



**RESISTING SELF-STIGMA AND RE-DEFINING OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE  
DISORDER IN HANNA ALKAF'S THE WEIGHT OF OUR SKY: A  
PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDY**

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ANILDEEP SINGH GILL

## APPROVAL SHEET

This research paper attached hereto, entitled “Resisting Self-Stigma and Re-Defining Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder in Hanna Alkaf’s *The Weight of Our Sky*: A Psychoanalytic Study” prepared and submitted by Anildeep Singh Gill a/l Baljit Singh Gill in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) English Language is hereby accepted.

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## ABSTRACT

The stigma of OCD is getting prevalent day by day because of the misconceptions from the public. Thus, this causes a person with OCD to internalize these stigmatizing beliefs which causes self-stigma. Therefore, this study aims to explore OCD and to counter self-stigma by using concepts from the psychoanalytic theory in Hanna Alkaf's *The Weight of Our Sky*. This study addresses the personality of the protagonist, Melati that explores her OCD by using the Id, Ego and Superego followed by the defense mechanisms to overcome her OCD. In addition, this study also addresses the evaluation of the protagonist's ego strength to counter the self-stigma of her mental illness. Based on the findings, the Djinn which is arguably the superego of the protagonist is the most dominant and punitive personality element that causes her OCD because it is not in harmony with the id and ego. This study also found out that she makes the effort to use more adaptive defense mechanisms compared to maladaptive ones. The analysis argues that certain defense mechanisms that are maladaptive could be adaptive and vice versa such as wishful thinking and suppression. Besides, the analysis suggests that she shows a form of resilience in countering self-stigma upon evaluating her ego strength. Implications of this study suggest that readers would be able to use a psychoanalytical approach to understand OCD as well as to overcome self-stigma through understanding a person's personality.

## DECLARATION

I declare that the material contained in this paper is the end result of my own work and that due acknowledgement has been given in the bibliography and references to ALL sources be they printed, electronic or personal.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Anildeep Singh Gill', written over a horizontal line.

Signature:

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Overview of Chapter

This section will explain the background of the study, the statement of problem, the research questions and objectives, significance of the study, definition of terms and the scope and limitations of the study.

### 1.1 Background of the study

Citation of information from national surveys conducted by the Ministry of Health, the article states that 20 percent of boys and 40 percent of girls aged 12-17 years experienced signs of depression, while about 3 million in total experienced a major depressive episode (Bedell, 2016). Fortunately, as the rates of illness in teenagers have risen, the amount of reading content available for their age range has increased with the spread of the modern literary category "Young Adult Literature" (Gabriel, 2018). However, many people with severe mental illness are profoundly challenged nowadays. The signs and disabilities arising from the disorder are a problem. Moreover, the assumptions and discrimination arising from misunderstandings surrounding mental illness is becoming a challenging factor. No one can be sure of a particular stigma, but most people are able to associate themselves as feeling a certain way about people with mental disorders. It is speculated that the attitude towards the mental illness is more pessimistic than positive, and this is an important issue. Thus, an individual with mental illness can be viewed in two different ways which is either positive or negative.

Stigma is an impediment to people's access to adequate mental and general medical treatment, compliance with medicine, work procurement, reception of marriage proposals, rental of a home and recognition as an individual within society. In addition, people with serious psychiatric illnesses like schizophrenia also witness some of the worst abuses of human rights in the aftermath of their disease (Loganathan, 2012). Moreover, stigmatic views

regarding mental health are not limited to ignorant citizens; even well-educated practitioners who do not follow disciplines of mental health have stereotypes about mental illnesses (Corrigan & Watson, 2002).

Studies of attitudes towards mental health, replicated several decades afterwards, showed that it is impossible to shift the social stigma of mental illness (Ballenger, 2012). Once diagnosed with mental illness, collective internalised mental disorder assumptions associated with poor personality, weakness and risk are present. This is called self-stigma. The individual is forced to face a devalued picture of herself (Štrkalj-Ivezić, 2013). According to the perspectives of experienced mental health professionals, patients are caught in a violent cycle of prejudice which has negative implications for the person, their families, their communities, and society as a whole (Hanafiah & Van Bortel, 2015). Hence, in this present study, the issue of mental health stigmatization is discussed through the personality of the protagonist in this novel by applying the theory of psychoanalysis. This is because in the chosen novel for this study, mental illness is highly stigmatized among the folklores of the Malaysian society. This causes the person suffering from mental illness to internalize those stigmatizing beliefs into their identity which is called self-stigma. Therefore, this study will investigate how does the protagonist counters self-stigma in order to lead a peaceful life.

Psychoanalysis is a unique theory that is used to understand the human mind. Psychoanalysis poses many metaphysical questions, primarily because of its clear adherence to both computational, reductionist and hermeneutical forms of interpretation as an understanding of sense relations (Gardner, 2001). While psychoanalysis is only centred on the human mind, it is also used to critically analyse various literary context such as novels and short stories.

Hanna Alkaf, a Malaysian author, made her breakthrough by writing a novel titled 'The Weight of Our Sky'. The novel was published on February 5th, 2019. It was her first critically acclaimed novel published by Salam Reads. This novel focuses on the main character's mental illness which is the obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Therefore, the psychoanalysis theory will be applied to analyse this novel. This theory is seen as one that drives psychoanalysis through personality structure and dynamics. Freud believed that our childhood shapes our personality (McLeod, 2018). For instance, a person's negative childhood experiences will develop into anxiety when they become adults. This is because traumatic events in the past are concealed from a person's consciousness and can lead to problems during adulthood (Freud, 2016). In line with another Malaysian study, psychoanalysis is used to examine the emotional status of the main character (Pratiwi et al., 2019). However, there are currently no studies related to this novel that addresses the issue of mental health stigma and therefore, a critical analysis is significant.

### **1.2 Statement of problem:**

According to a news article, mentally ill problems were growing at 10.7% in 1996 to 29.2% in 2015 in Malaysia and many of them are young adults ("Examining the stigma of mental health illness in Malaysia", 2019). OCD has been labelled as a negative stigma in everyday life by many people (Stengler-Wenzke et al., 2004). Many people believe that mentally ill people are hostile and aggressive. People who are suffering with this illness are often mistreated and misjudged. They are frequently challenged mentally by the stereotypes that people create. People should not judge a book by its cover. They should understand that there are reasons on why a person suffers from mental illness. However, since mental illness stigma is unavoidable nowadays, it is up to the individual to find ways to counter this issue. Hence, this present study strives to go against stigma to explore how a mental illness patient deals with the issue of stigmatisation. The protagonist's OCD should not be stigmatised in order

to disregard the negative stereotypes and misconceptions that are deemed insulting towards the person who is suffering from this mental illness. This will cause a person with mental illness to feel devalued by society if this issue persists. Besides that, according to a study by Zhang et al. (2019) Asians with mental illnesses were considered as dangerous and aggressive. The Asian societies were less socially acceptable, and their mental illnesses were viewed as being their personal weaknesses. In short, this is viewed as stigmatization of mental illness in the society.

Individuals suffering from disorders such as OCD and depression are often prone to accepting misconceptions of themselves, a problem known as self-stigma (Corrigan & Rao, 2012). Self-stigma is present because of general stigma. As a result, the person with mental illness will tell themselves that they are dangerous and will become ashamed of themselves. When an individual internalises harmful perceptions, they are more likely to have negative emotional responses. These negative emotional responses include low self-esteem and low self-efficacy, to name a few (Watson et al., 2006). Individuals who internalise mental illness stigma exacerbate the severity of their mental illness because of the harmful internal perception of themselves. This will cause them to stop focusing on their goals completely and will negatively affect their overall quality of life. Therefore, there is a need to investigate how a mental illness patient counters self-stigma.

According to Margetić et al. (2010) mental illness can be analysed through a person's personality. Freud's psychoanalytic personality theory which consists of the Id, Ego and Superego are suitable to analyze a person's personality. Although the number of studies on the psychoanalytic personality theory are widely used in many studies, it is inadequate in the Malaysian literature context especially in analyzing OCD and has not been clarified extensively. In a study by Epstein (2006), from a psychoanalytic point of view, the unconscious mind is the most suitable region to be analysed because this is where all the interruptions in a

person's attitude and personality originate. Hence, there is a need to analyze a person's personality through these concepts of the Id, Ego and Superego. If these concepts are imbalanced, a person will have the tendency to develop mental illness (Ferreira, 2018). Therefore, this present study aims to discover the personality of the protagonist to find out her Id, Ego and Superego who is suffering from OCD.

According to Mukherjee et al. (2017) people use defense mechanisms to cope with their mental illness. While defence mechanisms are natural in the human personality and a vast majority of the people uses them, these mechanisms tend to trigger obsessive behaviour, repetitive behaviour and neuroticism if used quite extensively (Jamilian et al., 2014). To support this claim, there is a need to understand what are the defense mechanisms used by people suffering from OCD in the Malaysian context because different people have different personalities (Chung, 2018). There are divergent views on the number of defense mechanisms, but psychoanalytic theorists generally agree on the premise that defences exist on a continuum, varying in degree of adaptiveness (Granieri et al., 2017). In general, adaptive defenses demonstrate a stronger capacity for adaptation to reality, allowing them to effectively separate themselves from threatening feelings without distorting reality (Vaillant, 2000). Besides that, it is often debated that people with mental disorders tend to use maladaptive defenses to cope (Hayden et al., 2021). Thus, there is a need to address whether OCD sufferers use adaptive defenses to overcome their anxiety to adapt to certain situations. Hence, this present study aims to find out the defense mechanisms used by the protagonist to overcome her OCD based on the level of adaptiveness.

Besides that, the concept of ego strength is very limited to almost none in the context of literary analysis. Most of the studies are focused entirely on clinical approaches and in educational settings. The results and findings are generally more inclined towards psychologists and doctors. However, there are currently no studies done on English Literature

especially in the Malaysian context. Hence, there is a need to understand the application of this concept when analysing a literary text. This is because ego strength is a concept that shows how an individual tackles problems in life. Therefore, this study will discuss how a fictional character uses her ego strength to overcome the issue of self-stigmatization of her mental illness.

In addition, the Young Adult (YA) genre has very limited studies on OCD. Hanna Alkaf's *The Weight of Sky* is labelled as a Young Adult fiction. The issue of mental illness stigma rises in the novel when family pride and dignity hang above all and the society tends to continue dismissing mental illness. This is because in the Muslim culture, speaking of mental health is seldom a choice. A person will be labelled as 'crazy' or 'possessed'. Moreover, since this novel in particular has no credible research on this present problem about OCD, this study aims to fill up the research gap.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study:**

The present study has the following objectives:

1. To analyse the protagonist's Id, Ego and Superego of her OCD.
2. To investigate the defense mechanisms used by the protagonist to overcome her OCD.
3. To evaluate the protagonist's ego strength in countering the self-stigma of her OCD.

### **1.4 Research Questions:**

The present study has the following research questions:

1. What is the protagonist's Id, Ego and Superego of her OCD?
2. What are the defense mechanisms used by the protagonist to overcome her OCD?
3. How does the protagonist use her ego strength to counter the self-stigma of her OCD?

### **1.5 Significance of the study:**

The findings of this present study will help the Malaysian society greatly in understanding that people suffering with OCD should not be stereotyped and misjudged. It lets people understand the sufferings and pain within the mind of the patient that slowly breaks them down. By applying Freud's concepts of the Id, Ego and Superego, this study will help in increasing the knowledge depth of OCD and prevent the stigmatizing of mental illness by understanding the personality of the patient.

The agony of OCD that would not go away often apply defense mechanisms to cope with this issue. Hence, they also use these mechanisms to overcome their own mental illness. Thus, this study is important to further understand the usage of defense mechanisms in overcoming OCD. If the person cannot handle their severe mental illness properly, they use defense mechanisms to cope. In addition, since defense mechanisms play an important role in the human mind, it is necessary to explore defensive mechanisms of characters in literary works because they represent real life characters.

Besides that, it is important to address the stigmatization of mental illness in YA fiction because it represents the actual life experiences of most young adults in general. This study will help benefit the relevant parties as well as mental illness patients to tackle the stigma of mental illness. Most importantly, it will shine a clear light on how a person with mental illness tackles stigma as an individual using their ego strength. Since mental illness stigma cannot be eliminated thoroughly, an individual who is facing stigma should be the most important person that can overcome this issue. Hence, this study will help to prevent them from self-stigmatizing themselves. Furthermore, this study will also help in contributing more knowledge in the YA literature genre as this is one of the most popular genres currently because they are extremely

important to young adults, making it preferred in many countries as the selected reading material for young adult students.

By using the psychoanalysis theory of the personality, the defense mechanisms used as well as the ego strength of an individual, this study will enable readers to further understand Hanna Alkaf's *The Weight of Our Sky* in terms of the psychological concepts that occur in the protagonist mind. This study will unravel significant findings in the literary context that other researchers have not explored. Therefore, a positive light on OCD will be shined upon and the society will likely be more understanding towards those who are suffering with this mental illness.

### **1.6 Definition of terms**

- I. Psychoanalysis is an umbrella term for a variety of psychological hypotheses as well as a collection of methods, each stressing unconsciousness as an important element in human actions and adaptation (Lipner et al., 2017). The method of psychoanalysis was originally developed in order to cure mental problems by Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). He was an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist. Freud also used his insights to develop a psychoanalytical psychological theory that underlines the role of the unconscious in all life (Lipner et al., 2017).
- II. Mental illness is a common term that refers to a category of diseases, just as heart disease refers to a group of diseases and conditions affecting the heart ("What is mental illness?", 2007). Mental illness is a health condition that greatly impacts how a person feels, believes, behaves, and communicates with others.
- III. Stigma is defined as the unfavorable respect, inferior status, and relative powerlessness that society has collectively accorded to individuals who hold a certain trait or belong to a certain community or category (Frost, 2011).



- IV. Self-stigma is described as the process by which a person diagnosed with a mental illness comprehends the general stigma, agrees with, and internalizes these stereotypes by applying them to oneself (Chronister et al., 2013).
- V. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is condition that causes people to feel compelled to do something repeatedly, intrusive emotions, thoughts, or experiences (Gorrindo & Parekh, 2017). An individual suffering from this mental illness will do weird, repeated actions such as washing hands frequently and cleaning the surroundings repeatedly even though it is clean. This affects their daily lives as well as their social interactions with other people.
- VI. Defense mechanism is an unconscious psychological mechanism that decreases anxiety induced by inappropriate or potentially harmful stimuli (Freud, 2018). They can result to safe or unhealthy outcomes, depending on the circumstances and extent of use of the mechanism.
- VII. Ego strength is a psychoanalytic concept that reflects one's attitude toward problems, as well as the most common response to frustration and the ability to adapt to one's emotional profile (Settineri et al., 2012). A person with a good ego strength can thus tolerate frustration and stress, delay gratification, alter selfish desires as needed, and settle internal conflicts and emotional issues before they lead to psychotic symptoms. In addition, good ego strength is also used to describe an individual's ability to preserve their identity and sense of self in the face of pain, anxiety, and conflict when it comes to mental health.

### **1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

This study will involve Hanna Alkaf's novel, *The Weight of Our Sky*. This study will be using the psychoanalysis theory to analyze only the main character of the novel, Melati who is suffering from OCD. Furthermore, this study involves the application of Freud's theory of

the personality which consists of the Id, Ego and Superego as well as the defense mechanisms to analyze Melati's OCD. Besides that, this study will also adopt the ego strength concept from the psychoanalytic theory to evaluate the protagonist's abilities to counter self-stigma. However, one noticeable limitation of this study is that psychoanalysis is considered bias towards women. It is believed to be a masculine theory that claims that women do not exist (Selby, 1993). Since the protagonist is a female character, her superego might be unstable, weak and has no independence (Britton, 2018). Therefore, to be as neutral as possible to avoid gender bias, this study will not be focusing on gender issues.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

The components in this chapter mainly discuss on the general background of the study and its significance. The psychoanalytic criticism will be applied to analyse the "*The Weight of Our Sky*" in terms of how the main character, Melati deals with her mental illness and self-stigma. Chapter 2 will discuss on past studies of psychoanalysis in literature and certain debates on mental illness.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.0 Introduction

Before the term ‘psychoanalysis’ was created, the human behavior was just the way to describe the people’s state of mind. There were almost no options to treat people who were suffering from mental illnesses, and nothing could be done. Sigmund Freud was the messiah of psychoanalysis as he was the main person who created this theory. The study of psychoanalysis has been used widely in various clinical situations as the main technique to deal with patients who are suffering from mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), personality disorders and many more. Although psychoanalysis is widely used in clinical situations, it is also useful in the various works of literature. Literary studies often make use of the concepts of the psychoanalysis theory to analyze a particular piece of work such as novels, short stories, and poems. Since, mental illness is often stigmatized, this literature review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding on mental illness in literature. In this context, a total of six themes will be discussed and covered in detail which are the difference between mental illness and mental disorder, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder (OCPD), the stigma of mental illness, mental illness in literature, the Young Adult (YA) literature, and a review on past studies from various contexts.

### 2.1 Mental Illness vs Mental Disorder

This section explains the difference between the terms, ‘mental illness’ and ‘mental disorder’. Although these terms are related, they convey different meanings. Mental illness is defined as a term which indicates that the human mind is suffering from a disease (Zechmeister, 2005). This contributed to the hypothesis that mental illness is a brain condition due to chemical genetic imbalances (Castillo & Guo, 2016). A person suffering from mental illness will often

display abnormal behavior, feelings, or emotions. Mental illness can negatively affect a person's normal daily routine if not treated. Such illness can last for a long time or even permanently. Besides that, mental illness can be labelled as a general term to define a set of specific illnesses. The care for most people with mental illness is personalized to their symptoms and special needs. Some disorders raise the likelihood of other conditions to develop. For example, an anxiety disorder may often evolve into a depressive disorder (American Psychiatric Publishing, 2015). In short, mental illness is a disease of the body.

According to Leighton and Dogra (2009) mental disorder is used to refer to specific group of illnesses and can sometimes be the synonym for mental illness. This claim is also supported by the World Health Organization (2003) where they use the terms, 'mental illness' and 'mental disorder' equivalently. However, mental disorder is a significant disturbance in the thought, feeling or actions of a person that represents a mental function problem. Mental disorders cause distress or disability in social, educational, or family activities. For example, anxiety is a symptom that happens in people with depression, schizophrenia, and post-traumatic stress disorder (American Psychiatric Publishing, 2015). According to Jacob (2001) symptoms of mental disorders are frequently related to certain conditions and they are not often deemed to be health issues. In short, mental disorder is the disruption of the normal physical mind. Hence, for this present study, the term mental illness and mental disorders will be used interchangeably because these terms are used frequently in all fields.

### **2.2 The Stigma of Mental Illness**

People who suffer from mental illness frequently describe the stigma as weaker than the condition itself (Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, 2013). People who are suffering from mental illness such as depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder

(OCD) and bipolar disorder are often labelled as crazy, mad, insane, freaks and nuts (Richmond, 2014). Hence, this section will be focusing on the stigma of mental illness.

Mental illness has been identified with a variety of derogatory stereotype features and it is somewhat confused by the population and is usually misrepresented in the media (Markowitz et al., 2011). In this context for instance, people often misuse the term obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) to depict someone who is a perfectionist and sometimes insult the person having bipolar disorder when he or she changes their mind suddenly. Many people just do not recognize multiple personalities and schizophrenia, but if anything as gentle as depression comes into the same category and is considered a mental illness as the aforesaid conditions, the stigma follows (Bullis, n.d.). These words may be used more often today, but the stigma of mental illness remains as bad as ever before (Kelly & Winterman, 2011).

Overton and Medina (2008) claim that people with mental illness are discriminated against and affected as they rent homes, apply for work, and receive mental health services. This claim is supported by Angermeyer and Matschinger (2003) when they suggest that mental health diagnosis impacts the general views towards patients suffering from mental illness with far more detrimental consequences. Therefore, these studies show that mental illness will likely be stigmatized for a long period.

### **2.3 OCD vs OCPD**

Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder (OCPD) is a severe personality disorder often confused with the more widely accepted Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD). Both disorders sound identical in name and are often confused with each other, but they are indeed two disorders that are very distinct and very different. The key difference between the two conditions is that ritualistic activities are done by OCD patients, and people with OCPD appear

to be perfectionistic in many ways, allowing their interactions with others to suffer significantly. Hence, there is a need to address these two terms to avoid confusion.

### ***2.3.1 Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)***

According to Veale and Roberts (2014), OCD is defined as the presence of obsessions and compulsions that affects the mind. A person suffering from this condition will have undesirable intrusions, doubt and desires that enters the mind out of the blue repeatedly. This is called obsessions. Compulsions are when a person does something repeatedly that corresponds to the obsessions. This is called ritualistic behaviors when the patient does the same action repeatedly for many times and are unable to resist (Veale & Roberts, 2014). OCD affects everyone all around the world. It does not discriminate. Usually, OCD starts to develop very slowly during childhood or early adulthood. However, according to Bouvard et al. (2004) OCD can develop as fast as lightning when a person suffers from traumatic events such as car accidents, miscarriages, and loss of a loved one. Even if they know that their obsessions are not real, people with OCD have a hard time holding their attention away from obsessions or avoiding compulsive action.

### ***2.3.2 Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder (OCPD)***

Obsessive-compulsive personality disorder (OCPD) was first described over 100 years ago (Freud, 2001). In 1952, after the first Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Psychiatric Disorders (DSM) was written, it became a diagnosable mental illness (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). It is distinguished by eight personality traits which are regards to details, perfectionism, over-devotion to work and efficiency, over-consciousness, unwillingness to dump useless things, inability to assign duties, misery, and stubbornness (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). As the most prevalent condition in individuals, it is associated with at least mild psycho-social dysfunction, a diminished quality of life and an overwhelming financial

strain (De Reus & Emmelkamp, 2010). If rules and procedures do not have the right solution, the decision-making process can be time-consuming, sometimes painful. Individuals with obsessive-compulsive personality disorder can have such trouble determining which activities are to be given priority, or what is the best way to perform a specific job, that they may never begin to do something. They are likely to become agitated or angry in circumstances where they are unable to retain control of their physical or interpersonal environment, though anger is not normally conveyed explicitly.

#### **2.4 Mental illness in Literature**

Authors usually apply mental illness in their characters and begin the story to ensure that the readers feel hooked into the plot. However, there is one main factor on why these authors use psychological interventions. A subject's life story could be either good or bad, exciting, or even catastrophic. In works of literature, a subject's life story is narrated through the term called characterization. Readers will know and understand how the characters were brought up in the novel. Writers will often apply mental illness on characters in a literary work because they represent the author's life experiences. This claim is supported by Cokal (2005) who states that one must tell their stories of life as the stories itself demand for it. Therefore, if the story fails to be narrated, one will surely suffer as the remnants of the tale has been held back. According to Ghent (2019) students would be able to understand the emotions, perceptions, and ailments of the literary characters and interact with them.

Laurie Halse Anderson's *The Impossible Knife of Memory* is a novel that examines the impact of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) on a person and his family. The protagonist, Hayley Kincaid, describes incidents happening during her high school senior year. Although she is concerned with school and her peers, Hayley takes care of her dad, Andy, who suffers from extreme PTSD due to his four tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, as the biggest

everyday hurdle. Hayley's father is dealing with drug problems and significant signs of PTSD in the novel, and Hayley cares for herself and her father while trying to keep her situation secret from her school and other parties (Anderson, 2014). This will enable readers to understand the thought processes of Andy and understand his mental illness.

*All the Bright Places* by Jennifer Niven is about two characters, Violet and Theodore who wants to commit suicide together. Theodore has always been labelled "a freak" by classmates and is always obsessed about dying (Niven, 2015). This novel is all about exploring bipolar disorder. Violet and Theodore fall in love and Theodore's mental condition deteriorates further to deal with the dark thoughts and suicide. The novel concludes that suicide is never the option to end problems. Berger (1986) states that suicidal teenagers are not alone and there are always constructive solutions to handle these thoughts.

Furthermore, according to a study by Pratama and Aji (2017), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl was analyzed in terms of the main character's personality disorder and its causes. Personality disorder is a type of mental illness. The study concluded that the personality disorder is prevalent in the main character of the novel, Willy Wonka where he developed characteristics of narcissism where the lack of social life is one of the main factors of his disorder (Pratama & Aji, 2017). Freud's psychoanalytic theory was used to analyze Willy Wonka's characteristics and found out that a narcissistic personality causes one's pride to go sky high and cause the personality disorder. On the other hand, obsessive-compulsive personality disorder (OCPD) is also linked to narcissism (Fleissner, 2007). The findings are in line with another study by López (2016) where loneliness was the main cause of a personality disorder in Vanessa Vilches Norat's *Crímenes Domésticos*. Therefore, it is strongly believed that a lack of social life or loneliness will cause a narcissistic personality. Personality disorder is defined as having an unstable or an unhealthy way of thinking and interpreting information. Wilson (1996) states that when a person is displaying a personality disorder, he or she will



often have lavish fantasies, the need for constant attention and are mostly self-centered. In addition, they could also be showoffs and make over-exaggerating claims in order to get attention from people. This is because they do not want to look inferior in the eyes of the public and have the idea that depending on other people is considered as a weak practice.

## **2.5 The Young Adult Literature (YA)**

It is mostly literature about and for teenagers to differentiate the categories between books for children and for adults. Richmond (2018) claims that psychologists found out that YA literature is beneficial when working with teenagers. The texts from these novels and short stories help individuals to cope with their mental health. In other words, this is called bibliotherapy (Richmond, 2018). Through this therapy, young adults will be able to understand themselves further and develop new forms to deal with their problems. This is supported by a study conducted by Fisher (2005) where he claims that literacy educators play an important role in preventing suicide cases among young adults. Pytash (2013) supports the study of Fisher (2005) by stating that suicidal thoughts can be prevented by reading young adult novels such as *Thirteen Reasons Why*. In short, young adults will be able to understand mental illness topics through these YA novels.

Besides that, according to Miskec and McGee (2007) several young adult books about teens who indulge themselves in self-injury have suicidal thoughts. This is because traumatic events that occurred in the lives of these young adults developed these suicidal tendencies. Nevertheless, Younger (2009) suggests that the negative portrayal of young women through cultural assumptions and social constraints causes them to develop mental disorders. A woman's body image and sexuality that are often used as common themes of patriarchy are discussed to encourage dissent and this affects the mental health of the females. However, in

the Malaysian context, there are currently very limited studies of YA literature in analyzing mental illness and most contexts are from the Western culture.

## 2.6 Review of past studies

Since the Malaysian context is currently very limited in adopting Freud's defense mechanisms and personality theory in literature, this section aims to review the past studies that applied the psychoanalytic theory from the general context to the Malaysian context.

Chandran (2016) in his study of Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* claims that the main character slowly went into depression due to the fact that her Id and Superego were not balanced properly by the Ego. Consequently, findings from another study by Gul (2014) on 'The Yellow Wallpaper' by Charlotte Perkins Gilman reported similar findings in which the main character in the short story started having mental disorders due to the Ego being overwhelmed by the pressure of the Id and Superego. Therefore, the Id, Ego and Superego needs to be balanced coherently to ensure a healthy state of mind. Although the studies by Gul (2014) and Chandran (2016) were related to the personality theory, they were more focused on gender issues.

Sudrazat (2017) on his study on the main character of *Fifty Shades of Grey* states that the Superego is used to hide the Id from the public. A person's dark side should be kept as a secret from the society. An individual's sexual fantasies acts as the Id, whereby the Superego acts as a morality principle to protect the Id (Sudrazat, 2017). Freud (2014) claims that the Superego acts as a guardian angel on one shoulder. This claim is also supported by Niaz et al. (2019) where the Superego tells people to control the behaviors of the Ego and to base their behavior on the moral part of the human personality that will indirectly affect their actions.

A recent study conducted by Pangestu and Sunardi (2016) applied the psychoanalysis theory to analyze the actions of the main character in terms of the defense mechanisms as well

as the issues that triggered these mechanisms in John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars*. The findings concluded that a person uses the defense mechanisms to protect themselves from threats. However, this study does not focus on mental health but more on personality issues.

Psychoanalysis was used to examine the emotional status of the main character in *The Tale of Hang Tuah* in both the cases of psychological and social conditions (Pratiwi et al., 2019). This is supported by another Malaysian study on Lloyd Fernando's *Green is the Colour* and Shirley Lim's 'Mr.Tang's Girls' where the person's mental stability was formed by the external forces in which it involves the closest people in your life (Farahmandian, 2015). However, these studies did not focus on Freud's personality theory.

Ali (2018) used Jacques Lacan's theory of the psychoanalysis to find out how a post-modern identity is created in selected short stories by Karim Raslan and Dina Zaman. The findings concluded that every individual would stay in a fluxed situation and at the same time they cope with their complex pressures and disputes that affects their desires or preferences (Ali, 2018). However, there is no specific discussion on why the characters develop mental disorders in his research.

In addition, death is one of the ways that possesses a psychological threat to the human mind. Termizi et al. (2017) states that the utilization of death in the study of selected works by Malaysian Contemporary writers are prominent to gain the attention of the readers. Since death is inevitable for every human, literature is used as a medium by authors to vent out their repressed feelings about dying. Therefore, the importance of how death has an impact on readers as a portrayal of a mental stigma that consists of repressed impulses should therefore be categorized as a literary tool (Termizi et al., 2017). Although the study of Termizi et al. (2017) addresses about the issue stigmatization, it focuses more on the theme of death than mental illness.

## 2.7 Conclusion

To sum up this literature review, mental illness, and psychoanalysis in works of literature go hand in hand. Without psychoanalysis, a person's mind and personality cannot be understood. On the other hand, this present study aims to contribute to the theory of the psychoanalysis in Malaysian English in Literature. This is because there is a significant lack of studies conducted in the Malaysian context and also, there are currently no available credible studies on Hanna Alkaf's *The Weight of Our Sky*. In addition, mental illness should be understood instead of stigmatizing them. Hence, this present study will enable readers to feel what is going through the mind of the protagonist and understand her situation better.

## CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.0 Introduction

In three elements, Freud analyses the human mind as Id, Ego and Superego (Freud, 2020). These concepts are important because they are able to interpret what is going on in a person's mind. These concepts are known as systems, and they are not parts of the brain. Freud (1962) labels these concepts as the psychic apparatus. The defense mechanisms are used to protect the mind from feeling anxious (Freud, 2020). Sigmund Freud noted several ego defences that he listed in all his writings (Freud, 2014). These ideas were developed and elaborated on by his daughter Anna Freud with the addition of ten of her own (Freud, 2018). Defense mechanisms are psychological strategies which unconsciously protect an individual against anxiety induced by unacceptable thoughts or feelings.

This study will incorporate the psychoanalytic theory by Sigmund Freud. This chapter will be divided into two parts. The first part will be the theoretical framework whereby the researcher will explain the psychoanalytic concepts in general. The second part will be the conceptual framework whereby the researcher uses the concepts to carry out the analysis for this study. The conceptual framework will be illustrated as a diagram and will be followed up by a write-up to explain how the whole research will be conducted.

### 3.1 Theoretical Framework

#### 3.1.1 *The Id*

The Id is one of Freud's concepts of the unconscious. The mind is split into three departments which are the Id, Ego and Superego (Lapsley & Stey, 2012). Lapsley and Stey (2012) states that the Id is the oldest and most fundamental psychic entity, which reflects the foundations of the biological personality. It is also known as the unconscious desires in the mind. This is when the mind requires the need for instant impulses to fulfil a certain desire.

Such desires are in need for whatever necessary without taking other situations into consideration (Niaz et al., 2019).

According to McLeod (2019), the Id is engaged in a primitive, illogical, unrealistic, and fantasy-oriented method of thought. There is no proper rationale on these thoughts and they are often deemed as narcissistic. Strunk (1960) claims that the Id is harmful and damaging which consists of actions that are negative in the viewpoint of civilized people. In other words, the Id wants whatever it takes to satisfy itself. It is mostly used to pleasure itself. The Id is the most inaccessible and mysterious part of our identity and is completely located in the unconscious part of the mind (Mambrol, 2016). In other words, the Id can be identified as the devil who sits on one's shoulder.

### ***3.1.2 The Ego***

The Ego is the second concept in Freud's theory of the unconscious. It mainly deals with things that are acceptable in a social setting. The ego is the middle part between the Id and Superego. Mario (2013) claims that the ego is a rational tool that will help a person to make decisions based on the understanding of the actual reality. The reality will not be ignored as the person will also be able to satisfy his or her desires. In this context the Ego acts as a balancing tool to ensure that the Id and Ego are in equilibrium (Niaz et al., 2019). The ego works in accordance with the theory of reality and it creates practical methods to fulfil the demands of the Id and Superego, sometimes compromising or postponing pleasure, to avoid negative social implications.

### ***3.1.3 The Superego***

According to McLeod (2019), the Superego's role is to control the demanding impulses of the Id especially actions that are commonly forbidden by the society such as sex and violence. The Superego also acts as a mentor to the Ego because it functions to influence the

Ego to focus on ethical considerations rather than perfection. When the Superego is violated, a person may have the feeling of remorse or distress because they have to atone for the actions of the Id. According to Strunk (1960), a person will have a negative impact if the influence of the Superego is lower than the Id and Ego. This will cause the person to accumulate all his negative tendencies and his Superego will not be sufficient to tackle hostility.

### ***3.1.4 The Defense Mechanisms***

Freud 's work focused primarily on how the ego handles internal threats, especially the intolerable impulses of the ego. Cramer (1991) suggested that creating an internal or external occurrence that contradicts the preferred self-view may cause a crisis in self-perception. Hence, it is normal for the person to protect themselves from threats. Therefore, these are called the defense-mechanisms by Freud (Cramer, 1991). According to Mcleod (2019), some examples of the defense mechanisms are sublimation, regression, denial and repression, rationalization and many more. The application of the defense mechanisms in main characters of literary works were used because it helps them to reduce anxiety and be able to be presentable to the society (Simma, 2009).

According to Freud (2018) repression happens when a person's emotions, experiences or feelings are so traumatic that the person pushes the knowledge out from his mind unconsciously and does not become aware of it. The repressed thoughts may still control actions, but the person who has silenced the thinking knows nothing of it. In other words, true repression from the Freudian point of view means fully shielding something from the conscious knowledge.

Suppression is a defense mechanism that allows people to deal with distressing mental contents by voluntarily attempting to keep them out of conscious memory before they have a chance to respond to the stressors (Costa, 2020). Even if a person is aware of it, they prefer not

to engage in a conscious thought, emotion, or action. This helps them to concentrate on their tasks without being disturbed by any sudden impulse or needing to act on those impulses.

Besides that, another defense mechanism is displacement. Displacement refers to the modification of the intention of the impulse. An unacceptable violent impulsion to the parent, for example, could become a hostile action to police or other officials. The goals of this actual assault would relate to the goal of the original suppressed impulses by concrete comparisons (Baumeister et al., 1998). In other words, displacement takes place when the Id tries to do something that the Superego does not authorize.

Furthermore, regression is a return to the earlier stages of growth and to the discarded forms of pleasure that belonged to them, triggered by hazards or disputes that occur at one of the later stages. The temperament of an adult goes back to an earlier development phase and adopts more immature ways (Jackson, 1969). In other words, when regression is used as a defensive mechanism, individuals cope with stressors by behaving in an immature or age-inappropriate manner, that is, by regressing to earlier stages of growth, such as when it is common to have excessive dependency or tantrums. For example, a wife returns to her parents' home after having an argument with the husband.

Introjection takes place when a person internalises other people's thoughts or voices (Truscott, 2012). The internalisation of external authority, particularly of parents, is widely related to this behaviour. Any experts in mental health agree that introjection is a defense mechanism used commonly by children to deal with absent parents or guardians (Truscott, 2012).

Wishful thinking is also another type of defense mechanism. This defense mechanism may be used to disregard or dismiss any strong desire that conflicts with another strong desire (Gouws, 2003). Wishful thinking is when people form assumptions based on what they want



to believe rather than on facts, reasoning, or logic. It is the product of reconciling conflicting beliefs and desires (Bastardi et al., 2011).

Another type of defense mechanism is rationalization. Rationalization enables a person to cope with emotional conflicts or internal or external stressors by creating comforting or self-serving but wrong explanations of their own thoughts, behaviour or feelings of others that conceal other motivations (Knoll et al., 2016). The rationalization of an occurrence will make people not guilty or deny what they have done wrong. Freud (2018) claims that if you cannot cope with real causes, you will defend yourself by justifying the actions on your own terms.

Next, sublimation is one of the ways that the ego eliminates the discomfort that can be triggered by unwanted desires or feelings. Freud (2018) viewed sublimation as a symbol of wisdom that allows people to behave in a respectable and humane manner. This approach will help people adopt healthy activities or perform constructive, successful, and innovative behaviours.

Reaction formation is the fixation of a thought, result or desire that is opposite to a feared unconscious impulse in consciousness (Freud, 2018). For example, a mother with an unwanted infant can respond to her feelings of remorse that she does not want the child by being overly vigilant and overprotective to convince the child and herself of being a good mother.

Projection is a type of defense mechanism that displaces unwelcomed thoughts to another entity, where they then pose as a threat from the outside world (Freud, 2018). A person, faced with their own angry feelings, has a typical mode of projecting when they accuse another person of containing another aggressive thought.

The rituals and undoing defense mechanism are the attempts to change the negative self-conceptions of yourself by executing practises or habits to offset certain behaviours, based

on negative judgments (Boere, 1997). For instance, after thinking about being aggressive with someone, one will suddenly transform into a sweet person by being nice towards them.

Denial is the deliberate rejection of the hard truth (Freud, 2018). The person just refuses to accept reality. If the situation is too much to handle, the person will just respond to it by denying its existence. The person blocks these events or circumstances to avoid dealing with the negative emotional impact. Thus, they can avoid hurtful events.

Intellectualization is a mechanism to control certain theoretical and behavioural effects and desires (Zepf, 2011). It implies approaching a situation so profoundly that the emotional aspect is totally overlooked by a person. Reasoning is used to block confrontation and related emotional tension with an unconscious disagreement (Freud, 2018).

Apart from all the defense mechanisms mentioned above, they can be classified into two categories which are adaptive and maladaptive mechanisms (Vaillant, 2000). In addition, there are some defenses that are considered to be adaptive, while others are considered to be problematic, causing challenges in one's emotional life and environment (Malone et al., 2013). More adaptive defenses, for example, are associated with stronger relationships, job satisfaction, mental health, and subjective well-being, whereas less adaptive defenses are associated with poorer mental health, work issues, and relationship difficulties. Therefore, this present study will further discuss whether the protagonist's defense mechanisms are adaptive or maladaptive depending on her situation.

### ***3.1.5 Ego Strength***

Ego strength is a concept derived from the psychoanalytic theory that refers to how strong the ego is able to overcome obstacles in life. Ego strength is the ability to have a positive perspective about oneself and one's skills, as well as self-esteem, interpersonal flexibility,

relationships, and social experiences (Petrović et al., 2018). Ego strength, according to Symonds (1951) is the ego's ability to control instincts and to handle difficult circumstances.

A person with a weak ego strength tends to isolate themselves and avoid problems by practicing maladaptive habits such as substance abuse and having suicidal thoughts. They have faulty thought habits that cause them to feel they cannot do it, that it is not their cup of tea, or that they do not have the ability and are weak. Such people think that their problems will go away on their own without taking any form of action (Singh & Anand, 2015). Since energy is drained into the preservation of unreasonable self-concepts, the person may be less capable of constructive activity, or the individual may be burdened with mental conflicts.

According to Singh and Anand (2015) people with high ego-strength are determined to conquer challenges, constantly working for the best and accepting their feelings, whether guilt, frustration, or other emotions. These kinds of people tend to have a positive self-worth. They are willing to fix their circumstances at all costs. No matter how life treats them, they have the will power to overcome all challenges. They do not just sit and wait for something to happen. Strong ego strength is also defined by the ability to overcome intense internal and external strain when considering and deciding a suitable path. Furthermore, a strong ego strength is also characterised by the ability to not be distracted by one's own drives but instead is capable to redirect those negative stressors into a very much constructive outcome.

### 3.2 Conceptual Framework

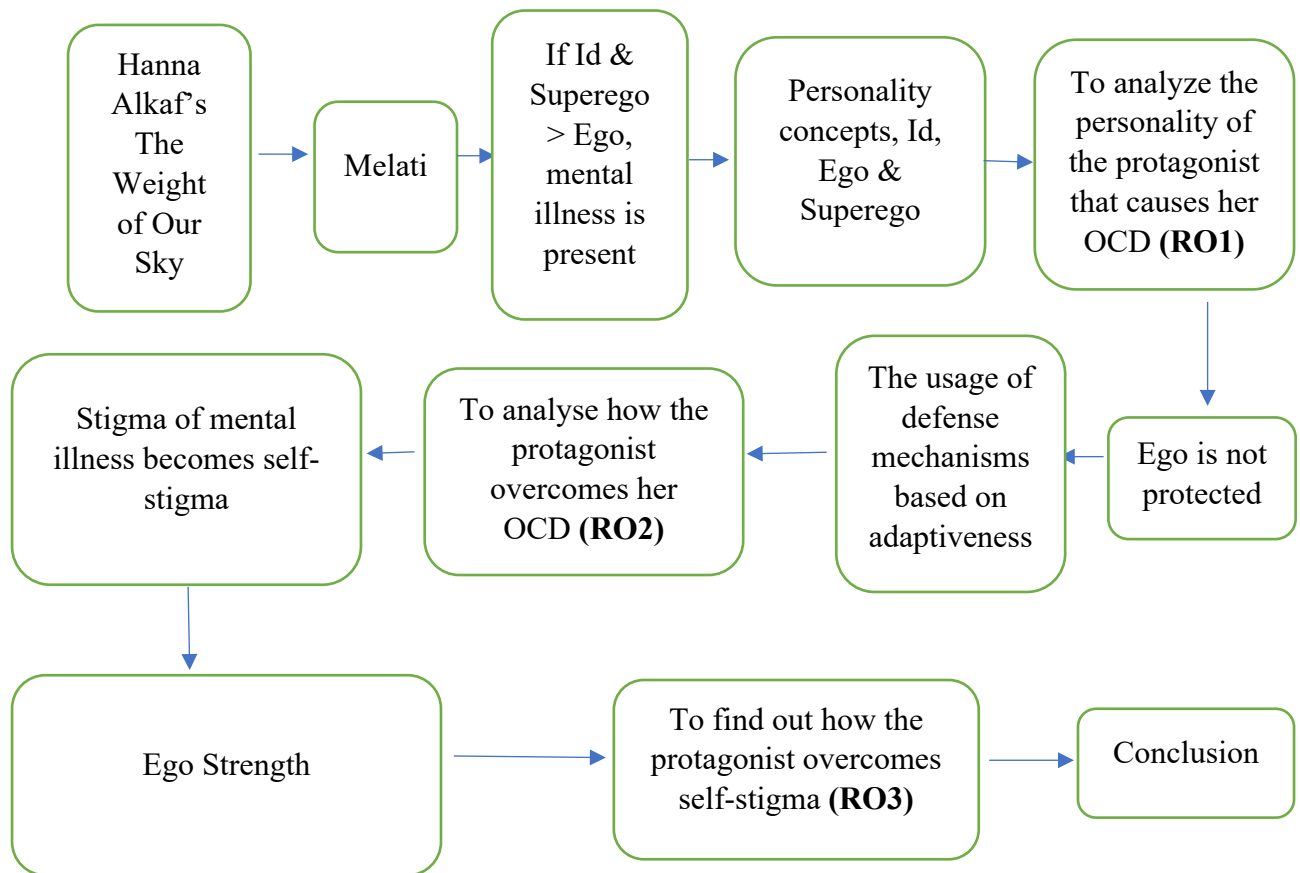


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Based on the conceptual framework as shown in Figure 1, the Freudian psychoanalysis theory will be applied to analyze the protagonist in the novel, Melati who is suffering from OCD. Since the issue of stigmatization of mental illness is prevalent, this study aims to argue on this issue. Therefore, on the first two parts of the analysis, this study will explore the personality and the defense mechanisms of the protagonist by diving into her mind to understand how her mental illness is affecting her.

When the Id is more overpowered, a person might become uncontrollable. If the Superego is more overpowered, a person might become overly moralistic or controlled by extreme feelings of guilt and anxiety. The Ego balances the Id and the Superego. When the ego

is unable to hold control of the Id and Superego when its urges are so severe, it causes a mental disorder. Thus, this part of the current study will discover which concepts of the personality overpowers the protagonist the most as she suffers from OCD. To achieve the first research objective, Freud's personality theory which consists of the Id, Ego and Superego will be applied to analyze the protagonist's OCD.

After analyzing Melati's personality, her defense mechanisms to overcome OCD will be analysed. When the Ego fails to protect itself, the usage of defense mechanisms is present to overcome her disorder. To achieve the second research objective, which is to find out what are the defense mechanisms used by the protagonist to overcome her OCD, the most appropriate types of the defense mechanisms will be applied. Then, they will be further classified according to their level of adaptiveness by adopting the concepts of adaptive and maladaptive defenses by Vaillant (2000).

Then, this present study will address the ultimate issue of stigmatization. After getting to understand the protagonist's personality, her ego strength will be evaluated to explore how she counters self-stigma. If she shows weak ego strength, she will not be able to handle problems and will avoid reality. However, if she has good ego strength, she will be able to tackle obstacles with ease. This study will therefore discuss the actions of the protagonist, Melati on how she indirectly counters self-stigma as an individual suffering from mental illness in this novel. This is due to the discriminatory attitudes of the society arising from the issue of stigma that contain prejudice and stereotypes towards OCD. Since people suffering from mental illness are often discriminated and stereotyped, these people will tend to face negative attitude from the public or society. Hence, the person suffering from mental illness will tend to agree with these negative stereotypes and relate it to themselves which is called self-stigma. If the public or the society are not able to counter stigma then it is up to the victim's ego strength to fight this issue instead of internalizing it.

Therefore, the findings from this study are important to address the stigmatization of OCD. It should not be a stigma when there is a proper understanding on a person's personality and the ways they cope with this issue. Therefore, people will be more educated and be much more open-minded to make a positive difference if OCD is not stigmatized. On the other hand, people with mental illness will understand how to counter stigma effectively.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### 4.0 Introduction

Melati Ahmad appears to be an average sixteen-year-old who enjoys movies and is a Beatles fan. In this novel, she is unaware that she is suffering from Obsessive-Compulsive-Disorder (OCD). When she gets caught during the 13th May racial riots in Kuala Lumpur in the 1960s, she feels she is being controlled by a Djinn who is living inside her mind. If she does not appease it by counting in threes, which is her obsessive activity, all her loved ones will perish, and she will be held responsible for their deaths.

In this chapter, the findings and analysis of this study will be presented to show the application of psychoanalysis to analyse Hanna Alkaf's *The Weight of Our Sky*. The novel is investigated accordingly, and the findings are based on the research questions presented in Chapter 1. The analysis will be focusing on Melati's id, ego and superego of her OCD followed by the defense mechanisms used to overcome her OCD and finally, her ego strength will be evaluated to counter the self-stigma of her mental illness.

### 4.1 The Id

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the id is where all the human instincts lie. It is the urges and desires of a person which demands an instant feeling of gratification. The urges and needs are unconscious that are based on the pleasure principle. According to Freud, if the id's demands are not satisfied, this will create distress in the individual. Therefore, in this section, Melati's id will be analysed to explore her unconscious desires in the novel. In general, Melati's id impulses are triggered whenever the intrusive thoughts of her OCD start to manifest. Hence, this section will be explored in much detail to discuss about her urges and desires.

Melati's id is firstly seen when she finds out that her usual seating spot is occupied in the bus. Her id develops when she needs to find a safe seat to keep her mother safe. This urge

needs to be satisfied otherwise the Djinn will make her mother die violently. She knows that she cannot chase away the person sitting at her usual place. Instead, she satisfies her id when she sits at “the window seat on the left” which is just opposite her usual place and feels that she can “make it safe” (Alkaf, 2019, pp. 6-7). Therefore, this shows that her unconscious desire is to keep her mother safe all the time which is a feeling that she has no control of.

Melati's id is also seen again when she gets the urge to check up on her mother to make sure that she is safe and fine. Melati does this routine check up on her mother every day after school by using a nearby pay phone. She is afraid of the intrusive thoughts of Mama dying in violent ways when it manifests in her mind and starts to sweat with anxiety when her mother does not answer the phone call for the first time. Her id is satisfied when “relief floods through [her]” after speaking to her mother and finds out that she is all safe and sound at work which is in the hospital (Alkaf, 2019, p. 9). Hence, her id needs to be satisfied before she can move on which is by making sure her mother is safe.

Her id reappears again when the racial riots started to break out. This time it is to save Safiyah's life. While Saf watches her favourite movie starring Paul Newman, Melati panics when she starts seeing the chaos happening outside of the cinema. Her instinct is to save Saf and get out of the cinema. “Saf. I have to get Saf. We have to get out of here” (Alkaf, 2019, p. 32). Saf wonders why Melati was in such panic out of the blue. All Melati wants is to keep her safe from getting killed but she fails to do so when they are trapped by the rioters in the cinema hall. Saf gets killed by one of the rioters and this situation has failed to satisfy Melati's id which causes her to panic. “My thoughts are racing so fast I don't feel like I can ever keep up” (Alkaf, 2019, p. 40). This quote shows her anxiety kicking in when her id to protect her friend is not satisfied.



When she fails to save Safiyah's life, Melati is helped by Aunty Bee because of the chaos of the riots. Since then, Melati is unable to reunite with her mother. She took refuge with Aunty Bee's family. This is when Melati's id to search for her mother starts to grow stronger. She needs to make sure that her mother is safe. When this urge is not satisfied, Melati feels dizzy and uncomfortable. She manages to satisfy her urge to find her mother a little when she teams up with Vincent. This is proved with the excerpt, "I need to know where my mother is, need to find out what happened to her, if she's okay. If I go out with you, then maybe I can ask around, figure it out" (Alkaf, 2019, pp. 118-119). This shows that she is using Vincent as a medium to satisfy her id. In other words, since she has a close bonding with Vincent, she uses this advantage to satisfy her id. In addition, it is also at this moment when Melati developed another urge to protect Vincent in search of her mother. "And if I'm with you, I can protect you" (Alkaf, 2019, p. 119). This excerpt proves that Melati's main urge is to protect the people around her. She thinks that they all will die if she does not protect them. This is because of the intrusive thoughts that she gets emanating from the Djinn.

Throughout the journey to search for her mother, Melati's id develops again when she needs to help Jee who is pregnant to get to the hospital urgently. Her unconscious desire here is to save people. Otherwise, she thinks that they will all die and is entirely her fault. Hence, she works together with Vincent to save Jee. Here, she depends entirely on Vincent's help to satisfy her id because she must accompany Jee who is in terrible pain. She hopes that Vincent can get help from the guards. However, her id fails to be satisfied because Vincent fails to successfully ask the guards for help. This causes Melati to build up with rage towards Vincent when her "eyes were filling with tears and [she] blinked them back angrily" because she thinks that Jee might die if she does not get to the hospital quickly and it will be all her fault (Alkaf, 2019, p. 172). Hence, this shows how Melati's id is all about saving people to prevent them from harm.

Her id impulses to find and save her mother continues when she has the urge to head to the Rex which is the cinema where Saf was killed. After finding out that her mother is not there, she is relieved and satisfied after checking the whole cinema. It was at this moment when she meets a little girl, May and begins to develop another id impulse to help the girl to find a way to get her home. Melati shows her instincts to protect May when she taps “a protective tattoo along May's back” when she gets the intrusive thoughts about May dying (Alkaf, 2019, p. 249). This shows that Melati’s urge is to protect and save the people around her when she gets threatened by the Djinn that starts to project images of their death. Her id is exemplified when it is not satisfied. Therefore, she gets anxious as they might die because of her.

In summary, it can be concluded that her main id impulses are to find her mother and at the same time to protect the people around her. If these impulses are not satisfied, her intrusive thoughts that control her mind will overwhelm her causing her to feel extremely distressed.

### **4.2 The Ego**

As previously mentioned, the ego is the “self”. It is the second part of the personality in Freud’s theory. The ego’s job is to mediate between the id and the superego. It must make sure that the id impulses are satisfied in a socially acceptable manner as it is based on the reality principle. It also acts to maintain a person’s self-control by making them to control the demands of the id and superego as realistic as possible. In general, the ego of Melati tries to deal with reality by mediating between her urges and the Djinn’s voices that resembles the superego (will be elaborated in subheading 4.3). Hence, this section will be analysing the ego of Melati who tries to deal with these two forces. To describe Melati’s condition, her personality is dominated by a strong id and a punishing superego with the ego trapped in between these forces.

Melati's ego firstly appeared when she was at the phone booth to speak with her mother to check up on her. After feeling satisfied talking to her, the Djinn starts to cause those intrusive thoughts by making her feel doubtful and insecure about her mother's safety. Intrusive thoughts can cause people to hear voices inside their heads, which can lead to unwanted ideas, thoughts, images, and even visions (Khetrapal, 2019). Hence, the manifestation of the Djinn means that it is her OCD that is being triggered. When she was “poised to dial” the phone again, Melati's ego manages to control her impulses by staying firm to her decision that her mother is safe and “that everything is okay” and not to listen to the “Djinn and his lies” (Alkaf, 2019, pp. 11-12). Due to the irrational criticism from the Djinn, Melati's ego gets in conflict with it by ignoring its voices.

Besides that, to satisfy the id's demands to protect her mother, Melati's ego manages to create a realistic plan when she was at the Rex cinema to search for her mother. The ego manages to satisfy the id when Melati decides to check the whole cinema because it was a reasonable plan. Therefore, she “starts combing through the rest of the building” from A to Z and barely gets a “sigh of relief” when she realises that her mother is not there at all (Alkaf, 2019, p. 225). Hence, this could mean that her ego is working to satisfy her id as realistic as possible to seek gratification.

When Melati met May in one of the Rex's halls, her id impulse to save May's life was mediated by the ego when Melati planned to take her to the police station which was a very much safer place. However, there were a lot of violence in the streets just to get to the nearest station. This is also when Melati's ego was able to make the decision to formulate a stealthy plan to avoid being detected by the rioters. This is proved with the following excerpt, “that's it! The police station isn't too far away; I'll take May there” (Alkaf, 2019, p. 233). Thus, her ego is making realistic decisions to satisfy her id to protect May.

Melati's ego appears again when she was able to come up with options when she was at a refugee hall. She manages to think about two options where one of them is to stay put in her current location where it is guaranteed to be safe, and the other is to find her mother. She chooses to find her mother because she will feel better when she finds her. Therefore, she heads out to satisfy her id impulses by finding and saving her mother. At the same time, Melati's ego manages to ignore the Djinn's criticism of her decision by "quashing down the wave of panic and endless questions the Djinn starts firing into [her] head" (Alkaf, 2019, p. 208). This shows that the ego is trying to satisfy the id and is ignoring the criticism from the Djinn which is acting as the inner critic that resembles the superego.

Melati's ego tries to ignore the voices of the Djinn in her head most of the time when she faces certain situations. For example, when she and May arrive at a school hall, the Djinn starts to taunt Melati's decision with images of death. Melati manages to ignore the Djinn with a lot of "effort" because they are not real (Alkaf, 2019, p. 242). Besides that, another situation when Melati's ego manages to ignore the Djinn is when the intrusive thoughts of her mother and Saf dying from gunshot wounds suddenly appears right after feeling the joy of sending Roslan to his home. She ignores the Djinn by trying to "hold on to that feeling of triumph" and telling it that she "is the one who saves" (Alkaf, 2019, p. 133). This indicates that Melati's ego is capable in identifying that her intrusive thoughts are not real, and she can protect people.

In summary, Melati's ego is in a conflict with the id and superego as it tries to balance out their demands. From the analysis, it can be said that her ego is stuck in a dilemma as it tries its best to work out on reasonable decisions and to think what is real based on the reality principle.

### 4.3 The Superego

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the superego is the self-critical aspect of the personality that punishes behaviour with feelings of guilt and teaches one on how to act. This demonstrates that the superego is not always operating just as a storyteller. Additionally, it can manifest as two or more distinct personalities conversing with one another within people's minds. The superego's critiques, constraints, and inhibitions serve as one's conscience, but its significant aspirations and values represent one's idealistic self-image. In other words, the superego is the inner critic in the mind. However, in this study, Melati's superego is a little different because of her OCD. In these instances, the mind indulges in negative self-talk, condemning their own work, social interactions, and other things. Hence, this section will analyse Melati's superego that appears in the form of the Djinn which she believes is acting as her inner critic that only causes negative thoughts that aims to tell her that she is not good enough to do anything.

Melati's superego in the form of the Djinn appears at the beginning of the novel when it suddenly threatens her with horrific images of her mother's death. Therefore, she tries to ward off the anxiety induced by the superego with the counting rituals. Her superego makes her fear of her mother's death. Therefore, her instincts are to protect her mother, but the superego punishes her instincts as it tries to condemn her with worthlessness that causes her to feel anxious. It only manages to be silent when she counts. This excerpt proves it, "see what I can do? See what happens when you disobey?" (Alkaf, 2019, p. 2). Throughout the novel, the Djinn causes similar violent thoughts and threats in Melati's head when she fails to protect her mother. Similarly, Melati's superego blames her for causing the death of Safiyah as she gets murdered by the rioters in the cinema, and this causes the Djinn to blame her for failing to save Safiyah. The Djinn says, "You stood back and did nothing. You didn't protect your friend. You saved your own skin and you let her die. It was your fault. Your fault. All your fault." (Alkaf, 2019, p. 213). The only thing that Melati has to do is to save Safiyah's life but she has failed

to do so and this incident triggers the inner critic which is the Djinn that makes her feel useless and good for nothing.

Furthermore, the Djinn criticizes Melati when she tells Vincent about her mental illness. It instils feelings of discomfort in Melati when she manages to reveal her counting rituals to Vincent. Melati gets extremely anxious because of the superego's criticism that labels her as crazy. This shows that her superego causes her to feel embarrassed of herself as it keeps taunting her with shameful insults, "he'll hate you for saying any more" (Alkaf, 2019, p. 138). This made Melati have stigmatic thoughts about herself by assuming Vincent will look at her as a mad person who is good for nothing.

Melati's superego criticizes her by unnecessarily making her feel bad after helping Roslan to get back to his home. Melati feels very happy when she was able to contribute a very solid idea to help Roslan out. Her superego just cannot see her happy as it creates a sense of unworthiness in her mind when it says "What did you do but provide one idea? Who actually had to carry it out?" (Alkaf, 2019, p. 133). The superego also makes Melati feel bad at the same time by taunting her for failing to protect her mother and Saf. It says, "If you think you're so capable of saving people, then why didn't you?" (Alkaf, 2019, p. 133). Thus, this indicates that the Djinn is all about punishing her with harsh criticisms of her actions which is in line with Freud's definition of the superego acting as the self-critical concept.

Next, Melati's superego appears when she wants to help May to get out of the Rex and head to a safer place. It warns her by telling her that she is toxic and good for nothing. It also threatens her that May will die if she follows Melati after blaming her for Safiyah's death. This is proved based on the excerpt, "you're toxic, Melati. You're capable of protecting nothing and no one (Alkaf, 2019, pp. 232-233). It then starts to threaten her that all her actions will cause

May to die. Therefore, the superego just wants to make Melati feel inferior by judging all her actions that she made will symbolize death.

In short, the Djinn is acting as Melati's superego as it wants her to follow its 'moralistic' demands. Every decision made by Melati is often taunted by the Djinn and it is the main culprit of her intrusive thoughts.

#### **4.4 The Defense Mechanisms Used by Melati to Overcome her OCD**

The connection of the defense mechanisms is important for the ego as they act as a tool to reduce anxiety whenever the ego is unable to mediate between the id and the superego. As stated in the previous chapter, defense mechanisms are the mental processors that the mind uses to overcome conflicts that are not able to be resolved. This process is usually unconscious. According to Freud, it is the forces of the mind that are battling against each other in resolving a conflict. It occurs when the ego feels threatened and therefore, it tries to protect itself to reduce anxiety. According to Vaillant (2000) Freud's defense mechanisms can be categorised into two main categories which are known as maladaptive and adaptive defense mechanisms. People who use adaptive mechanisms are able to confront and reduce conflicts and are generally more constructive of their environment. On the contrary, maladaptive defenses are known to not solve a problem completely. Instead, it will only lead to more distress in the long run and only relieves the pressure for a very short period. Therefore, this section will address the defense mechanisms used by the protagonist to overcome her OCD and will be further justified according to their adaptiveness.

##### ***4.4.1 Wishful Thinking***

Wishful thinking is a defense mechanism when an individual imagines a positive situation that is pleasing to the mind without taking reality into consideration. It is used to resolve conflicts and instil hope in one's mind that their positive desires might just become

real. In this context, Melati applies wishful thinking to overcome her OCD when she reaches home. She had “visions of Mama throwing open the doors” (Alkaf, 2019, p. 151). She hopes that her mother will be at home to welcome her by hugging her tightly and never letting her go. Instead, she finds out that her house is all torn apart and did not find her mother there. In this situation, she manages to stay in control and not to give up on her hopes and continues to search for her mother after getting important information from Mak Siti. Hence, Melati’s wishful thinking has enabled her to keep her mind off her intrusive thoughts momentarily and to keep moving on to find her mother because she knows that “everything will be okay again” (Alkaf, 2019, p. 181). As her intrusive thoughts are only about death, wishful thinking has kept her to “stay in control” of her thoughts instead of the critical Djinn (Alkaf, 2019, p. 181). Hence, this shows that wishful thinking is considered as an adaptive defense mechanism.

#### ***4.4.2 Rituals & Undoing***

As mentioned previously, rituals and undoing defense mechanism is used to undo negative actions or thoughts by performing specific rituals or behaviours to ward off those negative evaluations. Throughout the novel, Melati uses rituals and undoing frequently to ward off the anxiety from her mental illness. The ritual involved here is her compulsive counting and tapping to 'undo' the intrusive thoughts of her OCD. She does this in sets of threes because it feels safe, and the Djinn will become silent. Whenever she thinks of the people dying around her, she counts “one, two, three, one two three, one, two, three, just like music” and taps ritualistically to temporarily calm herself down (Alkaf, 2019, p. 96). This defense mechanism impacts Melati negatively because this causes her relationship with Vincent to have conflicts. At one point, Melati is unable to move because she must finish counting to undo the intrusive thoughts to protect Vincent, his parents, and Mama. Vincent gets annoyed with Melati because she is slowing him down when they are supposed to be moving forward to find his parents. Melati realizes her actions and wants to apologize to Vincent but all she can do is “count and



count until [she] reaches a number that feels safe” (Alkaf, 2019, p. 190). Therefore, the excessive usage of this defense mechanism does not provide a positive outcome on Melati and this can be considered a maladaptive defense mechanism as it is disrupting her relationship with Vincent.

#### ***4.4.3 Rationalization***

Rationalization is a defense mechanism when a person uses logical reasoning to justify their negative feelings in a logical and rational manner. Here, frightening thoughts are transformed into logical and positive thoughts to eliminate the sense of hopelessness and helplessness from a negative circumstance to cover up the problem. In this novel, Melati uses rationalization to overcome her OCD by claiming that other people too are “being tormented by their own djinns” (Alkaf, 2019, pp. 15-16). She uses this defense mechanism to eliminate the anxiety caused by the Djinn that always torments her with intrusive thoughts. This causes her to maintain her emotions in a calm and composed manner. She perceives that other people have “learned to hide their demons too” (Alkaf, 2019, p.16). Hence, this shows that Melati has learned to eliminate her anxiety by using logical reasoning through rationalization to stay calm and have a good time with Safiyah. Hence, this can be considered as an adaptive defense mechanism.

#### ***4.4.4 Sublimation***

Sublimation is a defense mechanism which is similar to displacement but is focused on more constructive and positive outcomes that are socially acceptable rather than harmful outcomes. Based on the novel, Melati uses sublimation to overcome her OCD after receiving treatment from her local doctor by taking up a sports activity which is playing badminton. She is able to channel her negative frustrations out by playing badminton with her mother on a daily basis. She enjoys playing badminton as it helps her to have fun and at the same time it helps to

make “the Djinn inordinately happy” (Alkaf, 2019, p. 22). Although badminton did not really contribute much to overcome her mental illness, sublimation has benefited her to the extent that she is now eating properly and improving her physical fitness, making it as an adaptive defense mechanism.

#### ***4.4.5 Suppression***

Suppression is a defense mechanism where the individual tries to consciously make the negative thoughts out of awareness and to deal with them at a later period. In this context, Melati uses suppression as a defense mechanism to overcome her intrusive thoughts of her OCD when she tries to “stop thinking it” (Alkaf, 2019, p. 88). Unfortunately, her thought suppression is useless because she is unable to do so. It further causes her to have more distress and anxiety until she is unable to catch her breath. Everything starts to “feel tight, like she’s wearing a buttoned-up coat two sizes too small” (Alkaf, 2019, p. 148). Hence, this indicates that excessive usage of suppression leads to an unhealthier outcome which is a maladaptive defense mechanism.

#### **4.5 Melati’s Ego Strength to Counter Self-stigma**

As mentioned in Chapter 3, ego strength refers to how a person deals with distressing situations. In the psychoanalytic lens, it means how adaptive the ego can function, organize, and synthesize personal conflicts to adjust with the external world. When the ego is strong, individuals see themselves as a coherent person who can overcome problems to maintain their sense of self. In other words, it means how a person is able to come up with solutions to conflicts. In addition, people with good ego strength will also tend to use certain coping strategies adaptively to overcome life challenges. From the previous sections, it is understood that Melati suffers from a very negative superego which is a contributing factor for her to self-stigmatize herself. Based on the findings from Melati’s general ego functioning in the previous

section, it can be deducted that Melati has a healthy ego because it tries its best to temporize the judgement of the superego and tries to cope adaptively (the usage of defense mechanisms). Thus, ego strength is important to overpower this dominating force. In this context, this section will analyse Melati's ego strength to show how she indirectly struggles to find solutions to her problems to lead a normal life as she tries to stop internalizing the stereotypes related to her OCD caused by her inner voice.

#### ***4.5.1 Ego Strength to Speak up***

Melati's ego strength is seen when she makes the decision to share about her mental illness when she becomes good friends with Vincent. Having the ego strength to share problems with a friend is important because this enables a person to loosen up and be their ideal self. Without good ego strength, an individual with mental illness will tend to accept and apply the negative stigma on themselves as they are unable to regulate these negative emotions (Inzlicht et al., 2006). Here, Melati opens herself up and talks about her mental illness to Vincent. This is proved when Melati tells Vincent that she needs "to count things" to help her "calm down" (Alkaf, 2019, p. 138). At first, she has her doubts that Vincent might call her crazy, but then finally realising that he is an understanding person made her feel very much empowered. The Djinn also appears to become super active to instil fear in her mind with stigmatic criticism ensuring that she does not speak about it by making claims that Vincent will only call her a mad person. Nevertheless, Melati manages to overpower the Djinn in her head and explains about her mental illness to Vincent. This shows that her decision to speak up to other people is a sense of good ego strength to prevent herself from self-stigma instead of isolating herself and to suffer on the inside. She shares with Vincent her secrets because she trusts him and thinks that his support is the best way for her to not internalize the stigma of her mental illness and thinks of him as a kind and understanding person because all she "hears in his voice is compassion" (Alkaf, 2019, p. 140). Melati therefore feels happy and comfortable around

Vincent because she believes that having an understanding and compassionate friend is important because he can make her feel stronger to overcome obstacles. This adds to Melati's ego strength further. Without Vincent by her side, Melati feels lonely and scared as she perceives her condition as shameful. This is proved with the following excerpt, "being apart means never knowing what dangers could befall him and being apart means being alone" (Alkaf, 2019, p.172). Indirectly, Melati receives moral support from Vincent because he does not view her mental illness as something weird or funny. Instead, he appreciates Melati as a friend and instils positive emotions in her like listening to the Beatles' music together. Melati is able to distract her mind from OCD and manages to be herself whenever she is spending time with Vincent. Her good ego strength has enabled her to be brave to ignore the stigmatic voices of the Djinn that keeps telling her that she is going to embarrass herself. Therefore, Melati's ego strength to share problems with an understanding friend is a good way to overcome self-stigma.

#### ***4.5.2 Ego Strength to Seek Help***

Melati shows her ego strength characteristics by voicing out her obsessive problem to her mother to indirectly seek help to treat her mental illness. This is proved when she vents out her frustrations to her mother. This shows that her ego is strong enough to prevent her from isolating her thoughts and building up more pressure in her mind. However, the Djinn sparks a self-stigmatizing comment, "You're about to tell your own mother you imagine her dying—how can that be normal? She'll think you're crazy; she'll toss you into a mental asylum and leave you there to rot" (Alkaf, 2019, pp. 13-14). As mentioned earlier, the Djinn acts as her critical evaluator as which is why it is called the superego. Although the Djinn's stigmatic voice demoralizes Melati, she still manages to push herself and tells her mother everything about her condition to feel relieved.

At the same time, Melati's ego strength enables her to increase her self-esteem when she "willed herself to get better and to heal" (Alkaf, 2019, p. 62). This is shown when Melati agrees with her mother to visit a regular doctor. When that solution fails to work out for Melati, she then agrees with her mother to visit the *Ustaz* because of the lack of professional support back then. The only solution is to put them into the mental asylum which is where a form of mental illness stigma arises. Although Melati failed to cure her mental illness, her ego strength to stop self-stigma is a point to be noted because not everyone is able to voice out their problems for help. This is because self-stigma is ego depleting and will result in a decrease of self-esteem.

#### ***4.5.3 Ego Strength to be Self-Confident***

Towards the climax of the story, Melati's ego strength causes her to develop a huge confidence boost to overcome the self-stigma of her OCD. It starts when she gets totally exasperated with her mental illness and decides to give up on life after realising the rioters were about to kill her and her loved ones. It is at this moment when the Djinn starts to taunt her mercilessly with shame and causes her to feel very distressed. As she curls up with anxiety, she then gets a boost of confidence when she realizes how far she has come and what good deeds she has done for the people around her while searching for her mother. Her ability to believe in herself is boosted when she can "remember who [she] is" and this is when all the positive thoughts come flooding in her mind (Alkaf, 2019, p. 261). She is able to recognize all her positive contributions that she made throughout her vigorous journey. She says that she is "more than her Djinn, and always have been" (Alkaf, 2019, p. 262). This enables her to push through the mob and to save her people. With this, she realizes that she needs "to keep fighting" to move on in life and to never give up for the sake of her best friend, Safiyah (Alkaf, 2019, p. 273). Hence, this causes Melati to be brave and to confront challenges to protect her loved ones. This shows that Melati's self-confidence has prevented her from internalizing the stigmatic beliefs of her mental illness which is caused by the Djinn.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the analysis of Hanna Alkaf's *The Weight of Our Sky* on the main character's personality based on the theory of psychoanalysis. In the first part of the analysis, the protagonist's OCD is dominated mostly by the superego which represents the Djinn that tries to criticize her in any way possible. According to the second part of the analysis, the defense mechanism used by Melati were identified and categorised according to their adaptiveness which would be further discussed in Chapter 5. They facilitate the mind's ability to cope with unpleasant or painful experiences or emotions. Based on Melati's defense mechanisms, she has managed to use more adaptive defenses than maladaptive ones that contradict the common connotation that mental illness people often use maladaptive defenses. Lastly, Melati's ego strength to counter self-stigma was evaluated and found out that she made efforts to rise above her mental illness to lead a happy life.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### 5.0 Introduction

This study's main goal is to discuss three big aspects about OCD. Firstly, it is about finding out the protagonist's personality of her OCD based on Freud's concepts of the id, ego, and superego. Secondly, it is to find out what are the defense mechanisms used to overcome her mental illness. Finally, the third aspect is to evaluate how she uses her ego strength to counter self-stigma of her mental illness. Hence, this chapter will include a discussion of the major findings from Chapter 4 to sum up this literary analysis. Moreover, this chapter will conclude with a discussion on the limitations and recommendations for future study and an overall conclusion of this study.

### 5.1 Discussion on Melati's Id, Ego and Superego

Freud argues that the id, ego, and superego forms the behavior of an individual. This structural formation addresses how conflicts in the mind affect the actions and thoughts of the individual as these conflicts are mostly unconscious. Freud believed that a person with a healthy personality is able to regulate these conflicts in a balanced manner. On the other hand, when the individual has an imbalanced structure of the id, ego, and superego, they are believed to suffer from mental illness. Therefore, findings from this current study will be discussed to explore the imbalances between these concepts in a person suffering from OCD.

Based on the findings in the previous chapter, Melati's id is all about protecting her mother and the people around her. Her main id desire is to make sure that they are always safe. Therefore, it is understood that Melati developed an urge of inflated responsibility because she tends to ensure that they all must be safe and protected. According to Rhéaume et al. (1995) inflated responsibility in obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) individuals consider that they are entirely responsible in terms of the damage they could do to themselves or to others. In this

case, Melati's id of inflated responsibility appears when she thinks she must ensure the safety of the people that she has a good relationship with and those who are in need for help. Her inflated responsibility is known as an uncontrollable urge to prevent disasters from happening to someone and this feels like it will last forever. The disaster here is about the people around her dying in various horrible ways originating from the voices of her superego which is the Djinn that only judges and criticizes her every move. In this context, the racial riots even worsened her condition and the Djinn's voice kept dominating her mind with images of death. Throughout the story, this urge to be protecting people dominates her thoughts almost most of the time. This is because she fears that the Djinn which is acting as her superego will 'kill' them if she does not satisfy her id. In other words, her superego is controlling her id. It simply criticizes her to the extent that it makes Melati worry about her intrusive thoughts regarding her mother's death as well as having to be concerned in protecting other people that she cares about. Therefore, she must satisfy her id with the help of the ego to protect the people that she cares in order to prevent her intrusive thoughts from becoming a reality because she perceives that she has the capability to control over what happens in her circumstances. For example, when she failed to protect Saf, she got extremely anxious, and the superego blamed her for failing to protect her. Hence, this prompted her to have this id impulse and to act on it before it causes distress. This is also proved when she has the ability to push through the violent racial riots to save the lives of May and Jee just to seek gratification. Therefore, her id is acting as a survival instinct where she needs to protect people otherwise her superego will punish her.

Based on the findings, Melati has two types of ego characteristics. Firstly, her ego can make realistic decisions and it adheres to the reality principle. According to Freud, by momentarily stopping the discharge of the id's energy until a suitable time and location, the reality concept requires one to consider threats, conditions, and potential outcomes as they make decisions. For example, Melati's ego can make realistic decisions throughout the story.



Although her id impulses were strong, she manages to make realistic decisions whenever her id impulses appear. Therefore, her ego does not actually stop her id impulses. Instead, it operates to fulfill the id impulses in a much realistic way (Lapsley & Stey, 2012). Hence, this supports Freud's claim that the ego is the rational part of the mind. Secondly, she is ego dystonic which means that the intrusive thoughts in her head are not normal to her ego (Hart et al., 2018). Hence, her ego can test reality and it is able to identify those intrusive thoughts. For example, based on the findings, she tries to ignore her intrusive thoughts as she perceives them as illogical and unreasonable to the self. The people around her cannot just die merely because of her thoughts. However, although she tries to stop these painful thoughts, she is unable to do so because they always appear in her mind even when she does not want them. Sadly, she is only able to reduce the pressure temporarily with the counting rituals.

Furthermore, from the findings of Melati's superego, it can be discussed that she possesses a very harsh superego that is very punitive which is the most dominant element in the mind. This harsh superego is portrayed in the form of the Djinn as it aims to represent Melati's inner voice that indulges in negative self-evaluation. This Djinn always disrupts the mind of the protagonist by causing extreme feelings of guilt, shame, and anxiety by insulting her decisions with constant death threats. When she tells Vincent her problems, the superego makes her feel guilty by judging her actions as shameful. Besides that, many people who suffer from OCD are consumed by feelings of guilt and this feeling can be triggered by a variety of symptoms, like having sexual or aggressive thoughts or thinking that the self is responsible for harming others (Chiang et al., 2016). In this case, Melati's superego causes the ego that is trying to satisfy the id to feel anxious, guilt, and shame. For example, the Djinn blames Melati for her best friend, Safiyah's death as well as blaming her that her mother is going to die. The superego in the form of the Djinn tries its best to induce feelings of guilt and shame whenever it can even though she has done good deeds like contributing ideas to help Roslan. Besides

that, her harsh superego thrives from the feelings of fear, and this is well supported by Newman and Newman (2020) where they affirmed that the superego feeds on fear. Therefore, findings from this current study proves that Melati's Djinn is motivated by her fear of losing her mother. This fear originated when she had lost her father in the Penang riots. Hence, she develops the phobia of losing her mother and ever since then, her superego always threatens her with guilt and violent images of her mother dying. Kempke and Luyten (2007) stated that OCD is caused by a conflict between the ego and the superego, or by strong urges emanating from the id manifesting as obsessional symptoms as a punishment from the superego. In other words, the superego is trying to dominate her personality as it tries to control both her id and her ego. That is why Melati always never stops her counting rituals to overcome her anxiety because there is an imbalance between her id, ego, and superego.

## **5.2 Discussion on Melati's Defense Mechanisms Based on their Adaptiveness.**

As mentioned in the previous chapters, defense mechanisms are used to prevent negative activities, behaviour, or thoughts from taking over the mind. Hence, it is very important to use adaptive defenses for a more positive outcome. Based on the findings from this current study, Melati tries to use more adaptive defenses compared to maladaptive ones to overcome her OCD. This is significant to address that OCD sufferers can also cope adaptively despite their mental illness.

Based on the findings, when Melati used rationalization to overcome her OCD, it is considered as an adaptive defense mechanism. This is because she manages to put aside her negative emotions which is anxiety and fear which makes her to be calm and composed. For example, she thinks that other people too have their own Djinn in their mind that tell them what to do. In this case, Melati managed to overcome her anxiety by rationalizing that everyone has their own negative events. This contradicts the common connotation of rationalizing as a

bad defense mechanism by Simma (2009) where it is used for self-deception using irrational thoughts. However, she is not twisting any facts, but instead is trying to generalize that everyone has life problems to deal with too which is considered as a rational thought. Nam et al. (2019) claims that rationalization is an adaptive defense mechanism because it allows a person to adjust their perceptions in certain circumstances to adapt to their situation. Findings from the current study supports the claim from Nam et al. (2019) because Melati manages to neutralize her feelings of anxiety by giving logical explanations to herself to maintain her overall sense of self. Therefore, she is able to calm herself down with her own reasonable explanations to not let her OCD disturb her when hanging out with Safiyah.

Melati uses adaptive wishful thinking to overcome her negative thoughts of her mother dying. Wishful thinking is argued to be categorised as a maladaptive defense mechanism because it does not focus on reality and makes one to be optimistic in the here and now (Kappes & Oettingen, 2012). However, based on the findings, the protagonist's wishful thinking enables her to stay motivated to reach her goal. She was determined to find her loved one by all means necessary. Therefore, she uses wishful thinking in hopes to find her mother when she manages to find her way home. Despite not managing to find her mother there, she did not give up hope. She knows that her mother is not dead and is safe somewhere. This motivated her desire further to search for her mother. Finally, her dream did come true when she manages to be with her mother at the end of the story.

Besides that, when Melati uses sublimation, it is considered as an adaptive mechanism because it helps her to channel out frustrations in a constructive manner (Cohen et al., 2014). Freud perceived sublimation as a matured defense mechanism because it encourages people to act in a civilised manner (Cherry, 2020). Based on the findings, Melati started playing badminton to channel out her negative thoughts of her OCD. Since, playing badminton is a socially accepted activity, it certainly benefited Melati as she was regaining her appetite as well

as keeping her healthy. Although this did not help her to cure her mental illness, sublimation certainly has contributed some positive outcome towards her overall health.

Furthermore, to overcome her OCD, she uses the undoing and rituals defense mechanism very frequently. Overuse of the same defense mechanism causes an unhealthy outcome (New World Encyclopedia, n.d.). She never stops counting and tapping in threes to silence the Djinn in her mind. This is categorised as an immature defense mechanism because this affects her social life and in certain serious situations. Based on the findings, her relationship with Vincent is affected negatively when Melati just keeps counting to silence her harsh superego which is the Djinn during a critical time. This causes her to waste valuable time and makes Vincent angry when they were supposed to keep moving on to find his parents. She gets too busy with the numbers in her mind until she cannot move. Only when she feels that the number is perfect, then she considers her intrusive thoughts to be ‘undone’.

In addition, suppression is considered as an adaptive defense mechanism because it allows a person to deal with those thoughts maturely at a suitable time (Costa, 2020). However, findings from this study argues that suppression can lead to a more destructive outcome, and it is therefore considered a maladaptive defense mechanism. For instance, Melati tried suppressing her intrusive thoughts but in the long run, these thoughts caused a rebound effect on her (Wegner et al., 2004). In other words, it means that these intrusive thoughts will have a very much greater negative impact towards an individual. Based on the findings, Melati’s suppression defense mechanism takes a toll when it caused her to have severe anxiety attacks as she gets overwhelmed with uncomfortable feelings in her body, and this causes the thoughts to become a never-ending vicious cycle.

### 5.3 Discussion on Melati's Ego Strength as a Resilience Factor to Counter Self-stigma

People who have a high level of ego strength are more resilient in the face of adversity. Rather than giving up when confronted with a challenge, these people see it as a task to be completed (Cherry, 2020). The American Psychological Association (2012) defines resilience as the capability to successfully deal with hard situations such as adversity, tragedy, difficulty, and stresses including family and interpersonal difficulties, severe health concerns, and occupational and financial hardships. Being resilient does not only mean to bounce back from problems, but also to grow for personal development. Hence, in this study Melati chooses to be resilient to fight against the stigma of her mental illness. This is supported by a study conducted by Chang et al. (2019) where they claimed that being resilient is a way to counter stigma for those who are victims of being stigmatized. Hence, good ego strength is an important resilience factor.

Based on the findings, Melati has shown good ego strength to open herself up and share her mental illness with Vincent who is an understanding friend. This shows that she has developed a form of resilience to counter self-stigma when confiding with a supportive friend. According to Southwick et al. (2016) resilient people tend to get social support to deal with life problems such as stigma through a variety of psychological and behavioral mechanisms. In other words, resilient people surround themselves with positive friends. When they surround themselves with the people they trust, they are building a support system. They develop feelings of being understood by someone that makes their stressful situations into a much less threatening form. Having friends with whom a person can chat and share their thoughts, as well as having them to help gain insight of an issue is where social relations can be advantageous. In this context, Vincent supports Melati when she shares her problems with him and does not stereotype her OCD. He reassures her that everything will be alright and to not give up easily. This made Melati to feel comfortable around Vincent's presence and ever since then they

worked together to find Melati's mother. Melati did not give up hope to reach her goal either. With Vincent's strong support, anything was possible for Melati. Therefore, this shows that Melati's good ego strength to share her mental illness to a supportive friend is a characteristic of resilience to counter self-stigma.

Furthermore, Melati shows her resiliency to fight self-stigma when she has the tendency to ask for help to get rid of her mental illness. For example, she tells her mother about her problem. They both then agreed to form a solution which was to seek professional help together. Therefore, this shows that Melati's good ego strength has made her to be positive towards treatment and has developed resilience with a strong will power that her OCD will go away and finally silence those stigmatic claims that she will be sent to the mental asylum. This point is directly related to a study conducted by Crowe et al. (2016) where help seeking will help to promote resilience and at the same time it will help to decrease stigma. Hence, this shows that asking for help is a form of resilience to counter self-stigma. If a person does not seek help, they have the possibility to further worsen their mental illness because they might have already self-stigmatized themselves.

When an individual instills self-belief in their abilities, they are known to have good self-confidence. Runco (2014) states that having good ego strength determines good self-confidence. Thus, having good self-confidence leads to increased resilience to overcome self-stigma. According to Çutuk et al. (2020) individuals who are resilient tend to have good self-confidence, self-esteem, and good self-perception. In addition, self-confidence means a person trusts his or her ability and skills to overcome challenges. It also means to have a positive view about oneself and the ability to have a purpose in life (University of South Florida, 2021). Therefore, being confident helps to overcome various challenges faced in life as it makes one to be brave to overcome them. When a person has low self-confidence, their self-esteem also decreases. Low self-confidence, on the other hand, can make one to feel insecure and will face

difficulties when overcoming challenges. Based on the findings of this current study, Melati develops a good sense of self-confidence to become resilient and to overcome self-stigma when she believes in herself. This is shown when she decides to overpower her mental illness to lead a peaceful life. For example, she manages to rise above her Djinn with a new positive inner voice and vowed to lead a successful life for the sake of her best friend, Safiyah who died in the racial conflict. Hence, this indirectly shows her resiliency to bounce back from setbacks due to self-stigma as well as her mental illness. She managed to perceive that all her struggles and contributions just to unite back with her mother are not gone in vain. Her increased self-confidence has increased her self-esteem to become resilient. She has decided to overcome her fear of people dying from the highly critical Djinn as well as silencing her self-doubts and proved that her life is not worthless and continued to fight on for a positive change.

#### **5.4 Recommendations for further studies**

Besides that, according to the labelling theory of mental illness, some people become the labels that others place on them. In other words, this is called self-stigma. Although this study has provided evidence to counter self-stigma, more research is needed to further clarify on how self-stigma is being portrayed in the novel by using another theory. When a person is diagnosed with a mental illness, societal ideas about the mentally ill become personal and can lead to negative self-esteem (Markowitz, 2017). To further understand how self-stigma negatively affects a person, further research is required to address this issue. This is because an individuals' personality and actions can be defined or affected by the words used to define or characterise them, according to the labelling theory. The theory suggests that mental illness stigma leads to prejudice, loss of socio-economic status, lowered self-worth, and increased symptoms (Markowitz, 2017). Hence, there is a need to understand the consequences of self-stigma that alter the protagonist's identity formation through integrating the labelling theory.

Furthermore, the stigma of mental illness could also be addressed by using trauma theory to further educate people that mental illness could also originate from a traumatic event. This study has addressed the personality of an individual suffering from OCD using Freud's concepts of the Id, Ego and Superego. However, one common limitation from using these concepts is that they are not able to clearly address the past experiences of the protagonist. They are focused on the unconscious desires and conflicts in the mind. Besides that, Freud's theory is also claimed to be biased towards women as stated in Chapter 1. To avoid this gender issue, a completely new psychological theory could be used to avoid this issue which is by applying the trauma theory. By using trauma theory, the main cause of the protagonist's OCD can be explored by diving into her past experiences. Besides that, by using trauma theory, new findings on why she has a harsh superego could be addressed. Trauma is generally accepted as a horrific event that has a profound influence on an individual's mental organisation and perception of the outside world. One fundamental argument of contemporary literary trauma theory is that trauma produces a speechless fright that splits or manipulates identity (Balaev, 2014). Therefore, further studies could consider analysing the root cause of the protagonist's mental illness by analysing the traumatic events faced and how her personality is being manipulated.

In addition, the lack of prior research studies on this topic is also another limitation of this current study. The lack of using psychoanalytic concepts to analyse a literary character suffering from mental illness needs to be further expanded especially in terms of overcoming a type of mental illness. Although findings from this study is able to narrow down the research gap on this topic, further research is required in the field of English Literature to analyse mental illness and stigma. For instance, future researchers could incorporate the concept of ego strength from this present study to further analyse a character's abilities to overcome stigma and other mental illnesses besides OCD as this concept is very scarce in literary analysis. Based



on this study, the protagonist's ego strength was good, and she was able to overcome self-stigma positively. Hence, there is a question of how a person with poor ego strength counters self-stigma in literary analysis. Therefore, future studies could address this problem further.

On the other hand, the application of certain defense mechanisms is limited in this study. This study has managed to contribute knowledge on the usage of adaptive and maladaptive defenses based on the context, but not all the mechanisms are applied due to its applicability. Therefore, future studies could also apply this same approach when analyzing other literary texts. This is because certain defenses that are always connoted as maladaptive could be adaptive and vice versa depending on its context. Therefore, this will enable readers to understand when to classify certain defense mechanisms according to its level of adaptivity and encourage readers to use more adaptive mechanisms in life.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, Melati's superego is the most dominant aspect of her OCD. This is because it acts as the inner critic in her mind which causes her to feel extremely guilty about certain situations and it criticizes her about her decision-making capabilities by causing doubt, shame, and feelings of worthlessness. Her superego is also the main cause of her intrusive thoughts about her mother dying. This is because it wants to control both her id and ego. Therefore, the ego is stuck between the id and the superego which makes Melati do her counting rituals. On the other hand, her id is to protect the people around her as it has a sense of inflated responsibility. The ego on the other hand, tries to satisfy the id by following the reality principle and is ego dystonic towards the superego's intrusive thoughts. In other words, the ego knows that her superego's thoughts are not real but is helpless towards it. Besides that, Melati makes the effort to use more adaptive defenses such as wishful thinking, sublimation, and rationalization to overcome her OCD. The maladaptive defenses are rituals and undoing

and suppression. Finally, Melati's good ego strength enables her to be resilient in the face of self-stigma by sharing her problems with an understanding friend, seeking help from parents and believing in herself through self-confidence.

Thus, readers would be able to use a psychoanalytical approach to understand OCD as well as to overcome self-stigma through understanding a person's personality. Through the first part of the analysis, readers could understand the application of Freud's id, ego and superego when analysing OCD. Findings from this study manages to contradict the common connotation that the superego is the angel on one's shoulders. It is the devil because all it wants is to cause negative outcomes. Readers could differentiate between each personality element to find out which one dominates or causes imbalance in the mind. Besides that, the analysis argues that certain defense mechanisms that are maladaptive could be adaptive and vice versa such as wishful thinking and suppression. The relevance of discussing defense mechanisms to overcome OCD is to enable readers to differentiate between adaptive and maladaptive defenses based on certain contexts. This is to further encourage readers to apply more adaptive defense mechanisms than maladaptive ones to overcome life's challenges. Finally, the evaluation of ego strength is important to educate readers how a person is able to overcome obstacles in a healthy or negative way. Thus, this study encourages readers about the importance of having good ego strength to overcome adversity such as self-stigma.

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