

## **Anxiety and Defense Mechanism of Joy Newsome in *Room* Movie**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The first purpose of this study was to determine the type of anxiety experienced by Joy in the *Room* movie (2015). Besides, this study also aimed to determine the type of defense mechanism Joy Newsome used to overcome her anxiety. This study was qualitative research because it focused on analyzing the psychological aspect of a character in a movie. Accordingly, the approach used here was the psychological approach. In this study, the researcher used Freud's theory about anxiety and defense mechanisms. Based on the results of the study, it was found that Joy Newsome experienced moral anxiety and realistic anxiety. To overcome her anxiety, Joy used several types of defense mechanisms. Those defense mechanisms are repression, reaction formation, denial, displacement, regression projection and fantasy.

**Keywords:** Anxiety, Defense Mechanism, Psychoanalysis

### **ABSTRAK**

*Tujuan utama penelitian ini adalah untuk menentukan jenis kecemasan yang dialami oleh Joy di film Room (2015). Selain itu, penelitian ini juga bertujuan untuk menentukan jenis mekanisme pertahanan diri yang digunakan untuk mengurangi kecemasannya. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif karena berfokus dalam menganalisa aspek psikologi dari karakter utama. Oleh karena itu, pendekatan yang digunakan adalah pendekatan psikologis. Di dalam penelitian ini, peneliti menggunakan teori Sigmund Freud tentang Kecemasan dan mekanisme pertahanan diri. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian, ditemukan bahwa Joy Newsome mengalami kecemasan moral dan kecemasan realita. Untuk mengurangi kecemasannya, Joy menggunakan beberapa tipe mekanisme pertahanan diri, diantaranya adalah represi, pembentukan reaksi, penyangkalan, perpindahan, regresi, proyeksi dan fantasi.*

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

Psychoanalysis is a psychological theory developed by Sigmund Freud, whose central premise is that everyone has unconscious thoughts, feelings, desires, and memories. Sigmund Freud separated psychoanalysis into three parts: id, ego, and superego. Id, the most natural form of human personality that functions on the pleasure principle, appears at the time a person is born. In other words, Ego is a cauldron full of seething excitement that needs immediate

pleasure without understanding how to achieve what Id wants to fulfill my desires. Ego serves to postpone, allow, or delay the satisfaction of Id, and superego has responsible for steering people in the proper direction in terms of good and wrong, as well as societal worth. The shame and reward senses are likewise stored in the superego.

The conflict that happens in id between ego and superego inflict the birth of anxiety as a human personality. Under the pressure of anxiety, the ego must do something to release the tension. It is called a defense mechanism. In general, defense mechanisms are responsible for overcoming the pain caused by anxiety. The defense mechanism, however, has the responsibility to satisfy the demanding id impulses. In this study, the researcher will analyze the psychological aspect that is suffered by Joy Newsome. The researcher chooses *Room* film as the research object.

Joy Newsome is the main character in the *Room* movie. She is a new mother with a five-year-old son named Jack. She is obsessed with escaping the "room" in which she has been held captive for seven years. She wishes to live a perfect and normal life like other people because she only lives in a small space, which she regards as abnormal. She learns that her parents have divorced, and her mother has a new partner, Leo, after they both successfully escape the "room." She returns to her childhood home with Jack, where her mother and Leo live. Her father refuses to accept Jack as his grandchild and departs. Joy tends to suffer from depression and anger, lashing out at her mother and becoming concerned about Jack's lack of interaction with "real" things. She attempts suicide because she is overwhelmed by guilt, but she is brought to the hospital.

The researcher is interested in analyzing the *Room* film because the main character, Joy Newsome, exhibits many psychological issues in the form of anxiety. She exhibits worry, panic, and fear as a result of the circumstances of her life. By examining these issues, the researcher expects to analyze the psychological aspect, focusing on Joy Newsome's anxiety and defense mechanism in the *Room* film.

## **B. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **1. Psychology and Literature**

Psychology and literature are related to each other because psychology was applied to literature. Psychology can be used to understand more deeply about message, characterization and other elements. Psychology can help reveal the reasons for character behavior. It reveals the basis of human behavior and motivation (Guerin 1).

### **2. Psychoanalysis**

Psychoanalysis is an inter-discipline between psychology and literature (Bennet&Royle 204). Psychoanalysis is a psychological theory of Sigmund Freud in which the primary assumption of this theory is the belief that all people have unconscious thoughts, feelings, desires, and memories. Freud divides the existence of the soul into three parts; conscious, preconscious, and subconscious. The conscious mind, according to Freud, consists of all mental processes that we are aware of, such as thoughts, feelings, and desires. Thoughts and feelings that a person is not aware of but may easily be brought to consciousness are stored in the preconscious. The unconscious mind is the fundamental source of human behavior; the portion of the mind that we can't see is the most important component. The

unconscious contains contents that are unacceptable or unpleasant, such as feelings of pain, anxiety, or conflict.

### **3. Character and Characterization**

According to Gill, a character is someone in a literary work who has some sort of identity, an identity which is made up by appearance, conversation, action, name, and (possibly) thoughts going on in the head (127). In a story, there is a process of understanding the personality or the characteristic of the character; it is called characterization. According to Klarer, characterization refers to the way of understanding the character in a story by seeing the method performed in presenting the character by its author (18). There are two methods in presenting the character, such as showing and telling. The method of showing the character in a story is known as dramatic characterization. In this method, the character of a story is being described through the character's direct utterances and/or actions (Klarer 19). The method of telling the character is called explanatory characterization. In this method, the character of a story is being described through a narrator.

### **4. Personality Theory**

Freud described the personality as consisting of three systems; they are the id, the ego, and the superego. The id is the source of all psychic energy, making it the most important component of personality. The id is the primordial reservoir of spiritual power that is present from birth. The ego, according to Freud, arises from the id and ensures that the id impulse can be expressed in an acceptable manner in the real world. The ego exists to deal with the objective, external world while also satisfying id desires and instinctive demands. The internalized moral standards and ideas that we acquire from our parents and society are held by the superego. The superego is preoccupied with ethics, with what is "good" and "wrong."

### **5. Anxiety**

In psychoanalysis theory, anxiety is one of the most important concepts. Anxiety is a painful emotional experience brought on by excitations in the body's internal organs. Anxiety is the result of the conflict between ego and superego. Sigmund Freud classified anxiety into three categories; neurotic anxiety, moral anxiety, and realistic anxiety

#### **a. Neurotic Anxiety**

Neurotic anxiety is defined as apprehension about an unknown danger, the source, on the other hand, is from Id. In childhood, hostility is typically accompanied with a dread of punishment, which develops into unrealized neurotic concern.

#### **b. Moral Anxiety**

The fear of consciousness is referred to as moral anxiety. It is someone's anxiety caused by thinking that is opposed or improper to the moral standards of the society. Moral anxiety is said to indicate that a person's superego is well-developed.

#### **c. Realistic Anxiety**

Realistic anxiety is defined as the fear of real external threats. It is developed from actual environmental hazards or threats. It is characterized as a dissatisfied and unspecific reaction to a potential danger.

## **6. Defense Mechanism**

Defense mechanisms are used to overcome anxiety. Freud in Hall stated that defense mechanism operates unconsciously so that people are not aware of what is taking place (50). The function of the defense mechanism itself is to deny and falsify reality, which may be too hard and painful to accept. Defense mechanism also functions to protect the ego from feeling overwhelmed caused by anxieties an individual undergoes.

### **a. Repression**

The ego uses repression as an unconscious strategy to avoid uncomfortable or threatening thoughts from becoming conscious. As a result of suppression, the individual is unaware of his anxiety-producing impulses or unable to recall deeply emotional and traumatic previous occurrences. Repression is, in fact, a type of forgetfulness.

### **b. Reaction Formation**

Reaction formation is a defensive strategy in which a person goes beyond denial and acts in the opposite direction of what he or she is thinking and feeling. The excessive nature of reaction creation, as well as its obsessive and compulsive shape, distinguishes it. The purpose of a response formation is to allow us to express our actual prohibited wants in disguised form by experiencing the exact opposite of our true sentiments.

### **c. Denial**

Denial is one of the most well-known defense mechanism, and it is frequently used to describe circumstances in which individuals appear unwilling to confront reality or accept an evident truth. Denial is the explicit unwillingness to accept or recognize that something has happened or is happening. The purpose of denial is to protect the ego from things that the individual cannot handle.

### **d. Displacement**

The redirecting of an impulse (typically hostility) onto a powerless replacement target is known as displacement. Persons can divert their undesirable desires onto a number of people or objects through displacement, so that the underlying drive is masked or camouflaged.

### **e. Fixation**

Fixation is technically defined as the libido's persistent connection to an earlier, more basic stage of development. Fixations, like other defensive systems, are fundamental.

People who are preoccupied with neatness and orderliness may have an oral fixation, whereas those who are obsessed with eating, smoking, or talking may have an anal fixation.

## **f. Regression**

When faced with stress, one may experience regression, which is a psychological shift back in time. When we are disturbed or scared, our actions frequently become more juvenile or basic.

## **g. Projection**

Projection is a defense mechanism in which we attribute our own unwanted characteristics or sentiments to other individuals. According to Freud, projection is the act of assigning a dangerous drive, impulse, or part of oneself to another person. If he or she believes that the best offensive is a solid defense, he or she will employ projection extensively.

## **h. Sublimation**

Sublimation is the cornerstone of all innovation, aesthetics, and society advancement. Sublimation occurs when the one who is suppressing these urges unleashes them by drastically altering their expression into innovation, invention, aesthetic appreciation, or other commendable pursuits.

## **i. Fantasy**

Fantasy is a continuum of mental experiences mediated by the ability of imagination in the human brain and distinguished by the expression of particular desires through vivid mental images. Fantasy is essential because it allows people to turn their hopes, desires, and ideas into something that cannot be realized in real life.

## **C. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study is qualitative since the researcher uses words as the data. Bogdan and Biklen have divided the characteristics of qualitative research into descriptive research because the data was collected in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers (26). Qualitative research concerned with developing explanations of social phenomena that are shared by participants in a particular social. This qualitative descriptive aimed to create descriptions, illustrations, facts, characteristics, and relationships between existing phenomena related to the research (Ary et Al, 423). In this study, the researcher choose psychology as an approach. The theories of anxiety and defense mechanism had been chosen to analyze the psychological state of the main character.

There are some processes in analyzing the data in this research based on Miles and Huberman (1994). First the researcher selected and categorized the data based on types of anxiety and defense mechanism. Second, the researcher uses the theory of Sigmund Freud to analyze types of anxiety and defense mechanism. The researcher will use brief description to display the data. The data that being used are actions, behaviors, and conversations that shows psychological state; the anxiety and defense mechanism of the main character, Joy Newsome. After the data has been reduced and presented, the researcher draws conclusions from the entire data described in the previous discussion based on research questions.

## **D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Types of Anxiety**

#### **a. Moral Anxiety**

Moral anxiety is the fears of consciousness which is people who have moral anxiety are considered to have their superegos well-developed. When people are morally anxious, they are afraid of being punished by their superego. Moreover, the person who has moral anxiety cannot escape from feelings of guilt by running away from them.

Nancy: Look at him. You should be thinking about him.

Joy: Don't you ever tell me how to look after my son. I'm sorry if I'm not 'nice' enough for you. **Maybe if you hadn't been in my head saying 'be nice' that day I wouldn't have gone to help him.** (01:26:38 – 01:26:45)

Based on the conversation between Joy and her mother, it shows that her mother forces her to help Old Nick. Joy could not reject what her mother asked to her. She would feel guilty if she chose not to follow what her mother wants to. Consciously, she could have rejected what her mother asked, but the person who has moral anxiety cannot escape from feelings of guilt by running away from them, as she was taught to be nice person by her mother. Because of that, she grew up with well-developed superego. She morally depressed if she was not behaving upon or 'consider as' good thing, her moral anxiety forces her to do a good thing, so the way she released the pressure of her moral anxiety was by helping Old Nick in which after that Old Nick abducted her.

#### **b. Realistic Anxiety**

Realistic anxiety is fears of real world threats and the most common way of reducing the anxiety is by avoid the threatening object. At some point, a person who has realistic anxiety may take whatever action to save them from the danger.

Nancy: Look at him. You should be thinking about him.

Joy: Don't you ever tell me how to look after my son. I'm sorry if I'm not 'nice' enough for you. **Maybe if you hadn't been in my head saying 'be nice' that day I wouldn't have gone to help him.** (01:26:38 – 01:26:45)

Joy as his mother tried to repel the mouse and warned him about the mouse as the mouse brings germs and might bite at night. She pointed out that mouse is harmful animal. It is clearly

shows Joy's realistic anxiety as she tried to avoid the treating object, in this case a mouse. The way she is reducing the anxiety by repels the mouse as an action the keep them both save.

## 2. Types of Defense Mechanism

### a. Repression

Repression is an unconscious mechanism which is employed by the ego to keep disturbing or threatening thoughts from becoming conscious. Repression is truly a form of forgetting.

Joy: He needs something real to do. I'm getting worried about him with the phone.

Nancy: He's fine.

Joy: I don't give him my phone so please don't give him yours.

Nancy: Ok.

Joy: I just want him to connect to something. You know?

Nancy: He's really doing fine.

Joy: **I'm sorry, I don't know what's happening to me. I can't feel anything. Even for...** (01:25:00 – 01:25:15)

Based on the dialogue above, she was using repression as her defense mechanism. Her regression triggered when her son, Jack, was watching cartoon through her phone. The cartoon was spongebob, the cartoon that she and her son used to watch in 'room'. This experience leads her anxiety arises unconsciously. She quibbles that Jack was lack of interaction with real things, so she decided to prohibit her son using phone and told her mother to not lend Jack phone, which is it was the way her ego suppresses the feelings and experiences she had in 'room' and forgetting about what she felt as a result of her defense mechanism. She was not aware of the anxiety itself that causes the impulse. She was not aware that the cartoon that her son watch was the cause of her anxiety arises. It was the result of ego whose suppress traumatic feelings and experiences. When a person becomes aware of repressed material, they will purposely try to remove it from awareness.

### b. Reaction Formation

Reaction formation is a defensive strategy in which a person goes beyond denial and acts in the opposite direction of what he or she is thinking and feeling. By using reaction formation, the id is fulfilled while the ego is kept in the ignorant about the underlying causes.

Old Nick: Hey. What's the smell?

Joy: **Sorry**, I burned some cheese.

Old Nick: You need to take more care.

Joy: I will. I wasn't thinking.

Old Nick: Yeah, well, thinking's not your strong suit.

Joy: **I know. I'm really sorry.** Why don't you sit down? (00:19:00 – 00:19:11)

The conversation above occurs when the Old Nick came to give daily needs, and when he entered, he smells something burned, which is cheese. While the Old Nick reprimand her, she was just apologized for what she had done, which is she behaves in the opposite way she feels. They do not develop bondness, even though Joy was abducted for seven years, even allow her raise Jack. Instead develops positive feelings toward Old Nick because her daily

needs were fulfilled, she keeps developing negative feelings through her reaction formation in disguise form.

### c. Denial

Denial is a defense mechanism as refusal to acknowledge disturbing aspects of external reality, as well as the existence of disturbing psychological events, such as thoughts, memories, or feelings. Denial is often used to describe situations in which people seem unable to face reality or admit an obvious truth.

Nancy: Look at him. You should be thinking about him.

Joy: Don't you ever tell me how to look after my son. I'm sorry if I'm not 'nice' enough for you. **Maybe if you hadn't been in my head saying 'be nice' that day I wouldn't have gone to help him.** (01:26:38 – 01:26:45)

Based on the conversation above, Joy as Jack's mother denies the fact that Jack is her son with Old Nick. She hides Jack in the wardrobe so both of them cannot see each other. She denied that Old Nick is Jack's biological father. Even she never told Jack that Old Nick was his father. She seems unable to face reality as she refused to believe the presence of Old Nick as her child's father.

### d. Regression

Regression is when a human has through all the development stages. They will get back to their previous stage when they feel anxiety or discomfort. It aims to gain help to face a traumatic occasion.

Nancy: I just could not get her to come down.

Dr. Mittal: Don't worry about it. It's perfectly normal.

Nancy: **She does not want to talk** (01:23:27 – 01:23:38)

Dr. Mittal: Yes, I understand. It's gonna take time for her to heal. She's been home, what, 10 days?

Nancy: Mm-hmm

From the dialogue above, it is noted that she acted like a child, which is she refused to talk to strangers yet she did not leave home after she was rescued from Old Nick. Joy's mother told the doctor that she could not get Joy to meet him for weekly checkup. She returned to an earlier period of life that was more enjoyable and free from the frustration and anxiety she was currently facing. Joy's personality returned to an earlier period because she does not want to remember her past through her doctor, so she decided to remain silent and refuse to meet him.

### e. Projection

Projection is a defense mechanism that involves taking our own unacceptable qualities or feelings and ascribing them to other people. When they feel anxiety, ego will decrease it by shifting the cause to the other person or object. It happens when Joy was doubting her condition. Instead of asking help, she chose to blame her mother for everything that happened to her.

Joy: You have no idea what's going on in my head.

Nancy: Yeah, well try me! I have asked you.

Joy: And then what? Then, everytime you look at me, that's all that you



see?

Nancy: When I look at you, Joy, I will see my daughter.

Joy: **You don't need me. You've been doing just fine without me.**  
(01:23:27 – 01:26:10)

Nancy: How can you say that? You think you're the only one whose life was destroyed?

Joy: Actually, that's exactly what I think.

Based on her conversation with her mother, it shows that Joy struggled with her life after she was free from 'room', as she was unable to control her rage and herself. She thought that her family is doing fine without her for last seven years. When she said to her mother, Nancy, that her mother did not need her and doing fine without her indicates that she uses projection as her defense mechanism in which her ego threw disturbing impulses at the other person, which is in this case is the target is her mother. She was covering up the problems she had by blaming her mother.

#### **f. Fantasy**

Fantasy is a continuum of mental experiences mediated by the ability of imagination in the human brain and distinguished by the expression of particular desires through vivid mental images. Fantasy used in order to resolve inner and outer conflicts. Fantasy is important since through fantasy, someone transforms his or her wishes, desires, and thoughts that cannot be fulfilled in the real life.

Jack: Why the aliens never scream back?

Joy: **I guess they still can't hear us.** (00:18:09 – 00:18:14)

Jack: We'll do it even louder, okay?

Joy: Okay.

Based on the conversation between Joy and her son, her son was fantasizing about why aliens never scream back while he pointed out the vent. Instead of telling the truth, she even acted like there were aliens living inside the vent. She let her son fantasizing. She used fantasy to protect herself from being anxiety due to question about real world. She used fantasy not only for her own good, but also for her son mental healthiness.

### **3. Discussion**

Based on the finding data above, it was found that Joy's anxiety included two types of anxiety, moral and realistic. Anxiety occurs based on internal and external factors. To prevent the anxiety continued, Joy tried to protect herself by using defense mechanisms. The defense mechanisms that she used was repression, reaction formation, denial, regression, projection and fantasy. The function of the defense mechanism itself is to deny and falsify reality, which may be too hard and painful to accept. The function of Ego is to delay, to allow, or to postpone the satisfaction of Id while Superego functions is to lead the direction about right and wrong and in accordance with social value, in which contains the value of guilt and reward sense.

### **E. CONCLUSION**

Joy Newsome as the main character experienced two out of three types of anxiety proposed by Freud, moral and realistic anxiety. Joy experienced moral anxiety because there was conflict between the ego and superego in which her superego was well-developed. She experienced realistic anxiety because she was threatened by the environment she lived in and

people around her that made her anxious. The types of defense used by Joy was repression, reaction formation, denial, regression, projection, fantasy and sublimation. Repression was used to keep ego from disturbing memories and feeling, reaction formation was used to camouflage her hatred over her abductor, denial was used to reject the existence of external threats or traumatic events, regression was used to face traumatic occasion by returned to an earlier period of life, progression was used to cover up the problems or mistakes she face by passing them on to others, and fantasy used to avoid inner and outer conflicts by transform desire, wish and thought through vivid mental imagery. At the end of the story, Joy had been able to control her emotions and she lived with her family without hesitation about her life with her son.

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