



**Defense Mechanism on The Main Character Depicted in
The Babadook Movie**

A FINAL PROJECT

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**DEFENSE MECHANISM ON THE MAIN CHARACTER DEPICTED IN
*THE BABADOOK MOVIE***

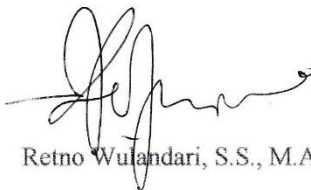
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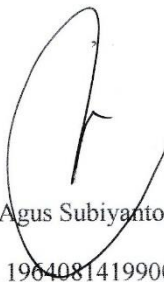
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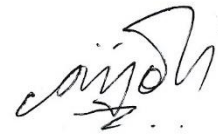
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MOTTO AND DEDICATION

Man Jadda Wa Jada

(Umar Bin Abdul Aziz)

Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet

(Aristotle)

Patience is the key which solves all problems

(Sudanese Proverb)

You may see me struggle but you will never see me quit

(Anonymous)

*This project is dedicated to
My beloved mother and myself
To everybody who supported me complete this project*

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini membahas suatu nilai mekanisme pertahanan diri yang terkandung dalam sebuah karya film dari Jennifer Kent yang berjudul *The Babadook*. Proyek ini bertujuan untuk menunjukkan contoh – contoh nyata dari adanya mekanisme pertahanan diri dalam setiap individu. Mekanisme pertahanan diri merupakan perkembangan ilmu psikoanalisis yang berdasarkan pada teori Sigmund Freud yang dikenal sebagai suatu tanggapan yang bersifat positif ataupun negatif dari setiap individu dalam menghadapi suatu kejadian atau masalah tertentu. Salah satu tanggapan dari mekanisme pertahanan diri yang positif adalah seseorang akan berusaha untuk lebih baik diam dan bersabar daripada menuruti amarahnya. Sedangkan untuk tanggapan dari mekanisme pertahanan diri yang negatif adalah seseorang akan cenderung mengikuti amarahnya ketika dihadapkan pada situasi yang membuatnya tertekan.

Kata Kunci: Mekanisme pertahanan diri, Teori Sigmund Freud, Psikoanalisis

1. INTRODUCTION

Defense mechanism is a manner in which we think or behave in particular ways to protect and defend ourselves. Defense mechanism is an attempt to alleviate anxiety by using methods that deny, falsify, or distort reality and that impede the development of personality (Freud, 1954:85). Defense mechanism has several types, such as repression, projection, negation, displacement, sublimation, denial, regression, rationalization, and reaction formation. This paper will analyze three types of defense mechanism which are sublimation, displacement, and denial. This theory is all about the influence of people's own unconscious mind towards their behavior. Freud believes that human's mind consists of three elements, namely *id*, *ego*, and *superego* which they have important roles in resulting in a defense mechanism.

Roger Ebert as the film critic of the Chicago Sun-Times in 1967 and honorary degrees from American Film Institute says in his journal which according to Robert Le Prince (10 : 1888) movie is a flexible film running through a camera and recording a strip of images in real time. Aside from its purpose to entertain public, movie is also one of the best media that is able to be a way to give an information or deliver particular messages indirectly. *The Babadook* is a 2014 Australian-Canadian psychological horror movie written and directed by Jennifer Kent. Aside from that, *The Babadook* has won nine awards category which is earned from British Board of Film Classification such as best film, best direction, best original screenplay, and best first feature from The Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts Awards (AACTA) and Saturn award,

then best horror, best limited-release, best screenplay, best actress, and best supporting actor from Empire Award and Fangoria Chainsaw Award.

The writer is interested in analyzing this movie because there are some defense mechanism values which are clearly contained within the movie, especially in the main character of the movie named Amelia. Amelia is the main character on this movie, she is depicted to have a behaviour which shows the defense mechanism aspects related to how defense mechanism values arise in horror movie. Amelia is the main character in this movie, whose attitude reflects a defense mechanism aspect.

Amelia faces a lot of troubles in her work that gives an influence to her financial. In summary, the defense mechanism aspect can be seen in how the character is able to struggle, substitute her sadness, and survive in running her life. She does not get any help from anyone, especially from men. This woman character does all of the things including the things that men supposed to do and all of men roles are been lived and done just only by herself. That is all the matters which make the writer is interested in analyzing defense mechanism aspect in *The Babadook* movie.

Furthermore *The Babadook* tells about a lovely family named Oskar and Amelia who have no trouble in running their life. Amelia is pregnant for the first time and they both seem so happy to welcome their first child. In the way to the hospital, they get crashed and Oskar is dead. When her first child is born, she is just being the only parent for her child named Sam. She raises Sam by her own

without help from anyone. Things that is very tough for Amelia that Sam behavior is very prankish, it can be seen when Sam against Amelia about what she tells to him, fight with his friends, and untill he drops out of school.

Amelia works as a nursing home to pay all of payment for her family, and she gets stress in this situation but she keeps trying hard to be a good mother and also should be able to be a father for Sam, and pay all the payment for her family necessity. One night, Amelia takes Sam to sleep to his bedroom by reading him a book entitled *Mister Babadook* which is randomly taken by Sam in a warehouse. The character of *Babadook* in this story is the demon of the mysterious storybook that always haunts anybody who opens the book. After reading the book of *Mister Babadook*, the terror begun. Because of that, Sam's behavior begin more prankish, naughty, and out of control and Mr. Babadook start to do a terror to her, and Amelia has never again had a good sleep because of the terror, this matter makes Amelia stresses and bothers her mind. She needs to face it all in the same time.

In the other night, Mr. Babadook goes back to do a terror again to Amelia by resembling her husband in purpose to kill her own child. She gets really stressed at the moment, she calls police about the disturbance to find a help but the result is nothing, they do not believe her. In the final scene, her stressfulness become her strength to against Mr. Babadook and when Mr. Babadook knows he fails, he disappears and Amelia and Sam back to be a lovely family again.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.2 MOVIE THEORY

According to Christopher P Jacob (2001:5), a professional movie director, movies are entertainment. Movies are documents of time and place, in artistic forms of self-expression. Movies that we see at theatres, on television, or home video are typically narrative films. The writer will give deeper explanation about what happens in the movie in order to understand better about the movie elements. According to Pratista, “intrinsic elements in the movie are divided into two elements, narrative elements and cinematic elements (2008: 1)”.

Narrative elements consist of several elements, such as theme, character, and setting. Other than that, cinematic elements consist of visual elements and audio elements. A bit further about cinematic elements, there are visual elements and audio elements. Ascher and Pincus (1999) states that “there are several types of shots distance, which is also known as ‘field size’. Four of them which are often used are long shot, full shot, medium shot, and close up. While three of them that are rarely used are extreme long shot, $\frac{3}{4}$ shot (also known as ‘American shot’ or ‘cowboy shot’), and extreme close up (also known as ‘Italian shot’).”

2.1 DEFENSE MECHANISM

The writer uses a defense mechanism theory as a branch of psychoanalysis theory. Defense mechanism is an attempt to alleviate anxiety by using methods that deny, falsify, or distort reality and that impede the development of personality (Freud, 1954:85), while according to Alwisol (2009:23) defense mechanism is “*suatu strategi pertahanan yang diperankan oleh ‘ego’ yang dimiliki suatu individu untuk melawan impuls ‘id’ dan menentang tekanan ‘superego’ pada realist.*” “a defense strategy played by an individual’s *ego* against a desire of *id* and *superego* pressure on external reality.”

Freud believes that defense mechanism helps shield the *ego* from the conflicts created by the *id*, *superego*, and reality. The *id* provides for the immediate discharge of quantities of excitation (energy or tension) that are released in the organism by internal or external information (Freud, 1954: 22). The *ego* is the executive of the personality, controlling, and governing the *id* and the *superego* and maintaining commerce with the external world in the interest of the total personality and its far-flung needs (Freud, 1954: 28). The *superego* is the moral or judicial branch of personality (Freud, 1954: 31)

There are three branches of defense mechanism which are used by individual to reduce the tension namely *sublimation*, *displacement*, and *denial*. *Sublimation* is the deflection of energy into intellectual, humanitarian, and cultural. The direct expression of aggressive instinct is transformed into apparently non-aggressive forms of behavior (Freud, 1954: 82).

Displacement is the opposite of the sublimation. The more explanation about the meaning of displacement according to Freud can be read as the paragraph below.

“The most variable feature of an instinct, i.e., reduction of tension, is achieved. If one object is not available the cathexis can shift from it to one that is available. This means that psychological energy has the property of being displaceable. The process by which energy is rechanneled from one object to another object is called *displacement*.” (Freud, 1954: 79)

The writer uses the three out of the nine aspects of defense mechanism because *denial*, *sublimation*, and *displacement* are the three stronger aspects of defense mechanism that are contained in the movie than the other aspects.

According to Columbia University Press (2003) Freud states the definition of *Denial* is the defense mechanism that operates unconsciously to resolve emotional conflict, and to allay anxiety by refusing to perceive the more unpleasant aspects of external reality.

3. ANALYSIS

3.1 Denial

One of the things that may constrain Amelia to struggle is when Amelia had a phone call from the headmaster in her child school, and she is asked to come to the school to discuss the naughtiness of her child. Amelia is shocked when she knows that her child makes a trouble. Moreover, another worse thing happens when the headmaster gives a solution for her child which makes Amelia to be more stressful and angry. It can be seen from the *picture 01* and *picture 02* that the headmaster says that her child has significant behavior problems and he will be separated from other children. This statement makes Amelia feels more stressful and angry. In the *picture 03*, the stress that Amelia feels is increased and Amelia prevents her child from being treated differently.

Headmaster : “We are going to have to employ a monitor for him
(05:54 minutes)

Amelia : “Monitor??” (05:56 minutes)

Headmaster : “He’ll be separated from other children, and monitor will supervise him one-on-one.” (05:59 minutes)

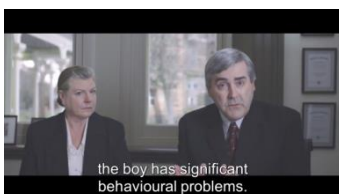
Amelia : “Sam won’t cope with this, he already feels so different.”
(06:03 minutes)

Headmaster : “Mrs Fanning! The boy has significant behavioural problems!” (06:07 minutes)

Amelia : “You know, Samuel doesn’t need a full-time monitor, what he needs is something understanding”
(06:12 minutes)

From the script above, we can see that she is struggle against the trouble that is caused by her child. Her *id* appears when she feels sad that she totally knows about Sam's behavior which is so disobedient and wicked. Her *ego* shows the believes that Sam is not wicked, and he just needs some understanding and no need to be distinguished from other children. Then, her *superego* makes she realizes for sure that Sam needs to be monitored and separated for the other children's safety so that Sam is not able to hurt his friends. In this case, the *ego* of Amelia wins over her *superego*, therefore, even though Amelia knows how the good way to solve this problem of this circumstances, Amelia still defends Sam from Sam's headmaster. Then, the result of this analyze can be said as a *defense mechanism* which includes to a *denial* because Amelia refuses her children to be treated differently and separately.

If Amelia follows her *ego* and she continues to tell Sam seriously hard how to behave, she does a *sublimation* aspect because Amelia substitutes her disappointment to Sam into the effort to change Sam to have the better attitude. It will be different in another case if Amelia follows her *ego* then she gets mad and shows her anger by smashing things at home. She substitutes her anger to Sam by replacing it to smash things. The case will turn into a *displacement* aspect.



Picture 01

Medium shot technique which frames the subject's head from the waist up



Picture 02

Medium shot technique which frames the subject's head from the waist up



Picture 03

Medium shot technique which frames the subject's head from the waist up

3.2 Sublimation

The rejection also occurs when Amelia and her friend take their children play in the park. Amelia offers a help about what she can do on Wednesday, because the son of her friend goes to celebrate her birthday party. But, her friend gives an unexpected answer, In the *picture 04*, the answer shows rejection to Sam to go to her child's birthday party. This rejection occurs because of Sam's behavior that is wicked, therefore she does not want Sam to come along. Knowing such an unpleasant answer from her friend, Amelia looks sad and disappointed but she is able to hide the disappointment.

The *picture 05* and *picture 06* show that Amelia's responses when her friend apologizes to her, she gives her best responses to deal with her friend. She still acts fine in front of her without shows her disappointment or her anger to her friend. To conclude this analysis, it can be said that Amelia still able to struggle with all of the problems that may drive her crazy and she still be a nice person.

- Claire : "What would you like me to do on Wednesday? I can get their birthday cakes, that's easy." (08:07 minutes)
- Claire : "I was hoping Ruby would change her mind, she does not want a joint party with Sam this year." (08:14 minutes)
- Claire : "Oh. It's ok, we dont have to come." (08:29 minutes)
- Claire : "You can still come, she just does not want Sam." (08:31 minutes)
- Amelia : "I understand, I understand, hehehe." (08:36 minutes)
- Claire : "Look, I just want you to be happy, and I end up on being awful" (08:52 minutes)
- Amelia : "No, I dont want you to feel awful, we'll be fine, we'll absolutely fine." (08:57 minutes)

As we can see from the script above, her *id* shows when she is very sad and angry about the rejection from her friend that she does not want Sam to come along to her child's birthday party. Her *ego* appears when she has a desire to show her friend about her anger and sadness because of the inappropriate answer that her friend gives to her. Her *superego* reminds her that she wants to still maintain the friendship and try to understand her friend position that she gives such the response just because to protect her own child from Sam's behavior. In this case, the *superego* defeats her *ego*, so that she is not angry to her friend when her friend says something inappropriate like that. The result shows the *defense mechanism* in *sublimation* because she substitutes her desire on angry by giving her smile to Claire that she and Sam will absolutely fine, and this is her positive act as a response to her disappointment.

The situation can give a *denial* aspect of defense mechanism if Amelia follows her *ego* to win. If Amelia prefers to follow her *ego* and she denies what her friend has said, she will defend and convince her friend the fact how good Sam's behavior is. The scene can show a *displacement* aspect if Amelia follows her *ego* to get mad at her friend. Instead, Amelia yells at Sam to replace and substitutes her anger to her friend.



Picture 04

Medium close up which frames the subject's head and mid-chest



Picture 05

Medium close up which frames the subject's head and mid-chest



Picture 06

Medium close up which frames the subject's head and mid-chest

In this part, another sublimation aspect appears in Amelia's behavior. There is nothing Amelia can do but survive from this rough time. This hard situation after her husband dies forces her to be more struggles and survives to deal with her child behavior and other problems. After that, Amelia finds out Sam is in her room doing something with her pictures and making it as a joke by drawing it. In the *Picture 07* Amelia asks for an explanation about what has he done. In the *Picture 08*, the unexpected responds from Sam that he pushes Amelia.

Amelia: [*showing photo*] "Do you think this is funny ???!!"
(24:41 minutes)

Sam : [*runaway carrying arrow*] (24:45 minutes)

Amelia: "NO! NO! NO! Give it to me!!!!" (24:49 minutes)

Sam : [*pushing Amelia*] "Eerrghh... do you wanna die ?!!"
(24:51 minutes)

Amelia: [*falling silent and staring to Sam*] (24:57 minutes)

In the *Picture 09*, Amelia is angry because of the behavior Sam which is not controlled well, but she also not be able to blame Sam, she may think that he becomes like he is now because the car accident, and she feels like she instead to love him more than to hate him.

From the script above, we can see her *id* appears when she feels very angry to Sam because of his behavior which always make trouble. Her *ego* forces her to yell at Sam when she finds out the photo of hers is made as a joke by Sam. However, the *superego* of Amelia defeats her *ego* which always reminds her to understand about Sam condition that he needs to have more understanding, so that

Amelia just fall silent and stares at Sam when the time Sam pushes her harshly. The result of this analyze is *defense mechanism* which includes into *sublimation*, because Amelia prefers to go away from Sam when Sam's behavior starts to drive her crazy and stress, she just sit and try to calm herself down instead of paying back to be rude to Sam.

It can be said as a *displacement* aspect of *defense mechanism* if Amelia's *ego* wins over the *superego*, and then Amelia does other bad things such as screaming aloud to show her anger.



Picture 07

Medium shot technique which frames the subject's head from the waist up



Picture 08

Medium shot technique which frames the subject's head from the waist up



Picture 09

Medium close up technique which frames the subject's head and mid-chest

3.3 Displacement

The dialogue below begins in the middle of night.

Amelia: [*Seize phone that is used by Sam.*] (56:38 minutes)

Amelia: “Gracie, I’m so sorry.” (56:42 minutes)

Gracie : “Has someone broken into the house ? Sam said that...”
(56:45 minutes)

Amelia: “No, no , no, we’re fine..Sam’s just being disobedient again.”
(56:49 minutes)

Gracie : “Oh I was so worried. He asked if you could stay the night.”
(56:53 minutes)

Amelia: “I told him not to call anyone. No, We’re fine, I just
headache. Sorry for troubling you.” (56:55 minutes)

Amelia: [*talking to Sam*] “I told you to not call anyone, do you want to
frighten a woman who hardly walk ?!!! Get that bloody thing
off!! Is this the only way I can trust you not to embarass me in
front of our neighbours?!!” (57:11 minutes)

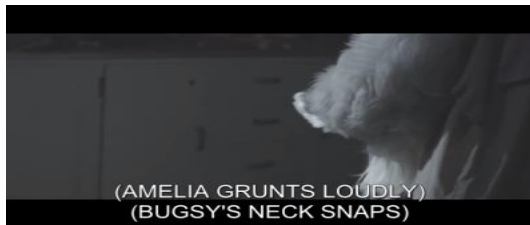
Then, Amelia feels frustrated badly, when Sam goes to bed, she sits in the chair broods all of her problems, and suddenly the dog appears, it can be seen in the *picture 10* Amelia kills the dog as a way to distribute her anger to Sam.

From the script above, her *id* exists as the anger feels to Sam, her *ego* shows rapidly when she looks there is her own dog approaches and she wants to kill it to distribute her anger. Her *superego* reminds her to think that she may not want to kill the dog, because it is her own dog.

In this part, her *ego* wins over her *superego*, so Amelia kills the dog. It can be said that *defense mechanism* which includes to *displacement* when Amelia actually feels angry to Sam, but she distributes her anger to Sam by killing the

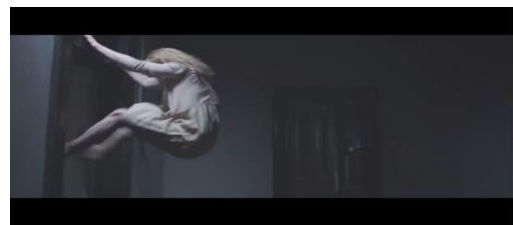
dog. It can be seen in the *picture 11* that Amelia kicks the door, it is also the represent and *displacement* from her anger to Sam.

It can be a better situation with a *sublimation* aspect if Amelia follows her *superego* to win over her *ego* by staying calm and make her time busier with other positive things instead of killing the dog. The *denial* aspect can occur in this part if Amelia follows her *ego* by avoiding the fact of Sam's real behavior. For example, Amelia avoids from Sam and locks herself inside of a room and cries. Then, she rejects to concern the bad things that Sam has done.



Picture 10

Cut-In shot technique which shows the other parts of the subject in detail.



Picture 11

Wide shot technique, which the subjects are taken up the full frame.

4. Conclusion

The defense mechanism aspects by Sigmund Freud are contained in *The Babadook* movie. In *The Babadook* movie, Amelia is a main woman character who shows some reflection values of defense mechanism by playing as a struggle woman and a surviving woman. She takes care of all her problems by her own ways without complain. In fact, she does sublimation by substituting her anger from all the problems into the positive ways such as loving her child even more and giving more attention to him.

However, sometimes her patience is broken. She shows a characteristic of displacement such as satisfying her depression in a bad way like killing a dog and kicking a door. There is really no one who is willing to help her. Her friends and even the police do not want to help her. They think she just gets trauma and her problems do not make any sense because she always relate it to a ghost.

She sometimes avoids the truth about particular fact. She denies a fact that her child is disobedient and unprincipled although she knows that is the truth. This matter points out the definition of *denial* in defense mechanism.

The defense mechanism aspects give a positive control to Amelia's personality such as keeping Amelia to calm down and maintain the Amelia's positive behavior from the anger that drives her crazy. Then, the defense mechanism aspects also successful to manage and control Amelia's reaction in appropriate ways to every problem she has. Regarding to that matter, her child slowly begins to change to be a good boy.

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