

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The feeling of love is a sense that is commonly experienced by people throughout their lives. Karandashev described that love is a “relationship between a man and a woman implying sexual interest and attraction.” (2017: 9). Love causes a person to experience complex emotions because it involves both positive and negative emotions, which then lead to various unconscious behaviors in dealing with the experience of love.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, a person’s psychological condition and the relationship with love can be analyzed using Sigmund Freud’s theory. These human personalities influence a person’s decision in dealing with feelings of love. Every decision made, leads to conflicts that cause anxiety and defense mechanisms.

A psychological phenomenon of love relationships can be found in Lara Jean, the main character from the novel *To All the Boys I’ve Loved Before* written by Jenny Han. This novel was published in 2014 and was so successful that it became a New York Times Best Seller (Simon & Schuster, n.d.). Han writes this novel based on her habit of writing love letters to people she likes when she was a teenager. She chooses the character Lara Jean, who is Korean-American, to represent the lack of Asian-American characters in American teen romance novels. She presents the unique story of a Korean-American girl living between two cultures, focusing on

her teenage years. The success of this novel also leads to its adaptation into a film released on Netflix in 2018.

In the novel, Lara Jean is portrayed as a shy girl who is afraid to express her feelings for the boys she likes. She keeps her feelings in letters that she writes since she was a child till her teenage years. There are a total of five boys she writes love letters to, two of whom are Peter Kavinsky, a handsome and popular boy who steals her first kiss, and Josh, her best friend who is also her sister Margot's boyfriend. The letters are never sent to the boys she liked and are only kept in a hat box in her closet. Until finally Lara Jean's sister, Kitty, sends all the letters to the boys she likes. As a woman who has never been in a relationship, Lara Jean feels her world was turned upside down. She is filled with anxiety and conflict in dealing with the letters. Moreover, she also uses defense mechanisms to cope with her anxiety and emotional distress.

In this novel, the character of Lara Jean provides an interesting case study, where her psychological condition plays an important role in her love relationship. Furthermore, there is a complicated love relationship that begins because of a letter she writes. The letters that are spread around cause Lara Jean to experience true love herself. The letters make her feel anxious because she has never experienced true love before. This triggers anxiety within her, as Lara Jean has never been in a real love relationship before. Based on this, the writer reveals how anxiety affects Lara Jean's love relationship and identifies the specific defense mechanisms she uses to cope with her emotional conflicts.

The reason for choosing *To All The Boys I've Loved Before* written by Jenny Han is because this novel describes the main character's complicated love relationship which triggers anxiety within her and leads her to use defense mechanisms to protect herself from psychological threats. In addition, almost all humans, including the writer, experience internal conflicts about love relationships in a manner similar to the main character, Lara Jean. By analyzing the character of Lara Jean, this thesis is significant as it explores how her love relationship through a psychoanalytical approach based on Freud's theory of anxiety and defense mechanisms.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the main focus of this thesis is the anxiety and defense mechanism experienced by the character Lara Jean in Jenny Han's *To All The Boys I've Loved Before*. The writer identifies how Lara Jean deals with various love relationship situations that come up in her life. Below are the research questions based on the explanation above.

1. What types of anxiety occur in the main character's love relationship after experiencing conflicts in this novel?
2. What forms of defense mechanisms does the main character's use to cope with her anxiety in this novel?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the types of anxiety experienced by the main character's love relationship after experiencing conflicts in the novel.
2. To examine the forms of defense mechanisms that the main character's uses to cope with her anxiety.

1.4 Previous Studies

In conducting this thesis, several previous studies are used as references. The first previous study is an article entitled "The Psychological Traits: Characters Personalities From Novel *To All The Boys I've Loved Before*" (2020) by Yuwana, Utami, Ezra & Desalfa. This article analyzes why each character acted the way they do, based on psychological issues, and compares it to the real-life experiences of teenagers today. In analyzing characters, the author uses a medical review by Timothy J. Legg (written by Kimberly Holland), which divides humans into introvert and extrovert types. This article reveals that, in reality, humans do have personality types that are similar to some of the characters in this novel. If they have an introverted personality, like Lara Jean, humans may be hesitant to express their feelings of love to others and prefer to keep them to themselves.

The second one is a research thesis entitled "Romantic Love as Depicted in *To All The Boys I've Loved Before* by Jenny Han" (2020) by Safira. The author of this research discusses how the novel *To All The Boys I've Loved Before* represents romantic love in two characters, Lara Jean and Peter Kavinsky. In this case, the author used Sternberg's *Triangular Theory of Love* (1986) and discusses intimacy,

passion, and decision/commitment. In addition, the author also analyzes romantic love through Ben-Nun's *Romantic Love - Characteristics and Effects* (2017) and elements of love from Fromm's theory of love in *The Art of Loving* (1995). As a final result, this thesis reveals that all aspects of romantic love are present in Lara Jean and Peter's relationship, which then has an impact on both of their lives. Lara Jean and Peter's romantic relationship brings new color to their respective lives and enables them to become better person.

The third previous study is a research thesis entitled "Anxiety Experiences by Lara Jean in *To All The Boys I've Loved Before* by Jenny Han" (2023) by Juliananda. The author in this research analyzes the main character, Lara Jean with a focus on her problem of internal and external anxiety. In analyzing the anxiety experienced by the character Lara Jean, the author uses the theory of Sigmund Freud. This thesis finds that Lara Jean experiences realistic anxiety, neurotic anxiety, and moral anxiety. These anxieties came from threats, conflicts, and frustrations she experiences in her relationships with Peter, Josh, Margot, and Genevieve.

Based on the three previous studies mentioned above, the writer finds differences between previous studies and the research that the writer is currently analyzing. First, the writer uses Sigmund Freud's and Anna Freud's theories in detail. The writer analyzes with a different psychoanalytical approach. Although the third previous study also uses Sigmund Freud's theory and discusses anxiety, but it does not discuss in more detail about Sigmund Freud's and Anna Freud's theory, namely defense mechanisms. Second, the writer focuses solely on the main character's relationship, unlike in the first and second previous studies, which also

analyze several other characters. Third, the writer focuses on the main character's internal and external conflicts in her love relationship by examining the character and characterization of Lara Jean, as described by Jenny Han, through Molinski and Slessor's also Johnson and Arp's theory.

Therefore, it can be seen that the research gap in this study is that there is no study specifically examining Lara Jean's anxiety, which she overcomes by using a defense mechanism in her love relationship using Sigmund Freud and Anna Freud's psychoanalytic theories, while also looking at the characterization aspects of Johnson and Arp's theory, and limiting the in-depth analysis to the main character.

1.5 Research Method

1.5.1 Type of Research

The writer analyzes the novel using the library research method. Library research is a research that focuses on "identifying and locating sources that provide factual information or personal/ expert opinion on a research question; necessary component of every other research method at some point" (George, 2008: 6). This quote emphasizes that library research involves more than just reading books; it also involves the process of identifying reliable sources.

Moreover, the writer uses qualitative research as an approach to understand Lara Jean's behavior and actions in more detail. Qualitative research is a research that "designates any research whose results are captured in words, images, or nonnumeric symbols; for instance, research on dreams." (George, 2008: 7). Through a qualitative research approach, the writer will analyzes the text of the

novel to find evidence of anxiety and defense mechanism experienced by Lara Jean in the novel *To All The Boys I've Loved Before*.

1.5.2 Research Approach

Based on the research background that shows psychological phenomena in Jenny Han's *To All The Boys I've Loved Before*, the writer applies psychoanalytical approach, namely anxiety and defense mechanism to analyze Lara Jean's love relationship in *To All The Boys I've Loved Before* novel. Abrams and Harpham describe the psychoanalytical approach as "an expression, in an indirect and fictional form, of the state of mind and the structure of personality of the individual author" (2012: 319). Based on that, it can be concluded that psychoanalytical approach is an analysis that discusses literary works as indirect and fictionalized representations of the author's mental state and personality. This study uses Sigmund Freud's and Anna Freud's psychoanalytic theory of anxiety, and Anna Freud's theory of defense mechanisms.

1.5.3 Data Source

The writer uses Jenny Han's *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* (2014) as primary data. In addition, books by Sigmund Freud, including *An Autobiographical Study, Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety, The Question of Lay Analysis, and Other Works* (1959), as well as Anna Freud's *The writings of Anna Freud. Volume II: The Ego and The Mechanisms of Defense* (1966) are used as secondary data. Journal

articles and internet articles are also used to enhance understanding and support a deeper analysis of the novel *To All the Boys I've Loved Before*.

1.5.4 Method of Data Collection

The writer uses a method of data collection in the form of textual data collection that focuses on close reading to analyze in detail the character, anxiety and defense mechanism of Lara Jean from Jenny Han's *To All the Boys I've Loved Before*. Textual data collection is the analysis of a text that "...make an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of the text" (Mckee, 2003: 1). Textual data collection is not merely copying sentences from books, but also attempting to find the most reasonable interpretation of the theory that is used.

In applying data collection through textual data collection, the writer uses the close reading method because it requires careful analysis down to the smallest details in the text from the collected quotations. According to Brummet, close reading is "the mindful, disciplined reading of an object with a view to deeper understanding of its meanings" (2019: 15). Through this quote, Brummett wants to convey that close reading requires readers to pay attention to every word of the text through a specific theoretical framework.

1.6 Scope of The Study

The writer analyzes this thesis using psychological theory by Sigmund Freud and Anna Freud (1959), which covers anxiety, and defense mechanism of

Lara Jean's love relationship in *To All The Boys I've Loved Before* by Jenny Han. This thesis proves that Lara Jean, a shy girl who has never been in a relationship, experiences various forms of anxiety and uses specific defense mechanisms to cope with her emotional distress. She eventually deals directly with her complicated love relationship because her love letters to all the boys she likes are spread to them.

