

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Reason for Choosing the Topic

Almost every person ever has secrets. People have different personal problems and their reasons that they cannot tell the secrets to other people. According to Cambridge dictionary, a secret means a piece of information that is only known by one person or a few people and should not be told to others. To keep the secret is part of knowledge in psychology. Slepian *et al* (2017) write that “Taking a broader view of secrecy as the intent to conceal information, which only sometimes necessitates concealment, yields a new psychology of secrecy.” Slepian *et al* (2017) write the definition of secrecy: an intention to conceal information from one or more than two individuals.

People keep secret for certain purpose. Frijns (2015) writes that the purpose to keep the secret is for protection, power and control, identity and independence, intimacy, relatedness and trust, and the need to belong. Frijns (2015) gives example about two young lovers who secretly meet after school. Their secret may simultaneously strengthen their intimate bond, protect them and their relationship from social disapproval, and provide them with a sense of independence from their parents and a feeling of control over their lives.

To keep the secret, it means that the secret keepers make self protection because they do not want other people to know about it. Christ (2018) writes that:

In some ways, keeping secrets can act as a defense mechanism: We protect ourselves from becoming exposed to judgment about things that we already feel guilty about and ashamed of. In the same way, the act of hiding secrets is an act of repression: By not allowing others to know these things, we eliminate any possibility of having to talk about it with others. And so, we convince ourselves that we will not have to think about it either.

In this quotation defense when keeping secret is important to protect the secret keeper from judgment from other people. This judgment can make the feeling uncomfortable.

Sigmund Freud is the founder about defense mechanisms since 1926 (<http://www.freudfile.org>). Freud proposed defense mechanisms that we use are: reaction formation, rationalization, repression, denial and sublimation. These fundamental defense mechanisms are developed by his daughter in a more systematic manner (Huerta, 2019). Whitbourne (2011) states that Anna Freud defined in detail the defense mechanisms sketched out by her father Sigmund Freud in her book, “The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense”.

In this research, the writer would like to study about defense mechanism in keeping secrecy. Defense mechanism is interesting because everybody have this defense mechanism. Whitbourne (2011) writes that “Defense mechanisms are a part of our everyday life”. According to Cambridge dictionary, “Defense mechanism is an automatic way of behaving or thinking by which you protect yourself from something, especially from feeling unpleasant emotions”.

According to Dictionary of Psychology Vocabulary, defense mechanism is a part of the study in psychiatry. It is an unconscious process that tries to reduce the anxiety associated with instinctive desires.” Grohol (2016) writes that “Most defense mechanisms are fairly unconscious – that means most of us don’t realize we’re using them in the moment.” In relation to secrecy, it means that defense mechanism is used to counter the bad feeling directly to protect the secret.

Moreover, the self defense is used to make the situation that the secret keeper likes. Personality defenses (coping technique) are important things to maintain healthy relationship and reject unhealthy relationship. In addition, becoming defensive is all about learning to identify and avoid painful and dangerous situation (Schwartz, 2015). Therefore in keeping secret, there is situation that need to be counteract because the secret keeper wants to safe his/her secret.

One of the literary works that tells about keeping secrecy is the novel *The Secrets of Midwives* written by Sally Hepworth. Sally Hepworth is a novelist from Australia. The novel is different from common novels and the story is very interesting because it describes about the work of midwives. *The Secrets of Midwives* reflects about the life of women in three generations: grandmother (Floss), mother (Grace) and daughter (Neva) who all of them are midwives. The grandmother, Floss, and the granddaughter, Neva, have secret about the real father of their baby. Floss who is eighty-three years old in the story remembers about the secret when Neva is known to have pregnant. Neva is six months pregnant but she does not want to tell about the man behind her pregnancy. The main character

between them is Neva. She keeps secret with some reason and she defends that the baby is her own baby with no father. There is the truth is that Neva has morality behind her defense about the secret. She thinks that Sean is the father, however Sean's wife is fighting with last stadium of brain tumor, so Neva does not want to add his problem. In the end, the story reveals that the real father is Mark and he admits the baby.

Based on the explanation above, the writer is interested to hold a literary research by using the novel *The Secrets of Midwives* in psychoanalysis study. The writer analyzes the characters' psychological effects since they keep the secrets and how they defend themselves to keep that secret.

## **1.2 The Objective and Scope of the Study**

The objective of the research is to study the defense mechanism used by the characters when keeping secrecy as seen in the novel *The Secrets of Midwives* by Sally Hepworth. The analysis is limited about the psychological effects because of keeping the secret. Then, the writer will explain how the defense mechanism is used to protect the secret. In the scope of the study, the writer limits this study only on psychoanalysis theory.

## **1.3 Formulation of the Problem**

The writer formulates the problems in the questions below:

1. How are the characters' psychological effects due to the secrecy as seen in the novel *The Secrets of Midwives*?

2. How do the defense mechanisms used by the characters against the psychological effects as seen in the novel *The Secrets of Midwives*?

## **1.4 Review of Related Literature**

### **1.4.1 Previous Studies**

Through library research and internet source the writer finds that the novel *The Secrets of Midwives* by Sally Hepworth is not yet studied by another researcher. In this research, the writer would like to study about the psychological effects because of the secrecy for the characters in the novel and how they defend themselves against the effect.

### **1.4.2 Theoretical Framework**

#### 1.4.2.1 Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is one of the approaches in literary criticism. According to Barry (2014), modern psychoanalytic theory is based largely on the work of Dr. Sigmund Freud. Sigmund Freud is the founding father of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is a method for treating mental illness and also a theory which explains human behavior (McLeod, 2016). In literature, psychoanalytic is the literary critic with a guide to discovering, revealing, and examining the truths that are hidden in literary works. The key components of psychoanalytical theory are the struggle among Freud's Id, ego, and superego. Psychoanalytical criticism of literature focuses on a work of literature as an expression in fictional form of the inner workings of the human mind. Psychoanalytic theory is a useful tool for evaluating literary works to gain a richer understanding of the work, the author,

and the reader. The literary critic identifies symbols and images in a literary work that reveal the author's unconscious desires and fears.

The struggle of the ego to balance the desires of the id and the superego informs the literary critic about the author's struggle with his or her personal identity and with his or her balancing of primal needs and civilized responsibilities. The psychoanalytical critic is able to reveal the tricks of repression, displacement, isolation, reversal, attribution, and other factors to identify themes, ideas, and messages that are hidden in a literary work. Understanding the psychological messages in a literary work leads to an understanding of the author of that work. This understanding can guide the critic to deeper self-awareness (Barry, 2014).

#### 1.4.2.2 The Id, Ego and Superego

McLeod (2016) states that Freud's single most enduring and important idea was that the human psyche (personality) has more than one aspect. In 1923 Freud saw the psyche structured into three parts: the id, ego and superego, all developing at different stage in our lives. These are the systems, not parts of the brain, or in any way physical. Freud later de

According to Freud's model of the psyche, the id is the primitive and instinctual part of the mind that contains sexual and aggressive drives and hidden memories, the ego is the realistic part that mediates between the desires of the id and superego, and the superego operates as a moral conscience. Although each part of the comprises unique features, they interact to form a whole, and each part makes a relative contribution to an individual's behavior.

Based on Freud, the Id, Ego and Superego are conceptualized as three essential parts of the human personality. The description about the Id, Ego and Superego is as follows:

1. The Id (or it)

The id is the primitive and instinctive component of personality. It is the impulsive (and unconscious) part of our psyche which responds directly and immediately to the instincts. The id is not affected by reality, logic or the everyday world. The id operates on the pleasure principle which is the idea that every wishful impulse should be satisfied immediately, regardless of the consequences. When the id achieves its demands, we experience pleasure. When it is denied we experience unpleasure or tension. This form of process thinking has no comprehension of objective reality, and is selfish and wishful in nature.

2. The Ego (or I)

The ego is that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world. The ego develops to mediate between the unrealistic id and the external real world. It is the decision-making component of personality. Ideally, the ego works by reason, whereas the id is chaotic and unreasonable. The ego considers social realities and norms, etiquette and rules in deciding how to behave. It also engages in secondary process thinking, which is rational, realistic, and oriented towards problem-solving. Freud made the analogy of the id

being a horse while the ego is the rider. The ego is like a man on a horseback, who has to hold the superior strength of the horse.

### 3. The Superego (or above I)

The superego incorporates the values and morals of society which are learned from one's parents and others. The superego's function is to control the id's impulses, especially those which society forbids such as sex and aggression. It also has the function of persuading the ego to turn to moralistic goals rather than simply realistic ones and to strive for perfection.

#### 1.4.2.3 Psychological Effects of Keeping Secrecy

It is introduced previously that studying secrecy has given a way to a new psychology of secrecy (Slepian *et al*, 2017). In relation to the id, ego and superego, keeping secrecy works in the id level. The secret keepers tend to react spontaneous and unconscious when they have to protect the secret. They become selfish and cannot tolerate what the aggressor wants. The rejection to share about the secret is the kind of respond directly and immediately to the unpleasant situation. This means that to keep the secret affects the psychology of the secret keepers and can be seen from their behavior.

In other words, keeping the secret can bring mental problem for the secret keeper. According to Burdick (2017), scientists have studied secrecy as a social act, as the willful hiding information from others. The suppression of the secret – the keeping it in, the self-monitoring, and the tactical contortions that go with it – that exact a cost on the keeper. The secrets cause suffering in other ways too.



Based on Burdick (2017), a great deal of research has explored the psychological effects that secrets have on their keepers – stress, anxiety, depression, loneliness, low self-esteem. But secret can take physical toll too.” By using this reference, the writer will study about the psychological effects of keeping the secret through the characters in the novel, they are stress, anxiety, depression, loneliness and low self-esteem.

To explain about the stress, anxiety, depression, loneliness and low self-esteem, the writer takes the references from psychology dictionary and other experts in psychology. The description and symptoms of these psychological effects due to keeping secrets are as follows:

#### 1. Stress

According to Dictionary of Psychology Vocabulary, stress means difficulty that causes worry or emotional tension. In psychology, stress is a state of mental or emotional strain or suspense. In physics, stress is a force that produces strain on a physical body (<https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/psychology>). Segal et al (2019) write that stress is a psychological and physiological response to events that upset our personal balance. When faced with a threat, whether to our physical safety or emotional equilibrium, the body's defenses kick into gear in a rapid, automatic process known as the 'fight-or-flight' response. We all know what this stress response feels like, heart pounding in the chest, muscles tensing up, breath coming faster, and every sense on red alert. Stress affects the mind, body and

behavior in many ways. Some people primarily experience physical symptoms such as low back pain, stomach problems and skin outbreaks. In others the stress patterns on emotional symptoms such as moodiness, agitation, restlessness, short temper, impatience, inability to relax, feeling overwhelmed, sense of loneliness and depression. Meanwhile in behavioral patterns stressful people tend to experience eating more or less, sleeping too much or too little, isolation from others, procrastination, neglecting responsibilities, nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing), overdoing activities (e.g. exercising, shopping), overreacting to unexpected problems, picking fights with others and using alcohol, cigarettes or drugs to relax.

## 2. Anxiety

According to Dictionary of Psychology Vocabulary, anxiety is a relatively permanent state of worry and nervousness occurring in a variety of mental disorders, usually accompanied by compulsive behavior or attacks of panic (<https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/psychology>).

Freud (in Boeree: 2006) says that “If you feel threatened, feel overwhelmed, feel as if it were about to collapse under the weight of it all, this feeling is called anxiety and it serves as a signal to the ego that its survival is in jeopardy. Freud mentions three different kinds of anxieties: the first is *realistic anxiety* which is normally called as fear. For example if you are thrown into a pit of poisonous snakes, you might

experience realistic anxiety. The second is *moral anxiety*. This is what we feel when the threats comes not from the outer, physical world, but from the internalized social world of the superego. It is just another word for feelings like shame, guilt, and fear of punishment. The last is *neurotic anxiety*. This is the fear of being overwhelmed by the impulses from the id, if you have ever felt like you were about to lose it, lose control, lose your temper, your rationality, or even your mind, you have felt neurotic anxiety. Neurotic is actually the Latin word for nervous, so this is nervous anxiety and we usually just call it anxiety, plain and simple.

### 3. Depression

According to Dictionary of Psychology Vocabulary, depression is sad feelings of gloom and inadequacy; a mental state characterized by a pessimistic sense of inadequacy and a despondent lack of activity (<https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/psychology>). Freud (in Armstrong: 2004) says that depression is violation to men's pleasure principle that creates the states of mourning and melancholic. Freud describes the state of depression as mentally characterized by a profoundly painful depression, a loss of interest in the outside world, the loss of the ability to love, the inhibition of any kind of performance and a reduction in the sense of self, expressed in self-recrimination and self-directed insults, intensifying into the delusory expectation of punishment. The modern diagnostic criteria for symptoms of depression

are sadness, loss of interest in the outside world, under or over-eating, under or over-sleeping, loss of energy, feelings of worthlessness, and recurrent thoughts of death.

#### 4. Loneliness

According to Dictionary of Psychology Vocabulary, loneliness is the state of being alone and feeling sad about it; the state of being alone in solitary isolation (<https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/psychology>).

Gierveld (1998) writes that loneliness is a situation experienced by the individual where there is an unpleasant or inadmissible lack of (quality of) certain relationships. This includes situations in which the intimacy one wishes for has not been realized. Thus loneliness is seen to involve the manner in which the person perceives, experiences, and evaluates his or her isolation and lack of communication with other people. Gierveld also writes that loneliness as a multidimensional phenomenon is distinguished in three dimensions. The first concerns the feelings associated with the absence of an intimate attachment and the feelings of emptiness or abandonment. The second dimension refers to the time perspective (do people interpret their loneliness situation as being hopeless or as changeable and treatable; do they blame others or themselves for the situation they are in?). The third dimension involves different types of emotional aspects such as sorrow, sadness, and feelings of shame, guilt, frustration and desperation.

## 5. Low Self-esteem

According to Dictionary of Psychology Vocabulary, low self-esteem is the feeling of not worthy of good things (<https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/psychology>). Rosenberg and Owen (in McLeod, 2012) state that low self-esteem means a feeling of one's low self-worth. People with low self-esteem are more troubled by failure and tend to exaggerate events as being negative. For example, they often interpret non critical comments as critical. They are more likely to experience social anxiety and low levels of interpersonal confidence. This in turn makes social interaction with others difficult as they feel awkward, shy, conspicuous, and unable to adequately express themselves when interacting with others. Furthermore, low self-esteem individuals tend to be pessimistic towards people and groups within society.

### 1.4.2.4 Defense mechanisms

Keeping secret can act as a defense mechanism (Christ, 2018). The secret keepers protect themselves from other people's judgment, to avoid the feeling of guilty and ashamed. Defense mechanism is a part of the study in psychiatry. It is an unconscious process that tries to reduce the anxiety followed with instinctive desires (Dictionary of Psychology Vocabulary). Therefore, the secret keepers tend to defend themselves when there is an aggressor who wants to reveal about the secret. They use some mechanisms to protect the secrets.

Based on Anna Freud in 1934 (<http://www.freudfile.org>), in psychoanalysis defense mechanisms include:

1. Denial

It can be explained through the refusal of accepting something that rose or it is happening in the mind. Thus, the victim of some family traumatic events can deny these traumas. The well known case of the wife beaten by the husband who refuses to recognize she is beaten. In this case we are not talking about a defense against anxiety but of sparing the narcissist ego.

2. Repression

Repression is an autonomous mechanism which acts in order to hinder representatives connected to unconscious demands to access the conscience and take a course of action. We sometimes act consciously in this direction and we call this mechanism suppression or condemnation. In the psychoanalytical treatment, repression has to be replaced with conviction, meaning with the processing at a conscious level of the conflict with the unconscious demands.

3. Displacement

It is a frequent mechanism especially known for dreams formation process. Displacement means that an affect is associated with other objects or events that are in a contiguity relationship with the initial ones which triggered it. We generally discover very easily the displacement in day to day life when someone is fighting with his

children because he cannot confront a hostile boss. Or the hostility displaced against a neighbor while the actual cause was an unpopular measure of the government or the corruption in the public administration, etc.

#### 4. Sublimation

Through sublimation an unacceptable drive is transformed into a social acceptable one. In sports, for example, we find the sublimation of aggressive demand in the competition or contest.

#### 5. Projection

It refers to the case when we attribute our own drives or character features to exterior objects. Projection is characterized through an extortionate development of criticism against other people's biases and flaws. Projection comes together with denial.

#### 6. Intellectualization

It is recognized in mental operations which tend to transform an uncomfortable or painful reality in philosophical contents, for example. Thus a failed exam can turn into a reflection over the life quality or the relativity of success.

#### 7. Rationalization

It offers explanations following a logical pattern for some biases or manifestations which make the subject feel embarrassed or uncomfortable. This mechanism can also be used to protect the narcissist ego.

#### 8. Regression

It refers to going back to the phases of sexual development and previous objects. For example to the oral phase, where the person can develop the feeling of being always hungry or the refusal to eat (anorexia). A student in love with an assistant professor develops anorexia due to the fact that her best friend “steals” her boyfriend (she cannot “swallow” this situation). Or the frequent case of an adult person who is getting divorce in order to marry his “first love” (regression to object).

#### 9. Reaction-formation

It can be easily explained by transforming a wish in its reverse, for example the desire of having immoral sexual intercourse turns into a cleaning obsession. Or the hostility felt against a person is hidden by some strong friendship proofs.

#### 10. Turning against oneself

A well-known mechanism, for example, when the wife states loud and clear that her husband is not to blame for his infidelity, that it is her fault as she did not communicate enough with him.

#### 11. Acting out

It refers to the tendency of acting in an involuntary manner stirred up by a demand disclosed during the analysis, thus confirming what it is actually repressed and denied.



12. Affiliation

It refers to the person's tendency to request other people's help, collaborating willingly with them.

13. Purpose inhibition

The person accepts an altered form of his initial purpose – it is what we usually call “to go half way”.

14. Altruism

It is the unconditional dedication for someone else's needs by totally neglecting or denying one's own identical needs. It is the well-known case of the neurotic person who asks for help of the psychoanalyst for another person he feels attached through compassion and friendship bounds.

15. Avoiding

It is the refusal of interacting with conflicting situations or persons.

16. Compensation

It is the excessive development of interest and action in a certain domain only to hide the missing of satisfaction in a previous one.

17. Humor

The mechanism is performed by revealing the funny or comical side of an embarrassing situation.

18. Passive aggression

It is the tendency of showing aggressiveness in an indirect manner.

### **1.5 Method of Research**

In this study, the method is descriptive method. Whitney and Milholland (1993) write that “Descriptive method is the existence of fact with correct interpretations. Descriptive research studies about the problem in the society, with the system which acts in society together with certain situations including the relationship, activities, behavior, point of view with the process which happened and the influences of phenomenon”. It means that descriptive method is used to describe the information that is needed to explain the psychological effects of secrecy and the characters’ defense mechanism to counter the effects.

The source of data is from the characters of Floss and Neva. According to Roberts (1999), “Character may be defined as a verbal representation of human being. To find out the data about the character, the writer sees from the action and speech of the main character, the description and commentary of the narrator and the other character about the main character”. It means that to explain about the effects of keeping the secret and defense mechanism used by the characters, the writer can get the data from her action, behavior, statement, description from the author of novel and also from the other character in the novel.

In this research, the writer follows some steps, first in collecting the data, the writer uses close reading technique. Jacobus (1999: 6) writes that “Close reading takes the form of writing, discussion or silent observation, should be based on questioning the text. Close reading requires that you take the text seriously enough to study it, to read and read it, search for details that might otherwise go unobserved, examine the text for special words and term and refer to

the dictionary to be sure of their meaning when necessary”. It means that to do this research the writer reads the novel again and again to get the right data. Second, the writer classifies the data based on the points in psychological effects of keeping secrecy and defense mechanism. The last step is interpretation of data based on topic of analysis.