfortable or painful.

Extract 2 :

Malorie resisted believing it for as long as she could. The sisters argued constantly, Malorie citing the pages that derided mass hysteria, Shannon citing everything else. But soon Malorie had to relent when the pages she frequented began to run stories about their own loved ones, and the authors of these blogs stepped forward to admit some concern. (p.25)

Based on the extract above, the sentence “*Malorie resisted believing it as long as she could.*” shows that Malorie tried to reject the words of her sister about news on the internet about problems when she saw something because it made her uncomfortable with her worries. According to Freud, repression is an unconscious rejection of something that is uncomfortable or painful.

Regression. Regression is a defense mechanism that repeats attitude to the expansion stages before that appropriate and assumed can solve the anxiety and felt calmly.

Extract 1 :

Malorie tries to calm down by focusing on the child growing inside her. She seems to be encountering every symptom mentioned in her baby book, With Child. Slight Bleeding. Tender breast. Fatigue. Shannon points out Malorie’s mood swings, but it’s the cravings that are driving her crazy. Too afraid to drive the store, the sisters are stuck with the items they stockpiled shortly after purchasing the pregnancy test. (p. 27)

Based on the extract above, the sentence “*Malorie tries to calm down by focusing on the child growing inside her*” shows that after the news had spread everywhere regarding the riots in other cities. Malorie tries to calm down and think of the fetus in her stomach. According to Freud, Regression is a defense mechanism when the individual returns to the initial period of his life connecting these feelings with a calm release even though there is actually a desire to explore further.

Extract 2 :

Steeling herself, eyes still closed, Malorie turns and grips the handle of the suitcase. The house is maybe fifty feet from where she stopped. She knows she is not close to the curb. She does not care. Attempting to calm herself, she breathes deeply, slowly. The suitcase is beside her in the passenger seat. Eyes closed, she listens. Hearing nothing outside the car, she opens the driver’s-side door and steps out, reaching for her things. (p. 36)

Based on the extract above, the sentences “Attempting to calm herself, she breathes deeply, slowly. The suitcase is beside her in the passenger seat. Eyes closed, she listens.” shows that fear was in herself but she tried to calm herself even though she was curious why her sister could die, she finally strengthened herself and tried to get out from her home. According to Freud, Regression is a defense mechanism when the individual returns to the initial period of his life connecting these feelings with a calm release even though there is actually a desire to explore further.

Rationalization. This defense mechanism is a form of producing some motivates which seem rational as a social justification toward the attitudes that cannot be received. Moreover, this defense mechanism is involves re-understanding

our behavior to make it more rational and acceptable to us. We try to forgive or consider a thought or action that threatens us by convincing ourselves that there are rational reasons behind those thoughts and actions.

Extract 1 :

At the first, Malorie struggled to accept this. In the new world, babies had to be trained to wake up with their eyes closed. They had to be raised scared. There wasn't room for unknowns. Yet, there were times when the Boy and the Girl surprised her. (p. 81)

Based on the extract above, the sentences "At the first, Malorie struggled to accept this. In the new world, babies, had to be trained to wake up with their eyes closed." shows that Malorie must accept the harsh reality, so she thinks rationally that her baby must be trained with his eyes closed. According to Freud, Rationalization is a defense mechanism that involves re-understanding our behavior to make it more rational and acceptable to us. We try to forgive or consider a thought or action that threatens us by convincing ourselves that there are rational reasons behind those thoughts and actions.

Extract 2 :

But Malorie didn't think so. A deep part of her understood what Don was saying. Every moment of her pending motherhood would be centered on protecting the eyes of her child. How much more could be done if this worry were taken away? The seriousness Don wore when he said it conveyed more than cruelty to Malorie. It opened the door to a realm of harrowing possibilities, things that might need to be done, actions she might have to take that nobody from the old world, could ever be fully prepared to endure. And the suggestion, dark as it was, never entirely vanished from her mind's eye. (p. 111)

Based on the extract above, the sentence "How much more could be done if this worry were taken away? The seriousness Don wore when he said it conveyed more than cruelty to Malorie. It opened the door to a realm of harrowing possibilities, things that might need to be done, actions she might have to take that nobody from the old world, could ever be fully prepared to endure." shows that being a mother must be ready to protect her child and take action that appropriates with the threats out there. According to Freud, Rationalization is a defense mechanism that involves re-understanding our behavior to make it more rational and acceptable to us. We try to forgive or consider a thought or action that threatens us by convincing ourselves that there are rational reasons behind those thoughts and actions.

Discussion

Josh Malerman's "Bird Box" is a novel with 260 pages. Malorie is the main character of this novel. Malorie is a mother who is struggling against a hard life, her life is very dark with blindfolded eyes. She has two children, namely Boy and Girl. Something terrifying that must not be seen. One glimpse and a person is driven to deadly violence. No one knows what it is or where it came from, the situation made Malorie feel anxiety, fear, and worry.

There are three kinds of anxiety and three types of defense mechanisms used in her life according to Freud's theory. The researcher found there are three kinds of anxiety that Malorie used in the novel, namely reality anxiety, neurotic anxiety, and moral anxiety which has been found in 18 sentences. And also, the researcher found there are three types of defense mechanisms of anxiety, namely repression, regression, and rationalization which has been found to 8 sentences.

Conclusion

After explaining and identifying the forms of anxiety experienced by Malorie, the writer draw conclusions related to how anxiety create Maloris's personality:

- In this novel, Malorie gets three forms kinds of anxiety that have been identified by the writer. Among these are reality anxiety, neurotic anxiety, and moral anxiety.
- Malorie can overcome her anxiety with types of defense mechanisms by Freud's theory, namely: repression, regression, and rationalization.

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