

EGO DEFENSE MECHANISM OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN “FIGHT CLUB” NOVEL (1996) :PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This research paper analyzed the ego defense mechanism by Sigmund Freud that are found in the main character of “*Fight Club*“ novel. The author of novel is Chuck Palahniuk in 1996. This research applied qualitative study, and the data are derived from the novel. The researcher focuses on causes of defense mechanism, the ego defense mechanism that the main character experienced and the effect that the main character got. The researcher found that anxiety is the cause why defense mechanism of the main character can active. The main character also applied ego defense mechanism namely displacement and reaction formation. And the effect for the main character is he becomes more bravely and easier to accept the reality.

The ego defense mechanism is an unconscious psychological process that helps a person overcome anxiety due to a stressful internal or external environment. The defense mechanism finds its origin in Freud's structural theory of mind, which divides the human mind into three parts: id, ego, and superego. The interaction of the ego and superego gives rise to morality, guilty, and a conscience.

Keywords : *Literature, Ego-Defense Mechanism, Fight Club novel*

1. INTRODUCTION

Most humans ever feel stress. *According to Cambridge dictionary (2018)*, stress is great worry caused by a difficult situation, or something that causes this condition, Ego-defense mechanism is an unconscious psychological process that helps a person overcome anxiety due to a stressful internal or external environment. Freud first described the ego defense mechanism in 1894 and suggested a possible link between this mental illness and this psychological process. The ego defense mechanism is unconsciousness reaction or spontaneous reaction carried out by the ego contained in someone. The ego depends on the superego, which underlies the desire for perfection, ideals, and spiritual goals. Ego tries to maintain the stability of the relationship with the id and the superego. The interaction of the ego and superego gives rise to morality, guilty, and a conscience.

According to Sigmund (1894, 1896) he noted a number of ego defenses which he refers to throughout his written works. They are, denial, regression, projection, reaction formation, repression, displacement, intellectualization, rationalization and sublimation.

Human problem like stress can be found in literary work. In the literature, the novel can describe the personality of a character. And here we can find a novel which tells about human's psychological problem such as stress and anxiety. The psychological novel first published in 17th century in France. Psychological novels is a literary method in which a fiction focuses on the psychological processes, interior motives, and characters' mental narratives instead of simply telling a story. One of the popular novel related with this is "*Fight Club*" written by Chuck Palahniuk in 1996.

"*Fight Club*" novel tells about a man who was trapped in life as a "white collar" worker who was involved in an illegal fighting club pioneered by a soap dealer named Tyler Durden to escape from the stress. The main character is "unnamed man" who became the narrator in the novel. He was a worker at a car company suffering from insomnia due to pressure of work, so he decided to follow the support group. This research focuses on the main character's problem and ego defense mechanism that he experience, and the effect for himself.

There are three problem statements as follow :

1. What are the problems faced by the main character?
2. What kind of defense mechanism does he experience?
3. What are the effects of his ego-defense mechanism for the main character?

2. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory applied in this article is Psychoanalytic theory. Psychoanalytic is a set of theories therapeutic technique related to the study of the unconscious mind and also its method of treatment for mental disorder. This concepts are also widely used the therapeutic areas, in areas such as psychoanalytic literary criticism as well as in film, novel, and other literary works. Freud first described the ego defense mechanism in 1894 and suggested a possible link between this mental illness and this psychological process.

Ego defense mechanism is an unconscious psychological process that helps a person overcome anxiety due to a stressful internal or external environment. When anxiety is so overwhelming, the ego tries to defend itself and unconsciously the ego will survive by blocking all impulses or by changing those drives into more acceptable forms.

3. METHOD

This article uses qualitative approach, the qualitative approach is research method involves data collection of personal experiences, introspection, stories about life, interviews, observations, interactions and visual texts which are significant to people's life. This article applies Psychoanalytic theory by Sigmund Freud and the object used is a novel written Chuck Palahniuk entitled *Fight Club*. The data collected by reading the novel, capturing by the page, retyping and segmenting into unit of analysis.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The Problem Faced By The Main Character

In this discussion, the researcher analyzed the problems faced by the main character in "*Fight club*". And here the researcher found two anxiety as the main character's problem there are Generalized Anxiety Disorder and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder.

4.1.1 Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

The problem that the main character faced in the novel until it made him use ego defense mechanism is Generalized Anxiety Disorder. Based on the short story, the problem that the main characters faced is Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD). We can see through this paragraph.

"I went to my first support group two years ago, after I'd gone to my doctor about my insomnia, again. Three weeks and I hadn't slept. Three weeks without sleep, and everything becomes as out-of-body experience." (Ch.2:9)

From the text above, we can see how the main character suffered from his insomnia. People with Generalized Anxiety Disorder can be very agitated even if they are not in a tense situation, even if they are fine.

4.1.2 Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

The second is Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD). In addition, people with GAD often have other anxiety disorders (such as panic disorder or phobias), obsessive-compulsive disorder, clinical depression, or additional problems with drug or alcohol misuse. In the story, we can know why the main character can be said to be suffering from OCD.

“You buy furniture. You tell yourself, this is the last sofa I will ever need in my life. Buy the sofa, then for a couple years you're satisfied that no matter what goes wrong, at least you've got your sofa issue handled. Then the right set of dishes. Then the perfect bed. The drapes. The rug. Then you're trapped in your lovely nest, and the things you used to own, now they own you.” (Ch.4:29)

From the text above, we can see why the main characters have an obsessive-compulsive disorder. The main character is pressured by the stigma of society where one must have the luxury or something material to show an established life.

4.2 Ego Defense Mechanism that the main character experiences

4.2.1 Displacement

The main character uses a displacement type to resolve his problem. In this novel the main character really hates his boss because of poor treatment of him.

“This is a terrible way to travel. I go to meetings my boss doesn't want to attend. I take notes. I'll get back to you.” (Ch.3:18)

The displacement occurs when the Id wants to do something of which the Super ego does not permit. The Ego thus finds some other way of releasing the psychic energy of the Id. Thus there is a transfer of energy from a repressed object-cathexis to a more acceptable object.

4.2.2 Reaction Formation

And also, there is a kind of reaction formation mechanism in the story. This is when you make yourself act and feel the opposite of what you're really feeling.

“To Marla I'm a fake. Since the second night I saw her, I can't sleep. Still, I was the first fake, unless, maybe all these people are faking with their lesions and their cough and tumors, even Big Bob, the big moose. The big cheese bread.” (Ch2:13)

In The Narrator's case, he decides that Marla is a morally reprehensible human being for being a “tourist”, when it's obvious that he's intrigued by her because she is just like him. Like The Narrator, she is hopping from therapy group to therapy group to find something missing in her life.

4.3 The effect of ego defense mechanism for the main character

After several treats that the main character got, there are some changes in attitudes or traits that occur towards the main character. First, after he was bullied by his boss at work, a series of displacement ensued which made him changes more bravely.

“My boss just looks at me. Let me help you, I say. I say, the fourth rule oh fight club is one fight at a time. My boss looks at the rules and then looks at me. I say, the fifth rule is no shoes, no shirt in the fight. My boss looks at the rules and looks at me. Maybe, I say , this totally diseased fuck would use an Eagle Apache carbine because an Apache takes a thirty-shot mag and only weight nine pound.”(Ch9:68)

The text above shows a change in attitude from the main character. He always pursuant to his boss before. But, in this part he began to be dare and reply his boss's words. He just got more confident and bravely.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

5.1 CONCLUSION

After analyzing finding and discussion in chapter 4 based on the “Fight Club” novel 1996 as data, the researcher concluded the study by using the theory of psychoanalytic by Sigmund Freud, as follows:

1. He had to work hard with the conditions of the scope of the office which is actually not so good for him and make him anxious. Then the anxiety itself make him suffered from his insomnia. People with Generalized Anxiety Disorder can be very agitated even if they are not in a tense situation, even if they are fine. The main character is pressured by the stigma of society where one must have the luxury or something material to show an established life.OCD sufferers sometimes realize that their thoughts and actions are excessive, but they still feel the need to do it an cannot avoid it.
2. Most of them is displacement. The definition of displacement itself is a kind of defense mechanism where it is taking out our frustrations, feelings, and impulses on people or objects that are less threatening. When Tyler asking to punch him, it is kind of displacement where Tyler wants The main character directed his anger/anxiety to something. And in this part The narrator itself is the object. The obsession of the main character about living comfortably in a lovely nest is very big. Then here, Tyler as ID

forces to confront and accept the fact that he is just decaying matter that will eventually die. And also he did a Reaction Formation when he say if Marla are fake.

3. After he was bullied by his boss at work, a series of displacement ensued which made him changes more bravely. He just got more confident and brave. More crazier is when he dares to shoot his cheek with a gun and give him a jagged smile from ear to ear. He realized that he needs to accept the pain and he just needs to give up.

5.2 SUGGESTION

The researcher suggests that people need to study literature because it is related with human life. Also the researcher provides advice relating to research and hopes to provide benefits for students, future researcher and all who wants to learn about literature. Here as follow:

1. The researcher hopes that students can understand literary theory especially about Psychoanalytic by Sigmund Freud.
2. And he also hopes that further researcher can use Sigmund theory to examine other object in more detail, better explanations and expanding research studies.

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