

ABSTRACT**AMIR'S DOMINATION OF SUPEREGO AND HIS EGO DEFENSE MECHANISM****AS SEEN IN HOSSEINI'S *THE KITE RUNNER***

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to uncover Amir's domination of superego and to identify Amir's *ego defense mechanism*. This research is a qualitative research. The source of data of this research was taken from Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* published in New York, 2003. The data taken from the novel were in the form of particular expressions related to Amir's domination of superego and the defense mechanism. During this research, the researcher read the text, collected the data, categorized the data, and analyzed the data taken from Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*. The data was analyzed by using Freud's psychoanalysis theory, focused on the imbalanced system of personality, especially in the domination of the superego. To obtain the trustworthiness of the data, the researcher used peer- debriefing method. The findings of the study show that Amir's imbalanced system of personality is caused by the domination of his superego. The domination of superego in Amir is triggered by the responses when he gets many conflicts in his life. The results of Amir's domination of superego are having over anxious feeling, having too high jealous feeling also having too much guilty feeling. There are two products of Amir's *ego defense mechanism* such as denial and displacement. Amir denies many things he feels and he knows. He tries to be an ignorant person who does not want to be involved deeper in several cases he experiences. Furthermore, Amir decides to displace his feeling into other objects because he has no capability to express it directly to the real object he should express for.

Keywords: *The Kite Runner*, psychoanalysis, the domination of the superego, ego defense mechanism, denial, displacement

BACKGROUND

Parents have enormous responsibilities in their children's development, both physically and mentally, starting from the simple thing to the complex one. The roles of parents are not only from the mother's side as the person who bears the children, but also from the father's side as the head of the family. They have to provide love, food, shelter, and protection to their children. They also provide guidance, not only in educational aspect, but also in emotional aspect that will help the children to build their personality and emotional skill to interact with their environment.

Basically, parents serve as role models for their children. They can give example through directs interactions with their children, and also through the example they set with their attitude and behavior within the family and in the outside world. Some parents will also have some expectations that their children should fulfill. For example, they will expect their children to take the same path as them. When their children can fulfill their desire, it can be a declaration that they are able to be the figure in the family who can be relied on.

However, as the figure of parents is not always perfect, parents may make mistakes during the process of learning and taking care of their child. The examples of mistakes that usually happen are: the lack of communication between the parents and the children, the parents' elevated expectations beyond their children's capability, the parents' strict rules which are not easily accepted and obeyed by the children, and the parents' abusive actions to punish the children when they cannot accomplish what the parents' want. These wrong treatments will create many serious problems for the children's development. According to Rockville (2004), children may experience feelings of abandonment,

anxiety, fear, anger, concern, embarrassment, or guilt.

Many literary works provide and portray childhood conflicts as their main topic. Some authors try to discuss this issue to remind people of the danger of it. The example of literary works which discuss this kind of conflicts is *But I Love Him* by Amanda Grace. This novel tells about a son who experiences abusive behavior from his father which leads him to do abusive things to his girlfriend. Another example is *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker. This novel even provides a portrayal of graphic abuse. However, the one which attracts the researcher's attention is *The Kite Runner* (2003) by Khaled Hosseini. This novel brings up the topic about unpleasant childhood experiences that affect the character physically and mentally.

Published in 2003, *The Kite Runner* becomes Khaled Hosseini's first novel. The story of this novel is categorized as a fiction, but it is rooted in real political and historical events ranging from the last days of the Afghan monarchy in the 1970s to the post-Taliban near present. It is also based on Hosseini's memories of growing up in the Wazir Akbar Khan section of Kabul and adapting to life in California. Amir, a 12 years old boy, the main character, comes

from a wealthy family. He is surrounded by a thing called “having everything he wants”. However, getting what he wants is not always the same with getting what he needs. He gets to deal with many conflicts during his life that bring negative effects on him.

The conflicts that happen to Amir lead the researcher to conduct this research by employing Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis. Freud mentions that human has structure of personality (*id, ego, and superego*). If one of them is imbalanced, it will create some effects. What happen to Amir in this novel will uncover that he has imbalanced system of personality. Imbalanced system of personality will occur when someone has domination among those three systems of personality.

Barry (1992, 2002: 96) states that “psychoanalysis itself is a form of therapy which aims to cure mental disorders by investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in the mind”. Freud (in Buss and Larsen, 2002: 169) explains that there are three different parts in the human mind. The first is conscious, the second is preconscious mind and the last is the largest part of human mind called the unconscious mind. However, Freud's

works are centered on the unconscious which despite being beyond consciousness still strongly influences human actions (Barry, 1992, 2002: 96). The organization of personality is divided into the id, the ego and the superego.

Based on Freud's psychological theory, there are several basic ego defense mechanisms found in daily life. Freud (in Feist, 2006: 34) mentions that “Types of Defense Mechanisms are repression, denial, displacement, rationalization, sublimation, projection, reaction formation.”

RESEARCH METHOD

To conduct this research, the researcher was using qualitative research study. The source data of this research primarily was taken from Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* published in New York, 2003. the data taken from the novel were in the form of particular expressions related to Amir's domination of superego and the defense mechanism he uses. The researcher is the main interpreter of this research. There were several steps in collecting the data: careful and comprehensive reading, note-taking, data interpreting, describing the data and categorizing. To gain trustworthiness, the researcher used triangulation and consulted her study with her thesis advisor to validate the data.

DISCUSSION

The discussion of the findings can be divided into two parts:

A. The Domination of the Superego

1. Having Over Anxious Feeling

Everybody has anxious feeling in their life and it is normal for them to have such kind of feeling. However, this novel narrates that Amir has too much anxious feeling towards the conflicts that occur in his life. The story tells that Amir's existence seems to be uncared and unexpected by his own father, Baba. In his life, he only seeks for Baba's attention because Baba seems to be ignorant and does not have any concern to Amir. This quotation shows Amir's anxiety toward his father.

I am a baby in that photograph and Baba is holding me, looking tired and grim. I'm in his arms, but it's Rahim Khan's pinky my fingers are curled around (Hosseini, 2003: 05).

Even from a photo, Amir can feel that his father does not like him. Normally, people with a stable ego will think that the photo has no intention to show Baba's feeling towards Amir, yet, as the domination of superego works, the result is he becomes anxious and finds no peace from the photo.

2. Having Too High Jealous Feeling

As the only child in the family, it is normal if a child wants to get love and attention from his/her parents fully as he/she does not have any sibling who will make his/her parents divide their love and attention to another child. The same goes to Amir. The novel narrates that Amir is the only child in his family. Amir who lives with Baba is accompanied by Ali and Hassan as their servants. However, Baba treats Hassan differently. It is not like the treatment from a master to a servant in common, but it is more like a treatment from a father to his own son. In this case, Amir feels that he gets unfair treatment from his Baba and makes him over jealous to Hassan. It is narrated in this below quotation.

I wanted Baba all to myself. And besides, one time at Ghragha Lake, Hasan and I were skipping stones and Hassan made his stone skip eight times. The most I managed was five. Baba was there, watching, and he patted Hassan on the back. Even put his arm around his shoulder. (Hosseini, 2003: 13-14)

Based on Amir's statement, it is clear that Amir feels that Baba treats both of him and Hassan differently. In his very first sentence, he does not want Hassan to get Baba's attention and tries to be a selfish one, this is because his id demands. As stated by Freud (in Boerre,

1997, 2006: 15) that “the id works in keeping with the pleasure principle, which can be understood as a demand to take care of needs immediately.” However, the next two sentences show that even though he is very jealous of Hassan that Baba keeps caring to him, he only shows his jealousy towards nothing. He just retells for the memory he feels in the past. This situation shows how his superego overpowered. The important thing for Amir is the situation in his surroundings, not himself.

3. Having Too Much Guilty Feeling

As a common person, it is normal if everybody makes mistakes whether they do it in purpose or not. After make a mistake, a person commonly ask for apologize and everything will be alright. However, the domination of superego within someone's personality will make them over reaction if they make a single mistake. They will feel too guilty after making a mistake. This is in line with Amir's story in this novel.

Many ironic and sad things come up in this story. Amir's behavior is also distracted by the issue of his mother's death. Even though he never has any chance to meet his mother, not even once, he is always curious about the cause of the death of his mother.

Because the truth of it was, I always felt like Baba hated me a little. And why not? After all, I had killed his

beloved wife, his beautiful princess, hadn't I? The least I could have done was to have had the decency to have turned out a little more like him. But I hadn't turned out like him. Not at all (Hosseini, 2003:19).

In this novel, Amir is accused by his father as his mother's murderer. Based on the quotation, it is clear that Amir started to think that he is the one who has to take all the responsibility related to his mother's death. The statement above shows how Amir thinks that he has killed his mother. The way Amir think is triggered by his superego which dominates among all of his systems of personality. He always thinks that Baba hates him because he kills his mother. He has to live with that thought in his whole life for he cannot delete the memory. As stated by Freud (in Boerre, 1997, 2006: 6), “the conscience and ego ideal communicate their requirements to the ego with feelings like pride, shame, and guilt.” Therefore, in Amir's case, his ego cannot repress the feeling of guilty, thus, he feels like he is a murderer. If he does not have an imbalanced system of personality, he will feel that his mother death is not his fault, since it is his mother's fate. This is in line with Baba's treatment towards Amir. He cannot act nicely to Amir. He even hardly accepts that Amir is his own son.

He lowered his voice, but I heard him anyway. "If I hadn't seen the doctor pull him out of my wife with my own eyes, I'd never believe he's my son." (Hosseini, 2003: 23)

The last statement from Baba shows that it is hard to believe that Amir, the one who murders his wife, is his own son. It has to be so sad for Amir to hear such conversation between Baba and Rahim. When a child is accused by his own father as his mother's murderer, it is quite clear that the moment will be hard to be erased from his mind. Amir feels so guilty and cannot live his life. This is the product of superego.

B. Amir's Ego Defense Mechanisms

1. Denial

The story of the novel tells about the problems which disturb Amir's personality. Too many psychological conflicts occur for it needs to be solved during his life. To solve these conflicts, Amir uses defense mechanisms. The first defense mechanism which will be explained is denial. In the second chapter, the researcher already mentioned that denial is a refusal of the reality or the fact that happens to someone's life. This means a person who does denial tends to deny the real situation he/she feels. The fact that Amir uses denial is shown from this quotation:

Never mind any of those things. Because history isn't easy to overcome. Neither is religion. In the end, I was a Pasthun and he was a Hazara. I was Sunni and he was Shi'a, and nothing was ever going to change that. Nothing (Hoseini, 2003: 25).

The above quotation shows Amir's jealousy towards Hassan that leads him to use denial as his defense mechanism. It is clearly stated that he tries to deny as he should not get jealous to Hassan because Hassan and him have different level of society and religion. He thinks that he is a way better than Hassan. However, what matter in this situation is not about the history or the religion they have, it is the matter of Baba's attention.

As it is already stated in chapter two, a person in denial tends to refuse the reality or the fact that happens in his/her life. If some situation is just too much to handle, the person just refuses to experience it (McLeod, 2009.) Normally, a person who makes a mistake will ask for apology to the one he/she should ask for, yet, Amir does not do it. He keeps pretending that nothing happens. It is states clearly in this quotation:

"Like I said, how should I know what's wrong with him?" I snapped. "Maybe he's sick. People get sick all the time, Ali. Now, am I going to freeze to death or are you planning on lightning the stove today?" (Hosseini, 2003: 81)

If Amir's ego works properly, he will say the truth to Hassan's father for what happen to Hassan without any hesitation. Since Freud (in Hall, 1954: 28) says that "when the ego is performing its executive functions wisely, harmony and adjustment prevail". However, in this situation, Amir's ego cannot manage it, he then denies the truth that he knows something bad has happened to Hassan. He tells a lie to Hassan's father as the product of his denial. Thus, denial leads him to act like there is nothing happens. Many people use denial in their everyday lives to avoid dealing with painful feelings. Furthermore, they think that it is normal for them to use denial. In Amir's case, he knows something big happens in his surroundings, yet he keeps it for himself. He can prevent himself to tell the truth even though the thing is something important or big.

In Amir's case, he also uses the words which can be interpreted as a denial statement. Here is the statement below.

"I'm fine." I said. The truth was, the room felt too hot suddenly—sweet was bursting room my pores, prickling my skin. And was this really happening? Was I really sitting across from Assef? (Hosseini, 2003: 282)

The words "I'm fine" shows how he actually hides something. As denial is a defense mechanism which avoids unpleasant thing, instead of saying the

truth to Assef, Amir prefers to say in that way. It will have a different result if the ego can manage that situation harmoniously. A person with stable ego will says the actual feeling he/she feels, or, a person with the domination of the id will directly goes away from that room, but Amir whose superego is dominant chooses to deny his feeling just to end his business with Assef quickly. He does not even care whether he feels hot or sweating. Therefore, it is clear that to pursue a goal, many people use denial to prevent the unpleasant feelings.

2. Displacement

Another types of defense mechanism found in this novel is displacement. Displacement is the shifting of the emotion directed at one person or object, but taken out upon another person or object. According to Hall (1979: 79), he states "if one object is not available the cathexis can shift from it to one that is available." Therefore, a person who does displacement usually cannot express his/her feelings directly to the target.

THE NEXT MORNING, as he was preparing my breakfast, Hassan asked if something was bothering me. I snapped at him, told him to mind his own business (Hassan, 2003: 23).

Feeling uncomfortable with an unpleasant situation makes Amir becomes

more sensitive for he cannot differentiate whether someone gives attention or bothering him. According to Alloy (1972), displacement involves a transfer of emotion. It means that someone who uses displacement will not directly use the real emotion he/she feels to the person who supposed to be given the emotion, instead, he/she will change it into another object. The quotation above emphasizes how Amir displaces his anger into another object. Normally, people with balance systems of personality will feel happy if someone takes a good care of him or gives attention to him. However, as his superego is imbalanced, he then feels insecure and feels that Hassan only wants to bother him.

Many conflicts that arise in Amir's life make his emotion unstable. He becomes a person who easily blaming someone for no reason. In his thought, all of the things happen in his life is because of Hassan. Therefore, the displacement occurs in this novel often haunt Hassan. This quotation below will be an example of how Amir shows his displacement towards another object.

I hit him with another pomegranate, in the shoulder this time. The juice splattered his face. "Hit me back!" I spat. "Hit me back, goddamn you! I wished he would. I wished he'd give me the punishment I craved, so maybe I'd finally sleep at night. Maybe then things could return to how they used to be between us. But Hassan did nothing

as I pelted him again and again. "You're so coward!" I said. "Nothing but a goddamn coward!" (Hosseini, 2003: 92).

It is clearly seen that Amir really has such an awful memory when he has to witness his friend being raped. After that moment, Amir and Hassan never play together. In one fine occasion, they meet in the place they used to go. In that place, Amir suddenly hits Hassan with pomegranate while cursing Hassan. The cursing words itself actually represent him. He feels like he is a coward because he cannot help Hassan when he is trapped in a bad situation. Instead of accepting the fact that he is a coward, he chooses to express his bad feelings by swearing to Hassan. This is the example of displacement used in the story.

Once again, Amir does displacement to Rahim Khan, Baba's friend. Amir cannot accept the fact when Rahim reveals the truth that actually Hassan is his own brother. Baba never tells the truth about this surprising thing. This is why when Amir knows the fact, he becomes uncontrolled. He says rudely "You bastards," I muttered. Stood up. "You goddamn bastards!" I screamed. "All of you, you bunch of lying goddamn bastards!" (Hosseini, 2003: 222). He starts to blame everyone. Actually, this is only a spontaneous reaction from him, but in fact,

he does not care and keep swearing to Rahim. The moment of swearing itself is the reflection of displacement. In fact, he should express his anger to Baba, but, as he cannot directly swear to Baba, instead he explodes his anger to Rahim.

According to Hall (1979: 79), the causes of displacement are the same as those that produce all personality development, namely maturation, frustration, conflict, inadequacy and anxiety. It is the same what has happened to Amir. In the story, he is portrayed as a person who has experienced many psychological conflicts during his life which then leads him to use ego defense mechanisms as the weapon to deal with any kind of situation he faces.

CONCLUSION

According to this novel, it is told that Amir experiences many bad things during his childhood. For example, he gets unfair treatment from his Baba, he witnesses his friend being raped, and he is also being accused as his mother's murderer. Those kind of bad experiences form him to be a person who always feels anxious, jealous and also guilty. In this novel, the conflicts that happen to Amir are the product of the domination of the superego. Thus, to overcome these conflicts, he uses defense mechanisms to deal with his situation.

This novel shows the existence of ego defense mechanism which Amir uses to deal with his situation. One of the defense mechanisms he uses is denial. In many cases, Amir denies many things he feels and he knows. He tries to be an ignorant person who does not want to be involved more in several cases he experiences. If he does not use denial, he may be a less ignorant person. He will pay more attention to his environment and what happens in his surroundings. However, he chooses to use denial because it helps him to hide what he really feels. He actually a person with full of anxiety, but, the denial makes it as the defense mechanism to reduce that feeling. Other defense mechanism which Amir uses is displacement. This trait represents the shifting of an emotion directed at one person or object, but taken out to another person or object. Displacement is often used when a person cannot directly express his/her feeling.

This novel shows how Amir decides to displace his feeling into other objects because he has no capability to express it directly to the real object he should express for.

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