

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, the researcher provides a review of related literature, which discusses key theories that serve as the foundation for this research. This section explores important psychological concepts that support the analysis, including the psychological approach, anxiety, and defense mechanisms, as they relate to the characters in “The Silent Patient” novel by Alex Michaelides. Additionally, this review includes an examination of previous studies that have analyzed similar psychological themes in literature, helping to contextualize this research within existing scholarly discussions. The details are presented as follows.

2.1 Psychological Approach

Psychology plays an important role in shaping a person’s personality. It is the study of the mind and how it influences human thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. According to Freud in Schultz & Schultz (2017), the mind is divided into three levels: the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious, which affect the way people make decisions and respond to different situations. The conscious mind includes all the thoughts, feelings, and memories that we are fully aware of the present moment. However, this is only a small part of the mind. Beneath it lies the unconscious mind, which holds hidden thoughts, desires, and memories that influence our actions without us realizing it. This is the core idea of psychoanalysis, which explains that many of our behaviors are driven by unconscious forces that we cannot easily control. Between these two levels is the preconscious mind, which

stores thoughts and memories that are not currently in our awareness but can be recalled when needed. Understanding these psychological levels helps explain human behavior, especially how people react to fear, stress, or anxiety. This approach is essential in analyzing anxiety and defense mechanism in literary works, providing insight into why characters think and act as they do.

2.1.1 Anxiety

In identifying anxiety, Freud emphasized that it is a felt, affective, uncomfortable state supported by a physical experience that warns the individual against approaching danger (G. J. Feist et al., 2021). Anxiety is the main reason that frequently causes someone to destroy themselves and possibly miss to achieve their true potential (Maharani & Arianto, 2022). In the anxiety, there are three types of anxiety: neurotic anxiety, moral anxiety, and realistic anxiety.

2.1.1.1 Neurotic Anxiety

Anxiety is a natural response to perceived threats, but sometimes, this fear arises even when no real danger exists, Freud, as cited in G. J. Feist et al. (2021), described neurotic anxiety as a fear of danger that does not actually exist. It often starts in childhood when a person becomes afraid of being punished for their thoughts or desires. This anxiety comes from unconscious fear of punishment for acting on id-driven impulses. For example, Malorie is aware of how easily four years may turn into eight. Eight will soon turn into twelve. The kids will grow up and become adults. Adults with no experience of the sky. What would twelve years of living as veal do to people who never glanced out of a window? (Hikmah, 2021).

2.1.1.2 Moral Anxiety

People often experience guilt or shame when they act against their own moral values, leading to a specific type of anxiety. Freud in G. J. Feist et al. (2021) described this as moral anxiety. This arises from a conflict between the id, which represents desires, and the superego, which represents morals. For example, a child may experience anxiety when having sexual urges but believes acting on them is unacceptable. Supporting this view, Kamalia et al. (2025) also explain that moral anxiety involves emotional discomfort caused by the fear of violating one's own moral standards.

2.1.1.3 Realistic Anxiety

In everyday life, people encounter dangers that trigger fear and caution. Freud in G. J. Feist et al. (2021) described this as realistic anxiety, which refers to a fear of actual dangers in real life. This type of anxiety is normal and helps protect a person from real threats. For example, a person may experience anxiety when realizing they do not have enough money to pay rent or taxes. This situation presents a real and external threat, making them feel worried about potential financial consequences. This type of anxiety is considered realistic because it is based on actual dangers that exist in daily life (Carveth, 2021).

2.1.2 Defense Mechanism

Defense mechanism is strategies that the ego applies to protect itself from the anxiety caused by the conflicts of everyday existence. Freud identified several different types of defense mechanisms that humans use to fight off anxiety and fear (Schultz & Schultz, 2017).

2.1.2.1 Repression

Repression is defense mechanism in which a person unconsciously forgets or pushes away painful memories. Freud explained that this process happens without them realizing it and helps them avoid thinking about things that cause pain or discomfort. It is one of the most common and basic defense mechanisms (Schultz & Schultz, 2017). For example, a person who experienced a trauma event in childhood, such as an accident or abuse, may not remember the details because their subconscious has repressed the memory.

2.1.2.2 Denial

Denial is connected to repression and involves rejecting the reality of an external danger or traumatic event. Freud explained that this defense mechanism allows a person to block out distressing facts to reduce anxiety and protect themselves from emotional pain (Schultz & Schultz, 2017). For example, when someone we love passes away. Instead of accepting reality and accepting loneliness, we assume that the person is still alive.

2.1.2.3 Reaction Formation

Reaction formation is a defense mechanism in which a person acts in the opposite way of their true feelings or impulses. Freud explain that individuals use this mechanism to hide their real emotions by behaving in the opposite manner, replacing threatening impulses with more socially acceptable behavior (Schultz & Schultz, 2017). For example, you would be being overly pleasant toward someone you really do not like in an effort to cover up your actual emotions (Cherry, 2020).

2.1.2.4 Projection

Projection is a defense mechanism where a person unconsciously transfers their own uncomfortable feelings, thoughts, or impulses onto someone else, as if those feelings belong to the other person instead. Freud explained this mechanism allows individuals to avoid acknowledging their own distressing emotions by attributing them to others (Schultz & Schultz, 2017). For example, when a person does not feel like he belongs with his classmates, he will convince himself that his classmates do not like him.

2.1.2.5 Regression

Regression is a defense mechanism in which a person unconsciously copes with stress by returning to behaviors from an earlier stage of life. Freud described this as a way individuals deal with anxiety by displaying childish actions or habits that once provided comfort (Schultz & Schultz, 2017). For example, when someone has a problem, they prefer to cry hysterically like a child rather than try to solve it.

2.1.2.6 Rationalization

Rationalization is a defense mechanism in which a person justifies their actions to make them seem more reasonable and avoid guilt, even if the actions are actually wrong. Freud in Schultz & Schultz (2017) explained that this allows individuals to create self-serving explanations to reduce anxiety and maintain their self-image. For example, a breast cancer patient who struggles with their diagnosis might say, 'At least this experience has made me stronger and taught me valuable life lessons,' even if they are deeply distressed. This statement helps them justify

their situation in a way that reduces emotional pain, which aligns with rationalization as a defense mechanism (Saab et al., 2021).

2.1.2.7 Displacement

Displacement refers to shifting id impulses from a dangerous object or from one that is not available to an object that is available. Freud explained that this process allows individuals to express their emotions in a way that feels less risky (Schultz & Schultz, 2017). For example, when a student fails to answer a school test. He returns home with this disappointment and acts violently, such as smashing doors, yelling at his family, or driving recklessly.

2.1.2.8 Sublimation

Sublimation involves transforming or replacing id impulses by switching instinctual energy into socially acceptable behaviors. Freud in Schultz & Schultz (2017) explained that this process helps individuals convert their unconscious desires into productive and constructive activities. For example, Melinda used art to express her suppressed feelings of oppression in more acceptable ways, “For a solid week, ever since the pep rally. I’ve been painting watercolors of trees that have been hit by lightning. I try to paint them so they are nearly dead, but not totally” (Hasra & Zulfaisya, 2020).

2.2 Previous Research

To support this research, the researcher uses previous research that discusses similar topics or ideas related to this analysis. These earlier studies help in understanding the psychological aspects examined in this research. The information from past research is useful because it provides different views on anxiety and

defense mechanisms in literature. In addition, this research also looks at studies that explore how characters experience anxiety and use defense mechanism to handle their emotions. By reviewing these studies, this research builds on existing knowledge while offering a new way of understanding the psychological struggles in “The Silent Patient” novel by Alex Michaelides.

The first research by Andriana & Kasprabowo (2020), entitled “Anxiety and Defense Mechanism of the Main Character in "The Black Cat" Short Story”, aimed to analyze the psychological aspects of the main character in The Black Cat short story. This research used Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory to identify the types of anxiety and the defense mechanisms employed by the main character. A qualitative method was applied, and the data were taken from the short story The Black Cat by Edgar Allan Poe. The findings showed that the main character experienced several psychological problems, mainly in the form of anxiety. these included neurotic anxiety, realistic anxiety, and moral anxiety. the research also revealed that the main character used several ego defense mechanisms to cope with his anxiety such as displacement, denial, acting out, symbolization, and projection.

The second research by Warkey et al. (2020), entitled “Moses' Anxiety and Defense Mechanism in Exodus: Gods and Kings Movie” aimed to find out the types of anxiety experienced by Musa and investigated the defense mechanisms used by Musa. The main theory used was Sigmund Freud’s and used qualitative research with content analysis as an approach. The results showed that Musa’s character experienced three types of anxiety: neurotic anxiety, moral anxiety, and realistic

anxiety. Furthermore, Musa used five types of defense mechanisms, including repression, formation, isolation, denial, and aggression.

The third research by Khoirunisa & Rahayu (2020), entitled “Ego Defense Mechanism of the Main Female Characters in Maleficent Movie” aimed to explain the causes and effects of the conflict experienced by the main female character and also explain the ego defense mechanism that she uses. The data for this research was taken from film scripts; they studied dialogue and scenes. The theory used a psychological approach developed by Sigmund Freud, and the method used a qualitative descriptive approach. The results of this research showed that the first cause of conflict is disappointment because she has been betrayed. Second, the effect is that the main character curses Aurora as revenge. Third, the main character changes for the better because she realizes that she loves Aurora. This research also showed two ego defense mechanisms, namely projection and repression.

The fourth research is “Facing Anxiety through Ego Defense Mechanisms on The Walking Dead: Michonne Movie Game” by Setiawan et al. (2021) concentrated on the ego defense mechanism utilized by game movie’s protagonist to deal with his anxiety. The purpose was to identify the different types of ego defense mechanism and how they can aid the protagonist in overcoming anxiety. The theory was based on Sigmund Freud’s idea of an ego-defense mechanism. This research employed a qualitative method to depict the protagonist’s actions as he dealt with his anxiety. The results showed that the protagonist used four different ego defense mechanism: repression, sublimation, rationalization, and aggression.

The fifth research by Mufidah et al. (2022), entitled “Anxiety and Defense Mechanism Portrayed by Mort Rainey in Secret Window Film (A Psychoanalytical Study)”, focused on the psychological issues experienced by the main character in the film Secret Window. This research aimed to examine how anxiety and defense mechanisms were portrayed through the character of Morton Rainey. It also analyzed the forms of anxiety and the specific defense mechanisms he used. The research employed a descriptive analysis method and applied Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory. the findings revealed that Morton experienced two types of anxiety: moral anxiety and reality anxiety. To cope with these anxieties, Morton engaged in several defense mechanism, including repression, rationalization, projection, displacement, and denial. The study concluded that Morton Rainey’s psychological symptoms were expressed through his behaviors and emotional responses throughout the film.

The sixth research by Shelah & Marsih (2022) entitled “Defense Mechanism in the Character of Hardin Scott in Anna Todd’s After”. The focus of this research was to see the type of defense mechanism used by the main character through qualitative research. The data taken is from the situations faced by Hardin and his father until the present, a conflict that remains unresolved. Several steps were used to analyze the novel, namely reading, understanding, and identifying. The result showed that Hardin used the following types of defense mechanisms: denial, projection, rationalization, isolation, identification of aggressors, and displacement. Hardin shaped himself with the help of this defense mechanism to avoid anxiety.

The seventh research is “Psychoanalytical Conflict, Anxiety, and Ego Defense Mechanism of Aza Holmes in John Green’s *Turtles All the Way Down*” by Palarani & Hadiyanto (2022). This research aimed to explain conflict, psychoanalysis, anxiety, and ego defense mechanisms used by Aza Holmes, for the theory using Sigmund Freud’s theory. While a literature study was the data collection method, the approach adopted was the literary psychology approach. The findings suggested that Aza Holmes has a fragile ego, which contributes to his conflicts with other people and with himself. His neurotic behavior and moral uneasiness were a result of these conflicts. He also employed defense mechanism including displacement, fixation, and projection to relieve his anxieties.

The eighth research is by Ivana & Laksono (2022), entitled “The Portrayal of Sutter Keely’s Defense Mechanism During Adolescence in *The Spectacular Now*”. This research was created to analyze the main character, Sutter Keely, who struggles through her teenage years without proper parental guidance. Keely also deals with failed romantic relationships, which impacted how she grew up as a teenager. In *The Spectacular Now*, she used several defense mechanisms every day when faced with adversity. This research aimed to identify the triggers, types and effects of the defense mechanisms used in Sigmund Freud’s theory. The results of this research showed that Keely used defense mechanisms such as rationalization, displacement, suppression, denial, altruism, and distortion. The effect of the defense mechanism that she used had negative results in her life.

The ninth research conducted by Febriana & Darma (2022) with title “Defense Mechanism as a Strategy to Overcome Jacob’s Anxiety in William

Landay's "Defending Jacob" aimed to reveal the type of anxiety experienced by Jacob Barber in William Landay's *Defending Jacob* and discover how defense mechanisms worked to overcome this anxiety. This research used qualitative method by applying Sigmund Freud's theory in a psychoanalytic approach. After that, the results indicated that there are three types of anxiety experienced by Jacob Barber namely neurotic, moral, and realistic anxiety. Meanwhile, Jacob Barber used five types of defense mechanisms, namely denial, projection, displacement, rationalization, and reaction formation.

The tenth research by Tarigan et al. (2022) in which the researchers analyzed defense mechanisms in the "Blind Side" movie that contained the main character. To get the research object, the researcher used literary criticism and a psychological approach based on Freud's theory. Data collection was done by collecting scripts and dialogue from the movie. The results of this research indicated that the main character used eight types of defense mechanisms: repression, reaction, formation, displacement, rationalization, sublimation, aggression, fantasy, and denial.

The eleventh research is the defense mechanism of Tyrion Lannister in *Game of Thrones* film series by Bahtiar et al. (2022). This research described the categories of defense mechanisms used by Lannister using Sigmund Freud's theory and used a qualitative descriptive method. Data analysis was carried out through observation, collecting, identifying, and classifying data. The results of this research indicated that there are ten rejection, thirty rationalization, two projection, four sublimation, eight formation reaction, two displacement, no regression, three destruction six identification, five compensation, eighteen on humor, and three repression data.

The twelfth research by Kartini (2023), entitled “Anxiety and Defense Mechanisms of Hyojang Characters in Movie *사도* (Sado)”, aimed to examine the psychological condition of Crown Prince Hyojang as portrayed in the movie *Sado* directed by Lee Jeon-ik in 2015. The film presents Hyojang as a character who suffers from severe anxiety, which places emotional pressure on his father King Yeongjo. This research focused on two main problems: how anxiety was portrayed through the character of Hyojang and how defense mechanisms were shown in response to his anxiety. The research applied a qualitative descriptive method and used a literary psychology approach based on Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory. The findings indicated, his subconscious was shown to employ three forms of defense mechanism: displacement, reaction formation, and repression.

The thirteenth research by Putra et al. (2023), entitled “Anxiety and Defense Mechanism of Joy Newsome in Room Movie”, aimed to identify the types of anxiety experienced by the character Joy in the movie *Room* (2015). In addition, this research sought to determine the defense mechanisms that Joy Newsome employed to cope with her anxiety. The research was qualitative, focusing on the psychological aspects of a character in a film, and used a psychological approach. Freud’s theory of anxiety and defense mechanisms was applied to analyze the character’s behaviors. The findings revealed that Joy experienced both moral anxiety and realistic anxiety. To manage her anxiety, Joy utilized several defense mechanisms, including repression, reaction formation, denial, displacement, regression, projection, and fantasy.

The fourteenth research by Aisyah & Susilowati (2023), entitled “Realistic Anxiety and Defense Mechanism from Character of Lady Tremaine the Stepmother from Cinderella 2015 Film”, aimed to analyze the character of Lady Tremaine in the Cinderella story from a psychological perspective. In this research, the author argued that Lady Tremaine’s cruel and evil behavior toward Cinderella was a form of self-defense triggered by anxiety. The research used Sigmund Freud’s theory of anxiety and defense mechanisms to examine how individuals experience anxiety and unconsciously develop defense strategies to reduce it. The research applied a qualitative method, with data collected from the story of Cinderella. The findings revealed that Lady Tremaine experienced realistic anxiety, which made her feel threatened and afraid. As a result, she used several defense mechanisms directed at Cinderella, including denial, displacement, and projection.

The fifteenth research by Mahardika et al. (2023), entitled “Analysis of Amir’s defense mechanisms projected upon his bereavement in *The Kite Runner*” examined the bereavement experienced by Amir, the main character in *The Kite Runner*, and analyzed the defense mechanisms he used to cope with his grief. A psychological approach was applied to identify and analyze Amir’s bereavement and defense mechanisms. The qualitative descriptive method allowed data to be presented in the form of texts or descriptions. The data were collected from the novel by examining the character’s feelings, thoughts, and dialogues.

This research reveals both similarities and differences when compared with previous research. In terms of similarities, all of the previous research applies Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, particularly focusing on anxiety and

defense mechanisms, to analyze characters in literary works or film. Most also use a qualitative descriptive method, making them methodologically similar. However, this research differs in several ways. While previous research analyzed films, drama, or different novels, this research specifically analyzes “The Silent Patient” novel by Alex Michaelides, which has not been explored in this context. Additionally, this research uses the latest edition of Freud’s theory from G. J. Feist et al. (2021) and Schultz & Schultz (2017) and focuses on the types of anxiety rooted in trauma, fear, and emotional insecurity as reflected through the characters’ behaviors, and the defense mechanisms employed by the characters as psychological responses to anxiety and emotional conflicts, offering a new perspective on psychoanalytic research in literature.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework applies a psychological approach based on Sigmund Freud’s theory, as presented in *Theories of Personality* by Schultz & Schultz (2017) and *Theories of Personality* by G. J. Feist et al. (2021). Freud’s theory focuses on the dynamics of the unconscious mind, particularly how anxiety arises as a threat to the ego and how individuals develop defense mechanism to cope with psychological distress. Anxiety is categorized into three types: neurotic anxiety, which stems from unconscious fears of losing control over impulses; realistic anxiety, which is a response to actual external dangers; and moral anxiety, which arises from internal conflicts between the ego and superego.

Moreover, to manage anxiety, the ego employs defense mechanisms, which are classified into eight types: repression, denial, projection, displacement,

regression, rationalization, sublimation, and reaction formation. By applying this framework, this research explores how anxiety and defense mechanism are portrayed in “The Silent Patient” novel by Alex Michaelides, providing deeper insights into the psychological struggles of its characters. The explanation can be seen in the figure below:

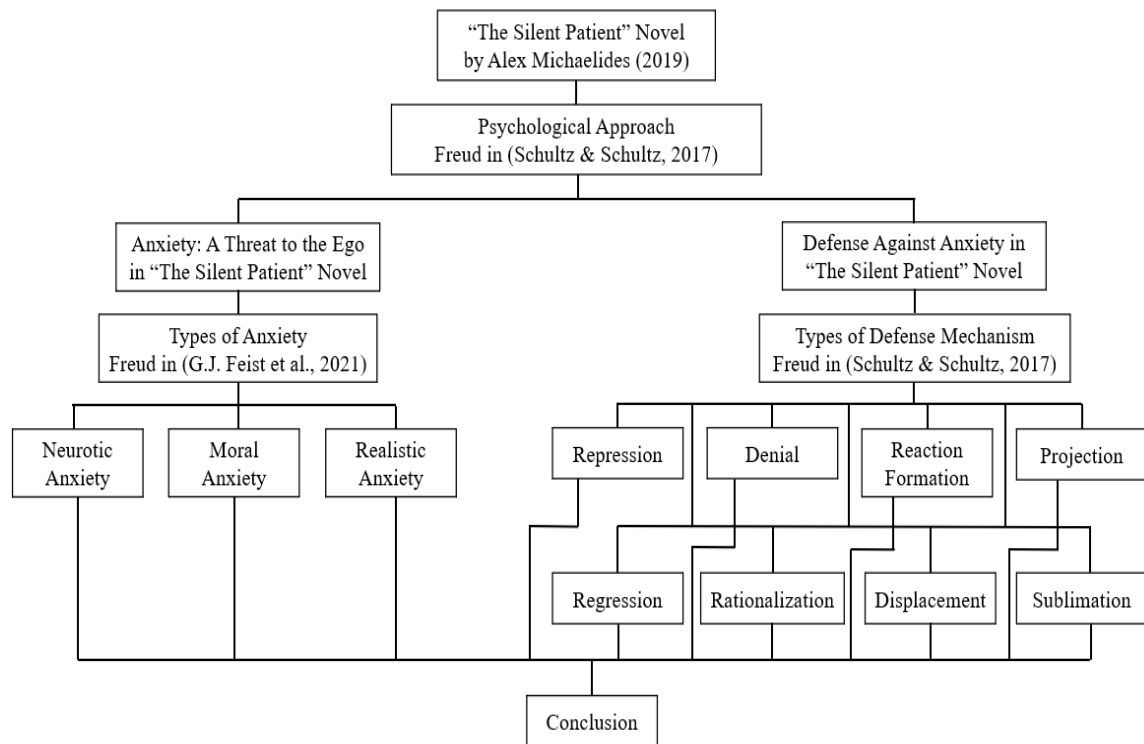


Figure 2.1 Theoretical Framework