

## EGO DEFENSE MECHANISM OF SUMARNI AS REFLECTED IN OKKY MADASARI'S *THE YEARS OF THE VOICELESS*: A PSYCHOANALYSIS APPROACH

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### ABSTRACT

The research entitled Ego Defense Mechanism of *Sumarni* in Okky Madasari's *The Years of The Voiceless: A Psychoanalysis Approach* aims to elaborate on Sumarni's ego defense mechanism. This research is classified as qualitative research, and the data is presented in descriptive form. The data is collected from *The Years of the Voiceless* novel written by Okky Madasari. In collecting data, the researcher reads the novel several times, looks for supporting data, then takes notes. In analyzing this research, the researcher applies the psychoanalysis approach by Sigmund Freud, especially the theory of ego defense mechanisms. The result of this research showed that Sumarni performs six ego defense mechanism because ego have to cope with reality demands, and the conflict between id's desires and superego's opposition. Anxiety will inform ego to surmount the conflict using an ego defense mechanism. Then, ego defense mechanisms present with Sumarni suddenly forgetting the source of the problem (repression), turning uncomfortable feelings into socially valuable actions (sublimation), justifying Sumarni's behavior (projection), looking for reasons to reduce the disappointment that she feels (rationalization), releasing his anxiety on others (aggression), choosing to be silent and giving up on problems (apathy), and looking for solutions in a fantasy world (fantasy).

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

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Literary work is representations of human social life condition. One topic that is portrayed in literary works is emotional abuse. One of many literary works that raise the issue of emotional abuse is *The Years of The Voiceless* by Okky Madasari. Emotional abuse happens when yelling

and anger go too far or when constantly criticize, threaten, or talk down to the individual until their self-esteem is damaged and they feel awful about themselves (Madasari, 2013). Rates of emotional abuse and control explained around 80%, with 40% of women and 32%

of men reporting expressive aggression (Specifically verbal or emotional abuse) (Carney & Barner, 2012).

Emotional abuse create trauma to the victims, which is not always easy to be healed. TeensHealth explained if emotional abuse also causes physical damage, the same as physical and sexual abuse (Kidshealth, 2020). However, mental illness or trauma experience will be more worrying. The trauma happens because of the intimidations, insults, and controls over the victim's behavior have been there for a long time and keep on repeatedly occurring.

The issue that is being discussed in *The Years of the Voiceless* is really interesting. This novel is one of high-quality literary works because of the creative process of social problems during the New Order era in Indonesia but can still be offensive to society nowadays. Then the society can learn about the past through reading the novel. In *The Years of the Voiceless*, Sumarni is the character of a woman who should do defense against the emotional abuse she faces.

This novel started with Sumarni as the main character, who at first only tried to get a bra with being a cassava peeler, then be a porter by carrying goods in the market until becoming a wealthy trader in the village. Sumarni shows the emotional abuse that occurs to her and how she copes with it.

One example of the emotional abuse that occurs to Sumarni is when the military asks Sumarni for money with the reason. Sumarni cannot go against the military, so she scolds and takes her anger out on her maid as her ego defense mechanism. Sumarni also receives much pressure from her child. Rahayu did not like how Sumarni prays and praises the ancestors (Madasari, 2013). Besides her daughter, Sumarni gets assault treatment

from her neighbors. The village people believe that Sumarni is doing *pesugihan* and curse at her for that prejudice, yet they still have an urge to borrow money from her.

In this research, the researcher wants to analyze and elaborate ego defense mechanism of Sumarni reflected in Madasari's *The Years of the Voiceless*. Due to a lot problems faced by Sumarni in the society, it is needed to find out how Sumarni defended and survived. Thus, the researcher chooses a psychoanalysis approach, especially ego defense mechanism theory by Sigmund Freud, by seeing at id, ego, and superego.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

To answer the form of ego defense of Sumarni, the researcher analyzes according to Freud states that the ego defense mechanism has nine various, start from Repression, Sublimation, Projection, Displacement, Rationalization, Reaction Formation, Regression, Aggression and Apathy, Fantasy and Stereotype (Minderop, 2018). Freud introduced the three-part model of the psyche and divides it into the id (das Es), ego (das Ich), and superego (das Uber Ich). According to Myers in an undergraduate thesis by Achmad Rozaq Nur Utomo entitled "The Narrator's Defense Mechanisms on H.G. Wells' *The War Of The Worlds*", id is the reservoir of unconscious psychic energy that constantly strives to satisfy our intellectual drives to survival (Utomo, 2016). Id does not have contact with reality and naturally exists in the unconscious. Then, id is a primitive that is owned by every human being, since the first time they were born into the world. Besides being primitive, id is also uncontrollable and emotional. Id is described as the dark and untraceable side of the human personality.

There are five studies that the researcher found as a reference for this study, three of the related studies use Okky Madasari's *The Years of the Voiceless* as the object of their studies, and two of them use similar theories as this research. The first researcher who uses *The Years of the Voiceless* novels is Fathiya Az Zahra (2015) from Muhammadiyah Surakarta University, who has written an undergraduate thesis entitled "Right To Work Reflected At Okky Madasari's *The Years of the Voiceless* (2013): A Feminist Approach". The major problem of her study is how the right to work is reflected in Okky Madasari's *The Years of the Voiceless*. The objective of her study is to analyze the novel based on feminist analysis. In analyzing *The Years of the Voiceless*, Zahra uses the qualitative method and feminist approach. The result is the novel contains many facts that are reflecting women's position, women's role, women's rights, and women's participation. In this novel, Okky Madasari wants to say that rights are not given but must be struggled for. It can be seen from Sumarni's condition in her daily life, she always struggles to get her right of being well.

The second is from Muhammadiyah Surakarta University, Nito Majid Mujtahid (2017) wrote an undergraduate thesis entitled "Behavior Control Reflected In Okky Madasari's *The Years of the Voiceless* Novel (2013): An Individual Psychological Approach". This research is proposed to analyze behavior control of Sumarni's character in *The Years of the Voiceless* novel used Individual Psychological approach by Alfred Adler. The researcher uses six points i.e. fictional finalism, inferiority feeling, striving for superiority, social interest, style of life, and creative power or self. Based on the analysis, the conclusion is Sumarni

behavior control arises when her desire arises but she cannot afford it because of her lack of power. The third is taken from Ayu Monita Eka Shinta (2018) from Dian Nuswantoro University, who has written an undergraduate thesis entitled "Feminism Reality as Expressed by Sumarni in *The Years of The Voiceless* Novel by Okky Madasari: A Critical Discourse Analysis". This research is conducted to convey the position and feminist reality of women as reflected by Sumarni in *The Years of The Voiceless* novel. The result of this research reveals that the use of the relational process is higher than material process intention and supervision, and mental process internalized and externalized.

Then, the fourth is from Rina Karina (2016) student from Stikubank University, who has written an undergraduate thesis entitled "Ego Defense Mechanism of Teenager Reflected in The Main Character of Judy Blume's *It's Not The End of The World*: as A Psychological Study". The research is focused on analyzing the teen-literature novel entitled "*It's not the End of the World*" written by Judy Blume in 1972. This thesis applied Sigmund Freud's theory of ego defense mechanism which is found in the female teenager character, "Karen Newman" as the main character of this novel. The research uses a qualitative study, and the theory of ego defense mechanism consists of 5 various. That is repression, projection, reaction formation, regression, and fixation. The researcher found that the main character, Karen Newman, experienced ego defense mechanism in her life as a teenager. She applies repression, projection, reaction formation, regression, and fixation in many ways to face the problem she has.

The fifth, the last one is a research that came from Gorontalo State University, Niar I Koem (2017) who wrote

an undergraduate thesis entitled "The Ego and Defense Mechanism in Jeanne's *Beauty and the Beast*". This research analyzes the ego and defense mechanism, also the researcher uses a psychological approach and a qualitative method. In analyzing the data, the researcher uses three steps to taking some notes, that are collecting, classifying, and categorizing. The researcher also makes a summary and create the categories of data that have meaning. Findings indicated that there are nine data found as ego and twelve data categorized as a defense mechanism of the characters in *Beauty and The Beast*. The ego is divided into four different classifications that are ego as thinking, ego as feeling, ego as sensation, and ego as intuition. In addition, the types of defense mechanisms found in *Beauty and the Beast* are rationalization, reaction formation, regression, and sublimation.

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

In analyzing the novel, the researcher determines to apply the qualitative research method. The qualitative research method is appealing to an answer by analyzing different social settings and the characters. Qualitative research refers to the what, how, when, and where of a thing its essence and ambience. Qualitative data will be obtained primarily through some sources.

In this research, the researcher has decided the theory and approach used to analyze the novel. The researcher is going to use a psychoanalysis approach and ego defense mechanism theory by Sigmund Freud. Psychoanalysis means a form of therapy which aims to cure mental disorders by investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in the mind (Barry, 2002). Then, psychoanalysis can help us better

understand human behavior (Tyson, 2014).

The researcher's focus is on ego defense mechanism of the character from the novel. In analyzing Sumarni's ego defense mechanism, the researcher needs to comprehend Sumarni's feeling and thoughts from the dialogue in the novel. The researcher has to read carefully to connect Sigmund Freud's ego defense mechanism theory to the problem in the novel that Sumarni experienced.

Freud theory regards the fundamental motivation of all human behavior as the avoidance of pain and the gaining of pleasure (Eagleton, 2008). Freud introduced the three-part model of the psyche and divides it into id, ego, and superego. Id is a primitive and owned by human being, since born into the world. Also, id is uncontrollable and emotional. Ego is a leader and focus on reality principle. Then, superego refers to morality and able to recognize good and bad values.

When ego feels id's impulse and superego's opposition, ego must be able to mediate the conflict between them. The conflict makes ego feel uncomfortable and produce anxiety. The anxiety that a person faces makes his unconscious defense mechanisms try to protect himself from external threats. At that time, ego who is between them plays an important role and ego tries existing conflict using defense mechanism (Minderop, 2018).

Ego defense mechanism is considered a general mental function and part of ego. There are various defense mechanisms whose function is always to protect ego and adjust to the individual's circumstances (Cramer, 2015). There are nine various of Sigmund Freud's ego defense mechanism. They are Repression, Sublimation, Projection, Displacement,

Rationalization, Reaction Formation, Regression, Aggression & Apathy, and Fantasy & Stereotype (Minderop, 2018).

#### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The occurrence of various ego defense mechanisms in individuals is affected by their circumstances. There is always a type of ego defense mechanism frequently used by ego to resolve conflicts, and then not all ego defenses are performed in Sumarni's conflict. Sumarni only experiences six of nine ego defense mechanisms to protect herself, adjusting to the situation she is experiencing.

##### 4.1. Repression

Repression is ego's most powerful defense mechanism. The task of repression is to avoid feelings of anxiety so that the individual cannot be aware of the impulses that cause anxiety and do not remember emotional and traumatic feelings in the past [6]. In repression, Sumarni and Rahayu touching meeting instantly makes Sumarni forget the problem about how she did not know if Rahayu was in prison for three years and how often they argued in the past. The feeling of pleasure with Rahayu's hug to her make Sumarni forget where they were now. Sumarni releases her repression by push out her id impulses, which are her uncomfortable feelings about how Rahayu has been in prison for the last three years and her traumatic experience with their argue. Repression pushes it back into the unconscious.

##### 4.2. Sublimation

The sublimation defense mechanism is a diversion. Be trusted to changing uncomfortable feelings into actions that are acceptable to social norms [6]. **In sublimation**, the appearance of Endang

and her son make Sumarni know that Endang would use her son with Teja to get Sumarni's property. Sublimation happen because ego prioritizes superego social norms and replaces Sumarni's id. How Sumarni replace the uncomfortable feeling about Endang want to take her home by giving another option about Endang's children to stay at her house. Sumarni knows that she will take good care of Endang's child rather than his own mother.

##### 4.3. Projection

The appearance of undesirable situations makes us unable to accept those things and blame others as justification for these uncomfortable feelings [6]. In projection, Sumarni feels like having a rival by the arrival of the state bank in Ngranget market. Then people who have debts to her, like Yu Ningsih are unwilling to pay according to their agreement. The situation that makes Sumarni uncomfortable causes her defense mechanism to make a projection.

Sumarni prays that all those who felt like cheated by her will get recompense from God. That could be a projection because Sumarni's ego tries to protect itself from the honest confession or the real problem. The real problem is that Sumarni feels stress about state banks are rivaling her livelihood in Ngranget market. In this case, ego mediates the uncomfortable feelings of id by praying, which means Sumarni's superego emphasizes what is good and bad.

##### 4.4. Rationalization

Rationalization provides a substitute reason for the actual reason why we did the action [6]. In rationalization, Sumarni thought if telling her uncle, her wish to have a bra would make him buy it. However, Sumarni is asking to realize that

she is poor and being grateful for what she has now by her aunt. The form of Sumarni's rationalization is that she blames her aunt's words, making her realize that she cannot depend on anyone to grant her wish. Essentially, Sumarni's id avoids uncomfortable feelings and reduces her disappointment because the goal cannot be achieved. The goal is to buy a bra from her uncle. Even though Sumarni knows what her aunt said is true.

#### 4.5. Aggression and Apathy

Aggression is closely related to destruction and attack caused by tension and anxiety. This tension and anxiety produce feelings of anger that can lead into destruction. There are two forms of aggression, namely direct and displaced. Then, apathy chooses to withdraw and act as if give up as a reaction to the frustration it face [6].

In aggression, Sumarni's id feels frustration because she regularly pays security money to the military, which is uncomfortable. Sumarni does this on a forced basis because she does not want to get into trouble with the government. Sumarni's superego warns her that she could not express her frustration with the military, so she took it out on Tonah and Teja.

In apathy, Sumarni's refusal to pay the security fee because Sumarni feels she has no enemies. That is the reason which makes the neighborhood unit chief coming to Sumarni's house early in the morning. The neighborhood unit chief asked Sumarni to follow the rules given by the military, specifically to pay security fees. The neighborhood unit chief told Sumarni that he did not want an incident like Tikno, who is now in prison and labeled as PKI.

Sumarni's id does not accept if she must pay a security fee. Meanwhile,

superego forces to follow the rule because it is the social rule made by the military. Finally, ego defense mechanism shows Sumarni's apathy, with her nodding weakly at the neighborhood unit chief explanation. Sumarni accepts what the neighborhood unit chief said, and she realizes that her real enemy is the military. Sumarni knew she did not want to have any problems with them.

#### 4.6. Fantasy

Fantasy can happen when someone faces so many problems and chooses to find a solution in an imaginary world, choosing a fantasy solution rather than a more realistic one [6]. Fantasy in Sumarni happens when the wedding preparations for Rahayu are ready, Sutomo and Mr. Kirun goes to Sumarni. They cancel the wedding because he knows Rahayu is an ex-political prisoner. The cancellation frustrates Sumarni's id because it is not appropriate according to the plan, but superego warns Sumarni not to force Sutomo to marry an ex-political prisoner.

Then, Sumarni often imagines hugging a grandson and still shocks when she sees Rahayu returning home. Sumarni keeps forgetting the reality that Rahayu is already returning home after being in prison. Sumarni does fantasy as a solution in dealing with problems.

### 5. CONCLUSION

Unconsciously, Sumarni performs six of the nine from Sigmund Freud's ego defense mechanisms to resolve the conflict she is facing. They are repression, sublimation, projection, rationalization, aggression and apathy, and fantasy. First, repression is when Sumarni meets Rahayu, it makes her suddenly forget how shock she is. When she finds out that her daughter has been in prison for three years. Second, Sumarni's sublimation

shows how Sumarni changes her uncomfortable feelings when Endang comes and wants to take half of her property. Sumarni is changing that feeling into volunteering to take care of Endang's son like her own. Third, projection. The arrival of a bank in the Ngranget market and Yu Ningsih's unwillingness to pay the loan makes Sumarni angry. Sumarni's prayer to God shows that she confirms that people who do not pay like Yu Ningsih deserve it. Fourth, in rationalization Sumarni reduces her disappointment that her uncle cannot buy her a bra to she blames her aunt's words, makes her realize that she cannot depend on anyone to grant her wish. Fifth, Aggression and apathy. Sumarni's aggression happens when she is forced to pay security money because it is a must. Sumarni does not want to have problems with the military.

Sumarni could not express her frustration with the military, and then she expressed her frustration to others. On the other hand, in apathy, when Sumarni is facing problems with the military, Sumarni gives up and chooses silence because she does not want to get involved in problems and be considered as a traitor to the nation. Sixth, fantasy. Sumarni chooses to find a solution in an imaginary world when she faces Sutomo and Rahayu's marriage cancellation because Rahayu is an ex-political prisoner. Sumarni becomes delusional, and she continues to believe that she is holding his grandson.

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