



Main Character's Conflict and Defense Mechanisms in The Novel "Tentang Kamu" by Tere Liye

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ABSTRACT

The study dealt with the main character's conflicts and defense mechanisms found in a novel "*Tentang Kamu*" written by Tere Liye. The objectives of this study were to find out the types of conflict of the main character and the defense mechanism that is reflected in solving the problem. The sources of the data were taken from the novel "*Tentang Kamu*" By Tere Liye. This was an observation study because this study focused on the analysis of spoken language in the novel. The collected data were identified, divided, and analyzed based on literature and psychology perspectives of Islam's (2016) theory and defense mechanisms by Cramer (2006). The

findings show that Sri Ningsih, as the main character, faces the external conflict which is described as person vs nature whereas the internal conflicts is person vs himself which describes the features of sadness, anger, betrayal, anxiety, love and regret as experienced by the main character. The conflict between person vs. herself (internal conflict) becomes the most common conflict faced by the main character then it was followed with the defense mechanism of denial and identification.

Keywords:

conflicts, defense mechanisms, denial, identification

INTRODUCTION

As human being, people encounter a conflict with themselves, this is known as inner conflict or internal conflict as in literary term. (Kuswidyasari's, 2013) states that conflicts continuously occur between the systems of personality, the ego, id, and super ego. (Nugroho & Viladinia's, 2018) says that external conflict is when people struggle against other's force, while internal conflict is when people struggle against opposing idea or feelings within their own mind, at the time they want to be independent but also an approval from others. In other words, conflict could be inside of someone or an internal conflict (a character against him/herself), and could be between a person with other than him/herself or external conflict.

Conflict can be found in a description or a story told by a writer or narrator in novel. The sentences express the idea of controversies or dilemmas which can be studied by analyzing the meaning of the sentences in terms of the novel theme. Novel is one of kinds of literature. Novel is fiction in the form of written or oral which has two elements are intrinsic and extrinsic. Novel, usually a book-length fictional prose narrative, has seen the development of the nonfiction novel in recent years, and some novels have been written in verse (Nugroho & Viladinia's, 2018). In a novel, human beings are presented as characters, because the story that is figured out in a novel is the representation of human experiences.

This research examined the conflicts faced by and the defense mechanisms the conflicts faced by and defense mechanisms made by the main character of *Tentang Kamu* novel written by Tere Liye. This research focused on the conflicts which are faced by Sri Ningsih, a strong patient woman, who suffers in her life-based on theory by (Islam, 2016) that classified several types of conflicts:

1) Person vs. Person

Conflict that pits one person against another is about as classic as a story can get. This type of conflict is pretty much self-explanatory, with one person struggling for victory over another.

2) Person vs. Self

In this type of conflict, a character finds him or herself battling between two competing desires or selves, typically one good and one evil.

3) Person vs. Nature

In this type of conflict, humankind comes up against nature, battling for survival against its inexorable and apathetic force.

4) Person vs. Society

The person-against-society conflict follows the storyline of an individual or a group fighting (sometimes successfully, sometimes not-so-successfully) against injustices within their society.

This research also examined the defense mechanism based on theory of (Cramer, 2006), there are several types of defense mechanisms:

1. Denial

Denial may be defined as the failure to see, recognize, or understand the existence or the meaning of an internal or external stimulus, so as to avoid the anxiety that would occur if the stimulus were recognized.

2. Projection

Projection has been used to encompass any process in which inner phenomena are allocated to the external world. It means that, if someone uses projection as their defense mechanisms, their unacceptable thoughts will be attributed to someone or something else. It is to relieve their disclosing or discomforting anxiety.

3. Identification

Cramer (2006, 94) mentions the main features of identification as shown below:

1. A change that occurs in the ego (i.e.: the personality, behavior, or motives of the individual).
2. The change is in the direction of becoming like some other individual, group or cause.
3. The change serves the purpose of maintaining an affective relationship with a significant other.
4. The change is related to the development and maintenance of self-esteem.

The theory of conflict by (Islam, 2016) and the theory of defense mechanism by (Cramer, 2006) will be appropriate to discover the main character, Sri Ningsih's conflicts and defense mechanisms.

METHOD

This study was conducted by applying the qualitative method of the research. Qualitative research explores attitudes, behavior, and experiences (Dawson, 2002). For the design of the research, narrative research is used. Narrative research is a literary form of

qualitative research with strong ties to literature and it provides a qualitative approach in which it is written in a persuasive, literary form (Creswell 2011, 502).

The source of data in this research were taken from a novel by TereLiye entitle *TentangKamu*. The novel was published in 2017 by RepublikaPenerbit. The novel consists of 523 pages. The data of this study are in form of clauses, sentences, expressions, or pharagraph found in the novel. The data were taken by some techniques, which are the novel must be first read completely to understand its content and to know how the main character plays her roles to the end of the story. After red the novel, automatically the researcher found the form of clauses, sentences, expressions or pharagraph which can figure out conflicts and the defense mechanisms. The next step was note taking and classifying the conflicts and defense mechanisms. Last step was analysing the excerpts from the novel based on the theory. After preparing and reading the data, the writer analyzed the findings of conflict and defense mechanisms in the data source with the theories used.

RESULTS

The results show that Sri Ningsih, as the main character, faces the external conflict which is described as person vs nature whereas the internal conflicts is person vs himself which describes the features of sadness, anger, betrayal, anxiety, love and regret as experienced by the main character. The conflict between person vs. herself (internal conflict) becomes the most common conflict faced by the main character then it was followed with the defense mechanism of denial and identification.

DISCUSSIONS

It was found that there are external conflicts and internal conflicts experienced by the main character derived from traumatic or bad incidents in her childhood, adolescence and marriage life.

1. External Conflict

- Person vs nature

Person vs. nature is the theme in literature that places a character against forces of nature (Islam, 2016, p.48). Person vs nature places a character against natural forces. This theory is appropriate with the finding. This external conflict occurred in the main character's childhood life are conveyed by the statements below:

Gerakan Sri lincah melewati nyala api di lantai. Sese kali dia menghindari potongan kayu yang terjatuh. Matanya perih, kulitnya seperti akan mengelupas, juga terbatuk-batuk, susah sekali bernapas, tapi Sri tidak peduli. Dia tiba di pintu kamar depan, mendorongnya. Pintu itu terjepit sesuatu. Tidak bisa dibuka. Sri menoleh, melihat kursi kayu, dia berlari mengambil kursi itu, kemudian menghantamkannya ke pintu. Satu kali, dua kali, kursi itu lebih dulu hancur, tidak cukup kuat untuk menjebol pintu. Bagaimana ini? Sri meremas jemarinya, berpikir cepat, sudut matanya melihat balok kayu sudah terbakar, gadis itu mengangkatnya, tangannya melepuh, dia menggigit bibir menahan rasa sakit. Menghantamkan balok kayu sekuat mungkin. Kali ini pintu kamar terbuka.

(Sri's movement was agile through the flames on the floor. Occasionally she avoided the falling pieces of wood. Her eyes were sore, her skin seemed to be peeling off, she coughed too, hard to breath, but Sri didn't care. She got to the front door and pushed it. The door was stuck with something. It was bolted. Sri turned around seeing a wooden chair and ran to take it and used it to break the door. Once, twice, the chair was broken later, not hard enough to break it open. How is this going? Sri squeezed her fingers, thought fast and her eyes caught the fire of the wood frame. She lifted it up with her burned hands and bit her lips to bear the pain. She threw the wood pane hard to the door and now it was open.)

People and nature are two things that cannot be avoided in life. This is an example of person vs nature conflict that faced by Sri Ningsih, she forced herself to go through the blaze, choosing to fight against the fire and hoping to save her stepmother and brother. She directly suffers from the force of nature which is fire.

2. Internal Conflict

- Person Vs himself/herself

Person vs him or herself places a character against his or her own will, confusion, or fears. Person vs him or herself can also be found when the character

tries to find out who he or she is, or when a character comes to a realization or a change in character. Although the struggle is an internal conflict, the character's can be influenced by external forces (Islam, 2016).

The psychological conflict found in the novel that leading to the defense mechanism is described the features of sadness, anxiety, betrayal, love and regret. These internal conflict occurred in childhood, adolsence and womanhood life period which are conveyed by the statements below:

1. Sadnesss

Hariitu, tahun 1955, usia Sri Rahayu menjelang Sembilan tahun, itulahterakhir kali Sri melihat Bapaknya. Sejak hari itu, dia sempurna menjadi yatim-piatu. (It was in 1955 when Sri Rahayu was almost 9 years old. She saw her father for the last time. Since that day, she had truly become an orphan, p. 96).

Sri berlarian di jalan setapak, melintasi rumah-rumah rapat, tidak tahu mau kemana. Dia tidak mau ada yang melihatnya menangis. Sejak kecil, Nugroho mendidiknya menjadi anak yang kuat dan sabar, Dia tidak pernah lagi menangis di depan orang lain. Gerimis menderas membungkus seluruh pulau. Sri terisak, diatidaktahan lagi untuk tidak menangis. (Sri runs on the footpath crossing the crowded houses and having no idea where to go. She doesn't want anyone to see her crying. Since she was a child, Nugroho has taught her to become a tough and patient child. She will never shed tears in front of other people. Drizzle falls covering the whole island. Sri weeps as she can't help crying. p.101).

It is easily predictable that a 9-years-old girl can experience a conflict in her mind when she feels sad because she has lost someone, namely her father, whom she depends on to struggle for her life. She is now an orphan who must stand on her own feet to survive. She is alone without any relatives who can help her to face the reality of life. Her wishes and expectations from her father who loves her very much are thrown away into the sadness. Sri experiences what is called the internal conflict in her mind as she realizes her status as an orphan because she has lost her father.

Defense Mechanism of identification

Sri is confronted with the internal conflict which arises from the problems of life to solve. The way she helps herself is called her defense mechanism. Sri knows her status well and realizes that she cannot do anything about it. However, she can change her behavior to adapt to the new condition in this case from a happy daddy's little girl to a mourning orphan. This is the identification defense of mechanism. She believes that no matter what happens to her, she always has a way out by changing her perception about life.

2. Anxiety

Sri menggeleng perlahan. Dia tidak bias pulang jika embernya belum penuh, dia tidak tahu harus sampai jam berapa. Satu tahun sejak kepergian Bapaknya, bukan hanya harus membantu pekerjaan rumah, mengepel, mencuci, menyetrika, memasak, dia jugaharusbekerjamencariuang. (Sri nodded her head gently. She couldn't go home if her pail was not full of water yet. She didn't know until what time she would stay at the sea. One year had passed ever since her father died. She not only helped her stepmother to do the chores like mopping the floor, washing the clothes, ironing and cooking but also had to work to earn some money p. 106).

Everyone can experience anxiety because people want to achieve something according to their plan. Sri is forced to work hard to help her stepmother to do the housework. This is a big challenge for her because she wishes that she were not having such a big burden. She has suffered from the heartache for a year after her father died leaving her alone without any support. Sri realizes that she has no power to argue with her cruel step-mother. She was most of the time anxious for not full feeling what her step mother wanted.

Defense Mechanism of identification

She defends her ego by identification that is she change her own role as a person who is expected to help her stepmother in order to maintain her affective relationship with her stepmother. That is the way she can hide her anxiety from her step-mother.

3. Suspicion

Sri menelan ludah. Ini bukan ceramah agama yang dulu sering disampaikan Mas Musoh. Dulu Sri selalu suka mendengar Mas Musoh membahas kajian agama, selalu tajam, bernas dan membuatin syaf. Tapi sekarang? Sri bingung. (Sri swallows her saliva. This is not a religious sermon that has often been presented by Mas Musoh. In the past Sri always loved listening to Mas Musoh who discussed religion which was critical, inspirational and made people regret. But now? Sri is confused. p. 183).Malam itu, Sri tidak bias tidur nyenyak. Kalimat-kalimat Musoh menyakiti hatinya yang senantiasa bersahaja memandang setiap persoalan. Besok pagi, Sri menumpang angkutan umum kembali ke madrasah, dengan berjuta pertanyaan menumpuk di kepalanya. (That night Sri couldn't sleep soundly. Musoh's words hurt her heart that was simple in perceiving every problem. The next morning, Sri took a bus to go to the Islam school with millions of questions lingering in her mind. p 186).

Suspicion is a feeling or belief that someone has committed a crime or done something wrong. In daily life, someone may suspect another person for being untruthful because there is a mismatch between what he says and what he does. This is commonly regarded as a violation of friendship or trust. Sri is suspicious of Musoh's words because she feels irritated or offended by the husband of MbakLatri. Sri also realizes that Musoh has changed. His words hurt her feelings. Sri thinks that Musoh must be a pious and religious person because he always teaches his students to become religious, but in this situation, it seems to Sri that Mas Musoh has changed (*In the past Sri always loved listening to Mas Musoh...*). Sri has an internal conflict that is whether she will always respect to the two people as she used to.

Defense Mechanism of identification

Sri must change her perception of the world that there can be a change in any situation. She knows the truth about Mas Musoh. She knows that she can't change the

manners of Mas Musoh but she can change her own attitude towards the two people. This defense mechanism is called identification.

4. Betrayal

"Aku minta maaf, Sri." Mbak Lastri dan Musoh muncul, "Aku tidak akan pernah teg amenyakitimu. Kamu sahabat baikku, aku menyukaimu sejak kita pertama kali bertemu. Tapi aku haru smelakukan ini, kamu harus diikat, tidak boleh kemana-mana untuk sementara waktu." "Apa yang Mbak Lastri lakukan?" Sri bertanya dengan suara gemetar. (I'm sorry,Sri. Mbak Lastri and Musoh appeared. "I will never have a heart to hurt you. You are my best friend. I have liked you since the first time we met. But I have to do this. You must be bound so that you can't go anywhere for the time being. p. 189).

Baginya, hingga kapanpun, Mbak Lastri adalah sahabat terbaiknya. Terlepas dari pilihan politik, rasa dengki, apapun itu, Mbak Lastri adalah sahabatnya. Tapi Sri tidak pernah berbohong dalam hidupnya, dan dia tidak akan tergoda untukmu lai berbohong. Maafkan aku, Mbak Lastri, Sri terisak, maafkan aku jika 'mengkhianatimu' dalam pengadilan ini.Sri mengangguk. Hakim mengetuk palunya. (For her, at any time, MbakLastri is her friend. But Sri never tell lies in her life and she is not allured to begin telling lies. Forgive me, MbakLastri. Sri is weeping, "forgive me if I have become a traitor in this legal court. Sri nods. The judge hits the hammer p.199).

Betrayal is an act of betraying someone or something, or the fact of someone or something being betrayed (Cambridge dictionary). Cases of betrayal can be observed in the daily affairs. When someone tells a lie as the violation of confidence, then, he is said to betray his friend. There is an aspect of lie or revelation of something secret. The person can be betrayed by his friend who doesn't tell him the hidden bad intentions that produce disappointment.

Sri thinks that MbakLastri will never betray her because of her simplicity of life. She expects something positive from her in return. However, Sri has learnt that sometimes betrayal is unavoidable. She herself has to betray MbakLastri in the court trials because she wants to be honest with herself. It is impossible for her to tell a lie. Thus, the lie of MbakLastri must be violated for the sake of the truth she holds in life. This is a revenge betrayal.

Defense Mechanism

When Sri knows that Lastri turns out to be a cruel woman to her, she then applies the defense mechanism of identification, that is, she must change her behavior in dealing with Lastri. She has no power to change her and so she has to change her own behavior to deal with Lastri.

Sri has the principle of maintaining her character that she will never tell lies. *(she is not allured to begin telling lies)* This is a change in her life when she is confronted with two choices. However, she regrets her own actions. The defense mechanism in the mind of Sri is identification which means that Sri chooses to tell the truth.

5. Love

Apakah Sri menyukai Hakan? Itu masih menjadi misteri bahkan bagi Sri sendiri. Kadang dia merasa terganggu dengan kehadiran Hakan-karena pengemudi tidak boleh mengobrol dengan penumpang. Kadang dia juga jengkel karena Hakan terus mengajaknya mengobrol saat bus mulai bergerak. Tapi setiap bus merapat di halte itu, dia menoleh keluar mencari Hakan, lantas buru-buru menatap kedepan saat Hakan naik. Bergaya baru lihat, pura-pura menoleh tidak peduli, menjawab pendek salam Hakan. (Does Sri like Hakan? It was still a mystery for Sri herself. Sometimes she felt disturbed by Hasan's presence because a driver was not allowed to talk with a passenger. Sometimes she felt offended because Hasan kept persuading her to have a chat when the bus was about to move. But each time the bus approached the terminal, she looked outside to look for Hakan and then hurriedly turned her eyes to look to the front

when Hakan got on the bus. She acted as if it were the first time she saw him and pretended to ignore him and answered his greetings in short utterances. p. 317).

The word “love” is very common to all people. However, it is the most controversial issue of life. People have different perceptions and concepts about the nature love. It is not clear how to define it as it is related to many aspects of emotion. Sri in her adult life experiences the problems of falling in love and getting married. Hakan, the Turkish worker in London, pays attention to her and gets attracted with Sri who is a hard-working bus driver. Love can produce a conflict when it is not well understood (*Does Sri like Hakan? It was still a mystery...*). This is an internal conflict. Sri has the internal conflict because she has to deal with her own feelings about falling in love with Hakan. She can't make up her mind yet whether to admit it as a sign of love or not.

Defense Mechanism of identification

Sri applies the defense mechanism of identification because she can't stop her feelings towards Hakan. The problem is that she must accept the feelings that influence her attitude towards the man. This is the defense mechanism of identification. She realizes that Hakan's presence in her life has influenced her way of thinking about Hakan.

6. Regret

Sri menangis dalam pelukan Hakan. Sejatinya, Sri ingin sekali bilang ke Hakan, apakah dia masih 'anak yang dikutuk'? Dulu, saat dia lahir, ibunya meninggal. Sekarang, saat dia melahirkan, putrinya yang meninggal. Jauh sekali dia sudah pergi, kenangan di Pulau Bungin tetap mencengkeram kepalanya. Tetapi Sri tidak pernah berbagi kisah tentang masa lalu pada Hakan. Tidak padasiapapun. (Sri cried in the embrace of Hakan. In fact, Sri wanted very much to tell Hakan if she was still “the cursed child?” In the past, when she was born, her mother died. Now when she gave a birth, her daughter died. Though she had gone far away, the memory of Bungin island

still lingered in her mind .But Sri never told the past life affairs to Hakan. Not to anyone either. p.384).

Banyak sekali pengorbanan yang dilakukan suaminya. Hakan bersedia tinggal di apartemen ini, padahal mereka bias pindah, memiliki rumah yang lebih baik di tengah kota London. Hakan yang bersedia menyesuaikan dengan budaya baru, padahal komunitas pendatang Turki, juga sama besarnya dengan pendatang India. Sri menangis. Diaabai sekali melihat semua halitu. (There was much sacrifice performed by her husband. Hakan was willing to live in an apartment, but actually they could get out and possess a better house in the heart of London. Hakan was willing to adjust to a new culture where as the number of Turkish immigrants was the same as that of Indian community of immigrants. Sri cried. She had ignored everything about it. p.411).

Regret can occur to anybody because of the mistake she made in the past. Regret is a feeling of sadness, repentance, or disappointment over something that has happened or been done (Cambridge dictionary). In this case, Sri regrets having kept a lot of secrets of her past to Hakan who can help her solve many problems of life (*In fact, Sri wanted very much to tell Hakan..*) Sri has an internal conflict in which she is challenged herself to tell her past stories to Hakan but the traumatic experiences make her hesitant to reveal her life to Hakan. She feels that telling the past will only lead to sadness for the people who listen to her. Sri undergoes an internal conflict in which she can only feel sorry for her attitude.

Defense Mechanism of Identification

Sri demonstrates the defense mechanism of identification in which she accepts the fact that what has happened cannot return. She tries to reduce the anxiety on her part and convince the other people that she is all right. (*But Sri never told the past life affairs..*) This is a change of attitude towards events that have happened.

Defense Mechanism of Denial

Sri also experiences the defense mechanism of denial, that is, she fails to see her husband has given her many sacrifices is good at making her happy, she doesn't realize that what Hakan has done is the symbol of love for her. *(Sri cried. She had ignored everything about it).*

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and discussions, it can be concluded that there are external conflicts and internal conflicts experienced by the main character derived from traumatic or bad incidents in her childhood, adolescence and marriage life. The external conflict is described as person vs nature whereas the internal conflicts is person vs himself which describes the features of sadness, anger, betrayal, anxiety, love and regret as experienced by the main character. The researcher also finds that the conflict between person vs. herself (internal conflict) becomes the most common conflict faced by the main character, Sri Ningsih which is demonstrated by the acts of defense mechanism to overcome her conflict. Next, the researcher concludes that the main character experiences the defense mechanism of denial by trying to ignore what happens as if it didn't happen in her life thinking that everything will be alright. The main character also applies the defense mechanism of identification by learning how to adapt to a new situation by changing her own behaviour so that she can accept the reality of life.

For further research, the findings of this research suggests that readers should learn more about character's conflict and the defense mechanism in literary work in order to generate more specific research topics about different conflicts and how a character overcomes the conflict by using the acts of defense mechanism. And also it is suggested that readers or scholars should read a novel by understanding the perspective of the writer which can produce wisdom to solve many problems of life. Scholars should perceive a novel as a source of inspiration that can enrich their life in understanding the human conflicts in life.

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