



**THE DEFENSE MECHANISMS OF CONRAD FISHER  
IN THE NOVEL 'THE SUMMER I TURNED PRETTY'**

**THESIS**

**By:**

**KARINA KARMELIA**

**2021060003**

**English Studies**

**Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities**

**UNIVERSITAS BUDDHI DHARMA**

**TANGERANG**

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**THESIS**

**Presented as a Partial Fulfillment of the requirement for  
Bachelor's Degree in English Literature at Faculty of  
Social Sciences and Humanities  
Universitas Buddhi Dharma  
Undergraduate Program**

**By:**

**Karina Karmelia**

**20210600003**

**English Studies**

**Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities**

**UNIVERSITAS BUDDHI DHARMA  
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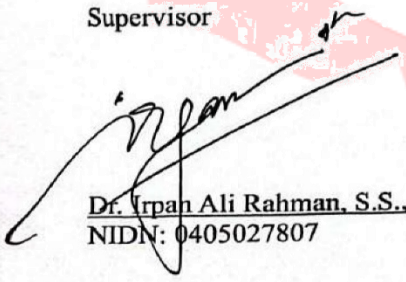
## FINAL PROJECT APPROVAL

Name : Karina Karmelia  
Student Number : 20210600003  
Faculty : Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities  
Study Program : English Department  
Final Project Title : The Defense Mechanisms of Conrad Fisher in The Novel  
The Summer I Turned Pretty

The Final Project Proposal has been approved to examine as a partial fulfillment requirement for the Undergraduate Program.

Tangerang, 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2025

Approved by,  
Supervisor



Dr. Irpan Ali Rahman, S.S., M.Pd  
NIDN: 0405027807

Acknowledged by,  
Head of Department



Riris Mutiara P.S, S.Pd., M.Hum  
NIDN: 042706870



**RECOMMENDATION FOR THE ELIGIBILITY OF FINAL  
PROJECT EXAMINATION**

The undersigned

Name : Dr. Irpan Ali Rahman, S.S., M.Pd

Position : Supervisor

certify

Name : Karina Karmelia

Student Number : 20210600003

Faculty : Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

Study Program : English Department


Final Project Title : The Defense Mechanisms of Conrad Fisher in The Novel  
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has been eligible to take the final project examination.

Tangerang, 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2025

Approved by,  
Supervisor

Acknowledged by,  
Head of Department

  
Dr. Irpan Ali Rahman, S.S., M.Pd  
NIDN : 0405027807

  
Riris Mutiara P.S, S.Pd., M.Hum.  
NIDN : 0427068703



## THE BROAD EXAMINERS

Name : Karina Karmelia  
Student Number : 20210600003  
Faculty : Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities  
Study Program : English Department  
Title of Final Project : The Defense Mechanisms of Conrad Fisher in The Novel  
The Summer I Turned Pretty

This thesis has been examined by the board of examiners on August 5, 2025

### Name of Examiners

1. Chair : **Dr. FX Rahyono, S.S., M.Hum**  
NIDN: 8918350022

2. Examiner I : **Adrallisman, S.S., M.Hum**  
NIDN: 0427117501

3. Examiner II : **Dr. Sonya Ayu Kumala, S.Hum., M.Hum**  
NIDN: 0418128601

Acknowledged by

Dean

**Dr. Sonya Ayu Kumala, S.Hum., M.Hum**

NIDN: 0418128601

BUKTI  
DAN ROMANIORA

## STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

I confirm that this thesis is my original work and that I have not unfairly used ideas and work from other scholars. I have not any scholarly ideas or content from others in dishonest manner. I assure that this work has not been previously submitted for any examination. All sources cited in this thesis have been properly acknowledged and quoted in accordance with academic integrity guidelines.

Tangerang, 7<sup>th</sup> of July



Karina Karmelia

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the self defense mechanisms carried out by Conrad Fisher, the main character in the book *The Summer I Turned Pretty* by Jenny Han in 2009, through the perspective of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis theory. This research used descriptive qualitative research method because all information is presented in the form of sentences taken from the book *The Summer I Turned Pretty*. Freud identified various unconscious defense mechanisms that individuals use to cope with anxiety and internal conflict, in Conrad's case, these mechanisms emerge in response to the emotional distress caused by his mother's recurring cancer, the potential divorce of his parents, and the complicated love triangle involving Belly and his brother, Jeremiah. As a result of this study, it was found that Conrad Fisher's use of defense mechanisms closely aligns with several concepts identified in Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory. These include projection, rationalization, avoidance, denial, displacement, and reaction formation. Throughout the novel, Conrad frequently displays behaviors that reflect these unconscious coping strategies as he navigates emotional stress and internal conflict. Among the identified defense mechanisms, avoidance appears most prominently in his behavior, with nine instances recorded in the analysis, indicating that Conrad often copes with distress by distancing himself from difficult emotions or situations. In contrast, rationalization is the least observed mechanism, appearing only once in the data collected. These findings highlight how Freud's theoretical framework can be effectively applied to understand the psychological depth of literary characters like Conrad Fisher.

**Keywords:** *Psychoanalysis, Defense Mechanism, Sigmund Freud*

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of The Study

For a long time, people with mental health challenges can face unfair judgments and negative beliefs or stigma as if it's something shameful and disgraceful. Even in this modern era, some people still have negative prejudices about mental illnesses and traumas. In some societies, a strong cultural stigma surrounds mental health issues, discouraging people from getting the support they need. This all underscores the critical need to continuously raise awareness about mental illness, its impact on individuals. Clearly, there's a crucial need to combat ignorance and misinformation surrounding mental health.

The word Literature comes from Latin word "littera" which means "letters". In its broadest sense, literature refers to all written works created by humans. More specifically, it can also refer to writings of a particular language or culture. Finally, Literature can also refer to the written work itself (Rexroth, para.1). Somehow, the definition of Literature is kind of circular, which means there is no single definition that perfectly captures what Literature is and it is not limited to a specific category or form. In other words, Literature can be found in a wide variety of written works (Culler 18). However, the idea that Literature offers more than just beauty and enjoyment, and that it also provides valuable lessons, is not new idea. This concept has been around for a really long time and continues to be a core belief about Literature (Bertens 2). Therefore, all written works by humans, from ancient texts to modern novels, all belong to Literature, and it is not just a category or a form; it is the very act of written expression itself.

According to Ian Watt, novels actually emerged as a new genre in the 18th century, as a new form of writing with specific features that distinguished it from earlier forms of prose fiction (10). Furthermore, M.H Abrams suggested that he views novel as a lengthy narrative work of fiction that typically offers a realistic portrayal of characters and situations (252).

In conclusion, authors in some novels aim to create realistic characters, situations, and psychological insights. Even though these stories are fictional, novels can be true-to-life by portraying realistic characters and settings. Since novels often reflect real-life experiences, the themes and values they convey can offer valuable insights.

The term psychology was first used in English in 1693, although it was not widely recognized and understood until the mid-18th century. The term comes from a combination of two Greek words: *psyche* and *logos*. Originally, *psyche* meant breath, but later the term was used to refer to the soul, as breath was considered a sign that the soul was still in the body. By the seventeenth century, *psyche* had also come to mean mind. The word *logos* originally referred to word and later evolved to mean discourse or reason. Based on these Greek origins, psychology literally means discourse or reasoning about the mind or, as it is more commonly understood today, the study of the mind (Colman,17).

Psychoanalytic criticism is a valuable starting point for exploring critical theory, as its core ideas have become familiar with everyday language. While terms like defense mechanisms are commonly used, a deeper understanding of psychoanalysis allows us to see how these concepts deeply shape our interactions and explain previously confusing human behaviors (Tyson 11). Consequently, this understanding is crucial for interpreting literature, which inherently reflects human behavior. Hence the writer uses psychoanalytic criticism approach for this research as it seems to be the most suitable theory can be used and is relevant to the main character in the novel *The Summer I turned Pretty*.

Defense mechanisms are unconscious psychological processes used by the ego to protect itself from the internal conflicts between the id, superego, and reality (Freud 43). The concept of Freud's defense mechanisms is a useful tool for analyzing characters in various literary works. Most importantly it is used when characters encounter experiences, ideas, or feelings that cause such distress they choose to forget them. They lack the confidence to mentally resolve the conflicts they have, so they unconsciously develop Defense mechanisms which core function is to avoid intense anxiety caused by conflicting thoughts, feelings, or experiences.

The researcher took the novel *The Summer I Turned Pretty* as the main case of this research, which tells a story about the established tradition of the Fisher family, wherein they annually retreat to Cousins Beach alongside his mother's lifelong friend and her children. Until one day, the tradition seems a little different, when Conrad is facing the ups and downs of being a teenager, his sadness because of his mother's health is getting worse and being caught in a love triangle with Belly, the daughter of his mom's friend, and his own brother, Jeremiah.

The researcher studies the ways in which Conrad's emotional unavailability and internal conflicts create complications within his life and his relationships and how this impacts his overall emotional wellbeing. Therefore, to understand the main character's behavior, the researcher employed a psychological approach, applying Freud's concept of defense mechanisms, outlined in his work from 1894. The writer decided to study main Conrad Fisher's defense mechanisms in the novel *The Summer I Turned Pretty* because it has not been studied previously in this aspect. It would contribute new knowledge to the understanding of the novel and potentially inspire further research on defense mechanisms in literature and might be relevant to readers who have experienced similar situations.

### **1.2 Statement of The Problem**

The object of this research is the novel *The Summer I Turned Pretty*. The novel was written by Jenny Han and was first released in 2009. The research will be focused on the defense mechanisms shown by Conrad Fisher reflected on Freud's concepts. As previously mentioned in the background of the study, the unique and stressful environment surrounding Conrad Fisher significantly impacts his emotional and psychological well-being, also his interpersonal relationships, leading to the development of various defense mechanisms, aligning with Freud's concepts. This study aims to identify, categorize, and interpret Conrad's defense mechanisms to provide a deeper understanding of his internal conflicts and their impact on his relationships and overall personality.

### **1.3 Research Question**

In accordance with the research context as previously described in the background of the study, the writer developed the research question to propose the general problem. How does Conrad Fisher's defense mechanisms depicted in the novel *The Summer I Turned Pretty*?

### **1.4 Goal and Function**

The goal of this research is to provide an understanding that addresses the research question and offers valuable knowledge and information to the reader. In this research, the writer examines the psychological impact of emotionally stressful environment cause effects on Conrad Fisher's relationships and character development. This research aims to understand how individuals develop defense mechanisms to survive traumatic experiences and explore the various defense mechanisms employed by the protagonist to cope with the psychological impact of stress, using the novel as a case study. The function of this research is to provide readers with practical benefits and insights that can be applied to real-life situations. Theoretically, it is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of literature from a psychoanalytic perspective. Practically, it serves as a valuable resource for readers and other researchers interested in exploring the psychoanalytic content of novels. The writer hopes that this research could offer insights into the potential psychological impact of similar situations in other contexts.

### **1.5 Scope and Limitation**

This research is focused on analyzing the defense mechanisms employed by Conrad Fisher in the novel *The Summer I Turned Pretty*, in the viewpoint of Freudian psychoanalytic theory. This study will examine how Freudian concepts of defense mechanism are portrayed in Conrad Fisher's dialogue and behavior.

The analysis is limited to the textual evidence provided by the novel and will not involve additional primary or secondary research. Additionally, this study focuses primarily on identifying defense mechanisms without exploring their potential implications for the protagonist's overall mental health or well-being.

## 1.6 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework serves as a foundational structure for comprehending and elucidating a research phenomenon. It combines diverse concepts and ideas to provide a coherent explanation or prediction of the event under investigation. As an analytical instrument, it facilitates the organization of thoughts and the delineation of conceptual distinctions. Moreover, it embodies the researcher's abstract thought process, translated into a schematic representation.

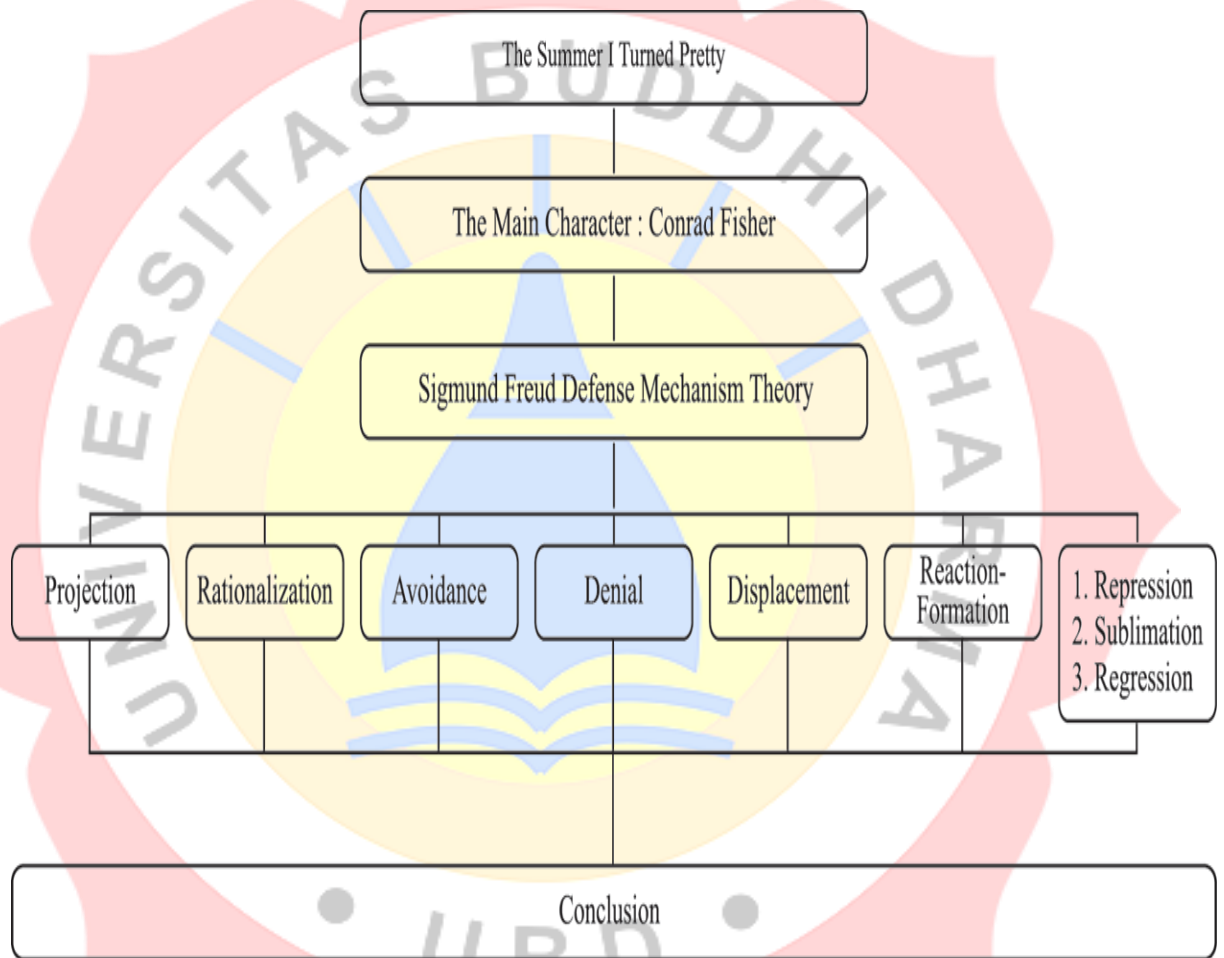
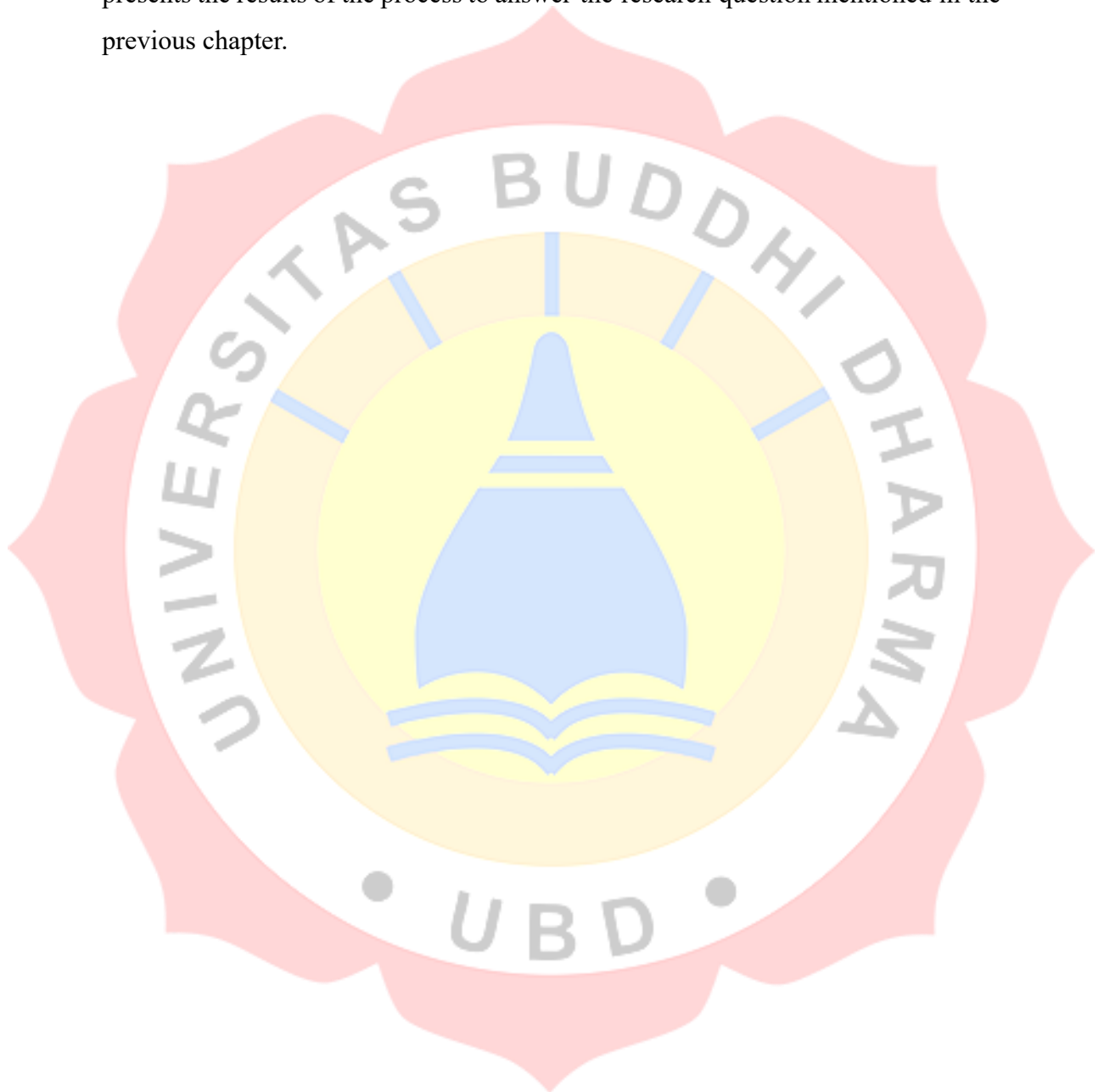


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

This diagram illustrates the theoretical framework underpinning the research. The writer analyzes the main character in novel *The Summer I Turned Pretty*. Specifically, the analysis focuses on Conrad Fisher, through the framework of Sigmund Freud's defense mechanism theory. To find out and complete the data, the writer took it from the novel by reading the novel and rewriting it. After

collecting the data, the writer will analyze it using psychoanalysis approach. Continually, the writer cross-referenced and examined the dialogues and actions with definitions and criteria based on defense mechanism theory by Sigmund Freud as discussed in the further discussion chapter on this paper. The writer then presents the results of the process to answer the research question mentioned in the previous chapter.



## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework used in the research. The primary theory is Sigmund Freud's defense mechanisms, which is supplemented by additional theories to help analyze the data. Other theories considered include those of Anna Freud and Feist.

#### **2.1 Previous Studies**

The first research the writer found is the research by Anas Nadya Difanda Arminata from Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim, titled “Defense mechanism of the main character in Jostein Gaarder's *An Unreliable Man*” (Arminata) In the research conducted in 2022, Arminata used Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis approach to analyze the main character named Jakop, she later found that Jakop used eight defense mechanisms; denial, displacement, projection, repression, reaction formation, isolation, rationalization, and rationalization which allows Jakop to avoid anxiety.

The second research is titled “Defense Mechanism of The Male Character in Colleen Hoover’s *Ugly Love*” researched by Anis Putri Ayu from Universitas Trunojoyo (Ayu) . The research, using psychoanalytic theory, focusing on the id, ego, and superego revealed that trauma plays a significant role in triggering the character's self-defense mechanisms. However, the impact of trauma varies from person to person.

The third research that the writer found is titled “The Personality Structure and Defense Mechanism of The Main Character in *The House at The End of The Street Film*” conducted in 2015 by Eris Widya Astuti from Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta (Widya). In the research, it was found that the main character, Ryan employs various defense mechanisms like repression, fixation, denial, projection and fantasy due to childhood trauma.

The similarity between the previous researches mentioned above and the research that the writer does is the same type of approach, namely qualitative and the usage

of the same core theory namely defense mechanism according to Freud. Meanwhile the difference is the object of research.

Then we have previous researches based on the Television series by Amazon Prime, adapted by the novel *The Summer I Turned Pretty*:

The first one is a 2024 research article by Bella Natasia Panjaitan from Universitas Putra Batam titled "An Analysis of Expressive Illocutionary Speech Acts in "The Summer I Turned Pretty" TV Series: Pragmatic Approach." (Panjaitan). This paper discusses the illocutionary speech used in *The Summer I Turned Pretty* TV Series using qualitative method, the pragmatic identity method. The findings reveal a total of 31 expressive speech act data, representing 13 different types. The most frequently occurring type was expressions of gratitude, which appeared four times. In terms of function, the most dominant was politeness, with 20 instances, indicating that the characters frequently demonstrate respect and courtesy in their interactions.

The second research article written in 2024 by Nabilah Putri titled "Analisis Psikologi Tokoh Utama Dalam Series *The Summer I Turned Pretty* Karya Jenny Han." (Nabillah). This study applies Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory to examine the psychological needs of the main character, Isabella or Belly. The findings indicate that self-actualization emerges as the most dominant need, as the character strives for personal growth and self-improvement, which is supported by the presence of a loving and supportive family.

## **2.2 Psychoanalysis Theory**

Psychology is a branch of science that studies the thoughts and actions of people, how they think, feel, and act. It seeks to understand mental processes such as perception, memory, and emotion, as well as observable behaviors and the biological, social, and environmental factors that influence them. As quoted from Yvette Brazier from *Medical News Today*, "Psychology is the study of the mind and behavior, according to the American Psychological Association. It is the study of the mind, how it works, and how it affects behavior." (Yvette, para.1) In conclusion, psychology plays a crucial role in helping individuals understand themselves and others, ultimately contributing to personal growth and societal well-being.

Psychoanalysis is a theory in psychology and a therapeutic method created by Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud. It is oriented towards the unconscious, self-protective ways, and their impact on individual actions and character. In essence, psychoanalysis deals with issues of personality, consciousness, anxiety, neurotic dreams and motivational emotions. Freud is considered the founder of psychoanalysis, however, Freud's students including Alfred Adler, Carl Jung, and others, expanded upon his theories, leading to different branches of psychoanalysis. Beyond its therapeutic applications, psychoanalytic concepts are also employed in fields like literary criticism and cultural analysis.

Psychoanalysis is one of the most commonly used theories to examine literary works, since psychology deals with human behavior, it's closely connected to the struggles often depicted in literature. As Barry highlighted, psychoanalytic criticism offers a psychological approach to the analysis of literary texts by drawing upon psychoanalytic theories (Barry 92). Tyson has a similar view to Barry, Tyson provides a comprehensive overview of various critical approaches to literature, including psychoanalysis. Through a psychological lens, Tyson argues that we can gain deeper insights into human behavior and motivations and provide valuable insights into human nature, interpersonal relationships, and the complexities of the human experience (Tyson 11). Therefore, the writer concludes that literary works can be studied using psychoanalytic perspective because it provides a basis for understanding the underlying motivations, conflicts, and behaviors of the characters.

### **2.3 Freudian Psychoanalysis**

Freud, a renowned Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist, believed that our mind operates on two levels; the conscious, which we can access easily, and the unconscious, a hidden realm that shapes our thoughts and behaviour. According to Freud the mind is like an iceberg, with the conscious mind being the visible tip and the rest of the iceberg is hidden underneath the surface, that is, the unconscious. As cited from Mischel, Freud developed a model to recognise the workings of the human mind, which consists of three main parts: the id, ego, and superego (43). This division helped him interpret mental images based on their underlying goals

or motives. He suggested that people possess three cognitive systems: the id, driven by pleasure; the ego, focused on reality; and the superego, concerned with morality.

### **2.3.1 The Id**

Id is a primitive instinctive force which resides in the subconscious, which is driven by primitive desires for pleasure and fulfilment. It represents the nascent and unmediated source of our basic physiological and biological needs, including hunger, thirst, and libido.

### **2.3.2 The Ego**

Functioning as a mediator, the ego serves as a psychological component that serves as a link between the basic instincts of id and the limitations of external world. It represents the rational and executive part of the mind, tasked with discerning socially acceptable modalities for the fulfilment of the id's impulses while simultaneously navigating the boundaries of reality.

### **2.3.3 The Superego**

While the id functions to seek pleasure, and while ego operates on the basis of the reality principle, The superego provides the mental elements necessary to pursue what is ideal. The superego is the source of moral supervision and consciousness, which encourages us to act in a way that is right and accepted by society.

## **2.4 Defense Mechanism**

“Defenses are the processes by which the contents of our unconscious are kept in the unconscious. In other words, they are the processes by which we keep the repressed in order to avoid knowing what we feel we can't handle knowing.” (Tyson 15). These mechanisms involve unconsciously blocking or distorting impulses to make them less threatening (Boeree 7). Tyson has a similar view to Boeree, she argues that our unconscious desires can prevent us from recognizing or changing harmful behaviors to protect ourselves from this discomfort (Tyson 12-13).

Freud originated the concept of psychological defenses in the late 1800s. He used the German word '*abwehr*', meaning warding off, to describe how we unconsciously avoid dealing with painful or morally objectionable thoughts or feelings. This process occurs outside of our awareness and is not a conscious

decision. In essence, based on Freud's perspective, defenses help us avoid acknowledging things that we believe we cannot handle. The ego, a part of our personality, is responsible for balancing the demands of our instincts (id), our moral conscience (superego), and the external world. When these demands become too overwhelming, the ego develops defense mechanisms to protect itself. These defense mechanisms help the individual to resolve the conflicts they feel. During his career, Sigmund Freud laid the groundwork for the concept of defense mechanism, below are descriptions of different defense mechanisms, based on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic viewpoint.

#### **2.4.1 Rationalization**

Freud identified rationalization as a defense mechanism in which the ego develops seemingly logical and socially acceptable justifications, frequently self-serving, to explain behaviors or beliefs that are truly driven by unconscious or less palatable motives, thereby protecting itself from anxiety. As a defense mechanism, rationalization occurs when we reinterpret our behavior to perceive it as more rational and acceptable. This involves excusing or justifying threatening thoughts and actions by finding a seemingly logical explanation. Essentially, rationalization helps the ego in balancing the desires of the id, the norms of the superego, and the pressures coming from the environment which helps to reduce stress reduce tension and dissension within the self.

#### **2.4.2 Avoidance**

Avoidance is a defense mechanism where individuals dismiss uncomfortable thoughts or feelings and avoid anything that triggers them. This can manifest as mentally dismissing uncomfortable thoughts or physically distancing oneself from people, places, or situations linked to those feelings. The intentional avoidance of anxiety-provoking situations, sometimes facilitated by substances. This can create a progressive pattern of avoidance, resulting in a diminished world as individuals become increasingly reliant. Consequently, these offers temporary relief but potentially hindering personal growth by preventing individuals from facing their fears.

### **2.4.3 Denial**

In Freud's psychological theory, denial is a defense mechanism characterized by the ego's rejection of reality. The way it works, is by refusing or blocking what is true. According to Freud, denial is a primitive defense mechanism, which begins to appear in childhood, precisely when the ego is still undeveloped. Freud also associated denial with narcissistic defenses, where individuals refuse to acknowledge flaws or negative facts about themselves or the people they idealize. Despite the resemblance between denial and avoidance, they are actually different. Denial is the rejection of reality, while avoidance is the distancing or distraction from the reality.

### **2.4.4 Displacement**

According to Freud, Displacement is a defense mechanism in which an unacceptable emotion, desire, or impulse is consciously redirected from its original target to a more acceptable or less threatening substitute target. These targets, are usually someone or something less powerful, so that it feels safer to the doer. In essence, Freud viewed displacement as a way for the unconscious mind to manage unacceptable urges and emotions by finding a less threatening outlet for their expression.

### **2.4.5 Repression**

According to Freud, repression is a defense mechanism where the ego unconsciously blocks unacceptable thoughts, feelings or memories. Unconscious means, that the person usually does not realize that their mind is doing this. The sole purpose of repression is to protect the conscious mind from overwhelming emotions, trauma, or conflicts.

### **2.4.6 Sublimation**

Sublimation is often considered as a more mature defense mechanism. Sublimation involves channeling the urges into something useful, or even praiseworthy in social standard. Freud also thought that sublimation is the most sophisticated defense mechanism due to its constructive effect.

#### **2.4.7 Regression**

While facing difficulties, the person unconsciously goes back to the behavior of their younger state, which means retreating to the earlier stage of development. With regression, they return to infantile patterns of behavior, thinking, or feeling that can provide a sense of comfort and security.

#### **2.4.8 Reaction-Formation**

According to Sigmund Freud, reaction formation is a defense mechanism where an individual unconsciously replaces unacceptable impulses with the direct opposites in their conscious behavior. Reaction formation is about switching to the opposite behavior therefore it is not about hiding feelings; it's actively expressing the reverse of what they truly feel.

#### **2.4.9 Projection**

Based on Sigmund Freud's viewpoint, projection is a defense mechanism in which a person unconsciously attaches rejected thoughts, emotions, or desires to another person. Freud believed that when individuals have thoughts or emotions that are too difficult or threatening to acknowledge within themselves such as anger, jealousy, or desire, they protect their ego by "projecting" those feelings onto others. Instead of recognizing the feeling as their own, they see it as coming from someone else. This allows the individual to avoid the anxiety or guilt associated with owning those feelings, preserving their self-image.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The writer discusses different analytical methods in this chapter. The chapter is organized into four sections: subject matter, material, research approach, procedure.

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

The first essential component of research structure is the choice of data collection and analysis methods. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are two fundamental approaches that differ in their use of data and analytical techniques. Qualitative approach focuses on the qualities and meanings of phenomena, rather than quantifiable measurements (Denzin and Lincoln 6). Qualitative approach prioritizes understanding processes, meanings, and experiences. Therefore, Qualitative data analysis is a process of drawing valid and trustworthy meaning from qualitative data. Therefore, this research uses a qualitative approach to analysed the main character of the novel through the lens of Freud's psychoanalytic theory. The researcher gathered information from various sources like books, websites, journals, and articles. Relevant quotes from the novel were collected and analysed to identify the main character's traits based on Freudian concepts.

#### **3.2 Subject Matter**

The subject of the research is the main character, the main male character of Jenny Han's novel *The Summer I Turned Pretty*. In this research, the writer explains about psychological problem namely Defense Mechanism experienced by Conrad Fisher, the male main character in the novel. Conrad that is caused by the events in his life, focusing on the experiences of growing into adulthood, family matters and love triangle between his first love and his own brother. By examining the character of Conrad Fisher through his words, actions, and the narrative of the novel, and providing concise explanations, the reader can gain a deeper understanding of the topic analyzed in this research.

### 3.3 Material

In this section, the writer uses the novel written by Jenny Han which titled *The Summer I Turned Pretty* that was published in 2009 as the object research. In addition to relying on the novel as the primary source of data, the writer also gathers information from other resources to enhance their understanding of the subject matter and strengthen the analysis, most noticeably the book *The Ego and The Id* (1923) by Sigmund Freud with additional sources such as journals on the internet and electronic books. By collecting and analyzing the data, the writer finds out how the characterization of the main character, Conrad Fisher through Psychoanalytic theories namely defense mechanism.

### 3.4 Procedure

The process of gathering information and conducting this study began with reading the entire novel and understanding the storyline. Subsequently, supporting resources such as articles, journals, and books are used to compliment the data. Afterward, the writer begins to analyze the defense mechanisms projected by Conrad Fisher by using phrases, conversations and situations from the characters in the novel. In the end, the author concludes this research based on the analysis that has been done.