

**ANXIETY AND DEFENSE MECHANISM OF AMIRAH IN NOVEL *SHE***

***WORE RED TRAINERS* BY NA'IMA B. ROBERT**

A GRADUATING PAPER

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Gaining the Bachelor

Degree in English Literature



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**2023**

**MOTTO**

In Allah, we trust.



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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicated this graduating paper to:

Both of my parents, Sriyanta, S.Tp., and Suparti

My brother and sisters, Salma, Ayyash, Sarah, and Afsheen

As well as for myself

and

English Department State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta



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Kami menyatakan bahwa skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan pada sidang Munaqosyah untuk memenuhi salah satu syarat memperoleh gelar Sarjana Sastra Inggris.

Atas perhatiannya, kami mengucapkan terima kasih.

*Wassalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb*

Yogyakarta, 14 Agustus 2023

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*Assalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb.*

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, who has been giving me blessing for finishing this graduating paper entitled “Anxiety and Defense Mechanism of Amirah In Novel *She Wore Red Trainers* By Na’ima B. Robert”.

I would like to express my gratitude and sincere appreciation to all those who have contributed to the successful completion of this graduating paper. Their unwavering support, valuable insights, and dedication have been instrumental in shaping this study and enriching its outcomes. Therefore, I would like to express my appreciation to:

1. Prof. Dr. Phil Al Makin, S.Ag., MA., as the Rector of State Islamic University Sunan Kaliaga Yogyakarta;
2. Dr. Muhammad Wildan M.A., as the Dean of Faculty of Adab and Cultural Sciences, State Islamic University Sunan Kaliaga Yogyakarta;
3. Ulyati Retno, S.S., M.Hum., as the Head of English Departement, State Islamic University Sunan Kaliaga Yogyakarta;
4. Dr. Witriani, S.S., M.Hum., as my advisor. My deepest thanks to your guidance, encouragement, and patience throughout this research process;
5. All lecturers of English Departement;
6. Harsiwi Fajar Sari, S.S., M.A., as the examiner of this research;
7. My beloved parents Sriyanta, S.Tp., dan Suparti, who never stopped praying and providing moral and material support;

8. Dear brother and sisters Salma, Ayyash, Sarah, and Afsheen;
9. Bhanu Argani Widyatna who has accompanied, helped, and never stopped providing support to researcher in working on this graduating paper;
10. All members of Squid Squad Ella, Bella, Sheylla, and Fakhri (RIP);
11. All reviewers;
12. Nisa and Heni, as a friend who lives beside my room;
13. All members of Choose Your Way Squad;
14. All friends of English Department, State Islamic University Sunan Kaliaga Yogyakarta.

May all the prayers, assistance, and support that have been given to researcher will be rewarded by Allah SWT. The researcher realizes that this graduating paper is far from perfection, therefore criticism and suggestions are highly expected for the perfection of this research. Hopefully, this graduating paper provides benefits for the readers.

*Wassalamu 'alaikum Wr. Wb.*

Yogyakarta, 13th July 2023

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## **ANXIETY AND DEFENSE MECHANISM OF AMIRAH IN NOVEL *SHE***

### ***WORE RED TRAINERS* BY NA'IMA B. ROBERT**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

*She Wore Red Trainers* is a young adult novel written by Na'ima B. Robert. In this novel, readers are invited to follow the life story of Amirah, a female main character who grew up in a Muslim environment amidst the hustle and bustle of London. The character of Amirah in this book experiences a complex development, mainly due to the influence of a challenging family environment. The repeated conflicts and tensions between her parents significantly shaped Amirah's outlook on relationships. This experience even made him swear that he would never marry. The situation at home also often traps Amirah in situations that cause anxiety. This study has the main objective of analyzing Amirah's anxiety, identifying its root causes, and uncovering the defense mechanisms she uses to relieve this anxiety. In the context of this analysis, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory becomes the theoretical basis used. A qualitative research method was adopted to understand the complexities of Amirah's character. The results of the analysis show that Amirah experiences three different types of anxiety, namely neurotic anxiety, moral anxiety, and realistic anxiety. The three main factors that trigger Amirah's anxiety are an unstable home environment, traumatic experiences, and complicated feelings of affection. In her efforts to deal with this anxiety, Amirah implements various defense mechanisms. Mechanisms of displacement, denial, rationalization, reaction formation, repression, regression, and sublimation are revealed as ways that Amirah uses to deal with the feelings of anxiety that haunt her.

**Keywords:** *Anxiety, Defense Mechanisms, She Wore Red Trainers.*

**KECEMASAN DAN MEKANISME PERTAHANAN AMIRAH DALAM  
NOVEL *SHE WORE RED TRAINERS* KARYA NA'IMA B. ROBERT**

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**ABSTRAK**

*She Wore Red Trainers* adalah sebuah novel untuk pembaca remaja dan dewasa yang ditulis oleh Na'ima B. Robert. Dalam novel ini, pembaca diajak mengikuti kisah kehidupan Amirah, seorang tokoh utama perempuan yang tumbuh dalam lingkungan Muslim di tengah hiruk-pikuk kota London. Karakter Amirah dalam buku ini mengalami perkembangan yang kompleks, terutama karena pengaruh lingkungan keluarga yang penuh tantangan. Konflik dan ketegangan yang terjadi berulang kali antara orangtuanya memainkan peran besar dalam membentuk cara pandang Amirah terhadap hubungan. Pengalaman ini bahkan membuatnya untuk bersumpah bahwa ia tidak akan pernah menikah. Keadaan rumahnya juga sering menjebak Amirah dalam situasi yang menimbulkan rasa cemas. Penelitian ini memiliki tujuan utama untuk melakukan analisis terhadap kecemasan yang dialami Amirah, mengidentifikasi akar penyebabnya, dan mengungkap mekanisme pertahanan yang digunakannya untuk meredakan kecemasan tersebut. Dalam konteks analisis ini, teori psikoanalisis oleh Sigmund Freud menjadi landasan teoretis yang digunakan. Metode penelitian kualitatif diadopsi guna memahami kompleksitas karakter Amirah. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa Amirah mengalami tiga jenis kecemasan yang berbeda, yakni kecemasan neurotik, kecemasan moral, dan kecemasan realistik. Tiga faktor utama yang memicu kecemasan Amirah adalah lingkungan rumah yang tidak stabil, pengalaman trauma, dan perasaan kasih sayang yang rumit. Dalam usahanya menghadapi kecemasan tersebut, Amirah mengimplementasikan berbagai mekanisme pertahanan. Mekanisme pemindahan, penolakan, rasionalisasi, pembentukan reaksi, represi, regresi, dan sublimasi terungkap sebagai cara-cara yang digunakan Amirah untuk mengatasi perasaan cemas yang menghantuinya.

**Kata kunci:** *Kecemasan, Mekanisme Pertahanan, She Wore Red Trainers*

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Study

*She Wore Red Trainers* by Na'ima B. Robert is a literary work that tells a complex and meaningful story. This story takes the reader into the life of a main character named Amirah, a Muslim teenager who lives in the Islamic community in London. Amirah's character complexity in the novel is deeply influenced by her upbringing in an unstable household due to the tumultuous relationship between her parents. Growing up in a home with strained parental relations creates a sense of instability and insecurity for Amirah. Her parents' constant tension and conflicts shape her perception of relationships and love. She develops a mistrust of commitment as a result of witnessing her parents' fights. The complexity of Amirah's character is also reflected in her relationship with the character Ali. Her meeting with Ali creates a complex dynamic, as Amirah must balance her affection and religious beliefs.

The researcher is interested in the emotional complexity and character development of Amirah. In the novel, she is described as a person who does not want to get married. This unwillingness is due to her experience of repeatedly witnessing her mother's marriage falling apart. As the story progresses, she is pressured by her family to get married. Zayd then attempts to set her up with his friend, Hassan, making her anxious. She firmly rejects the idea. Amirah's anxiety is rooted in the fear of replicating her mother's

failed marriage. Witnessing the pain and emotional turmoil caused by her parents' constant arguments and divorce has traumatized her. Consequently, when faced with the prospect of marriage, she is overwhelmed by nervousness. It is interesting because even though she is reluctant to marry Hassan, she develops feelings for Ali.

Anxiety occurs in everyday life and is often experienced by characters in literary works such as films, novels and short stories. The portrayal of anxiety in a character humanizes them and allows readers to empathize and connect with their struggles. Moreover, when characters experience anxiety, it creates an opportunity for the plot to evolve. How characters overcome their anxiety often drives the narrative forward, allowing for growth in both the characters and the story.

Anxiety is a common human emotion experienced by people in varying degrees and situations. Anxiety is a painful emotional experience which is produced by excitations in the internal organs of the body. These excitations result from internal or external stimulation and are governed by the autonomic nervous system (Hall, 1979:61). Anxiety alerts people to potential dangers and helps them prepare for uncertain situations. However, it can be maladaptive when experienced for a long period of time. Excessive anxiety can be a sign of an anxiety disorder. It is the sixth leading cause of non-fatal health losses worldwide. In 2015, anxiety disorders contributed to 24.6 million Years Lived with Disability (YLD) globally (WHO, 2017: 10). The impact of anxiety on an individual's well-being can be profound,



influencing various aspects of their life, including personal relationships, professional performance, and overall health.

In response to anxiety, individuals often employ defense mechanisms. These mechanisms are first conceptualized by Sigmund Freud. It is a mechanism the ego utilizes to counter threats from the id, superego, or outside world and reduce anxiety (Ewen, 1993: 35). These mechanisms may vary from person to person and can either be beneficial or detrimental depending on their utilization.

Anxiety is a natural response to certain situations. Triggers for anxiety can vary from person to person. In exploring the possible causes of Amirah's anxiety, it is essential to consider her life experiences, background information, environment, culture, and traumatic events. Additionally, environmental factors like the school environment could play a significant role in increasing anxiety.

In order to lessen anxiety, people develop defense mechanisms. With Amirah's anxiety, her defense mechanisms manifest in various ways, which will be explored in the study. Identifying these strategies will provide information on how she deals with anxiety. Through her example, it can be seen how defense mechanisms are useful in dealing with anxiety. It is important to remember that anxiety can be managed, and we can all lead healthier lives with the right strategies.

This study aims to explore anxiety and defense mechanisms in Amirah from *She Wore Red Trainers*, who grew up in an unstable household. The

conflict experienced by Amirah will be analyzed using the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud. Exploring the types and causes of Amirah's anxiety and evaluating the defense mechanisms she employs will provide a more comprehensive understanding of anxiety and how to reduce it.

### **1.2 Research Questions**

In this research, several problem formulations to be addressed are:

1. What are the types and causes of Amirah's anxiety?
2. What defense mechanisms does Amirah use to reduce her anxiety?

### **1.3 Objectives of Study**

This research aims to find the type of anxiety and the causes of Amirah's anxiety. This research also aims to find defense mechanisms that Amirah uses.

### **1.4 Significances of Study**

This study's importance lies in its addition to our understanding of the subtleties of anxiety and the wide range of defensive strategies used by the protagonist, Amirah. This study intends to explore the nuanced elements of anxiety manifestation and the use of defense mechanisms by delving into Amirah's experiences, providing insightful information for both academics and readers. The results of this study are expected to increase our understanding of anxiety as a whole and offer useful advice for reducing it.

### **1.5 Literature Review**

In fact, no research has been conducted using the novel *She Wore Red Trainers* as the object. However, several studies have similarities in theory.



This research uses psychoanalysis theory. There are some prior studies relevant to this study. First, the research of Atun Farkhatun (2017) entitled *Anxiety And Defense Mechanism of Rachel Watson in Paula Hawkins' Novel The Girl on The Train* from the English Department of Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University. This study outlines the several sorts of anxiety that Rachel Watson experiences and her defense mechanisms. The researcher used the psychoanalysis theory of Sigmund Freud. The method of this research is qualitative. The results show that Rachel uses three types of Anxiety. They are neurotic anxiety, moral anxiety, and realistic anxiety. She applied six defense mechanisms: repression, displacement, fixation, projection, rationalization, and denial.

Second, the research of M. Beni Setiawan (2018) entitled *Lily's Defense Mechanism As Seen In After You Novel* from the English Department of Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University. This study raises the issue of the changing characterization that is caused by anxiety and how defense mechanisms help the character overcome her anxiety. The researcher applied the Sigmund Freud psychoanalysis theory. This study used a qualitative approach. The findings indicate that Lily uses three different anxieties. These three types of anxiety are realistic, moral, and neurotic. Denial, regression, projection, sublimation, reaction formation, and rationalization are the defense mechanism she used.

Third, the research of Syaikhu Aliya Rahman (2019) entitled *Kim Yeong Hye's Anxiety In Han Kang's The Vegetarian* from the English

Department of Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University. This study focuses on the anxiety suffered by Kim Yeong Hye and the defense mechanism she uses to reduce her anxiety. The researcher used Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories. The methodology for this study is qualitative. The results show that Kim Yeong Hye employs three types of anxieties. They are realistic, moral, and neurotic. She applies eight defense mechanisms: denial, repression, aggression, projection, rationalization, isolation, fixation, and reaction formation.

Fourth, the research of Nanda Saraswati (2020) entitled *Anxiety And Defense Mechanism of Hannah Baker In Jay Asher's Thirteen Reasons Why* from the English Department of Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University. This study points out Hannah Baker's forms of anxiety as well as her coping mechanisms. The Sigmund Freud psychoanalysis theory was applied by the researcher. This study used a qualitative approach. The findings indicate that Hannah uses two different anxieties. These two types are moral and realistic. She used six defense strategies of aggression, reaction formation, repression, regression, and rationalization.

After explaining each of the previous studies, it appears that they have the same theoretical basis, the theory of psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud. Every study uses a qualitative research methodology. The four studies investigated the relationship between anxiety and defense mechanisms in different novel characters. They reveal several types of anxiety, such as realistic, moral, and neurotic anxiety. Defense mechanisms that are frequently

discussed include repression, rationalization, reaction formation, projection and denial. However, there are significant differences in terms of the novels and characters they focus on, the quantity and the types of anxiety studied, and the defense mechanisms identified.

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In previous research, much has been learned about how anxiety is triggered by conflicts and how defense mechanisms are used by individuals to overcome anxiety. However, this research enriches our understanding with a different focus on the novel *She Wore Red Trainers* as the object of study. In different novels, unique characters face special situations and conflicts. This research allows us to understand the diverse ways in which anxiety and defense mechanisms may occur in more specific contexts. By focusing on aspects that have not been explored before, this research makes new contributions to the understanding of the dynamics of psychoanalysis in the

context of *She Wore Red Trainers*. This research will lead to a deeper understanding of how anxiety and defense mechanisms can operate in different narratives, help us see psychoanalytic theory in action in the real world, and introduce new insights that enrich discussions about the relationship between literature, psychology, and human experience.

## **1.6 Theoretical Framework**

The researcher applies psychoanalysis theory to the analysis of this study. It is a psychological theory and treatment approach developed by Sigmund Freud that aims to treat mental illness. By analyzing the content of the novel *She Wore Red Trainers*, the researcher may identify patterns of thought, behavior, and unconscious conflicts that contribute to the character's anxiety. In addition, the researcher examines how the character copes with their anxiety and identifies the defense mechanisms they use to protect themselves from the anxieties.

### **1.6.1. The Structure of Personality**

Freud categorizes personality into three structures: id, ego, and superego. The innermost core of the personality is known as the id. It is entirely contained in the unconscious mind. The id is completely irrational and has no actual connection to reality. The id strives to immediately fulfill its needs and will not accept any delay. It only understands immediate gratification. The ego interacts with reality directly and runs mainly on a conscious level. It follows the reality principle, evaluating reality to determine when and how the id can

properly release its impulses and satisfy its desire. The last personality structure is the superego. It is conscience-based internal morality. The traditional beliefs and ideals of family and society are contained in the superego. The dynamics among these structures lead to feelings of anxiety.

### **1.6.2. Anxiety**

The book "A Primer of Freudian Psychology" describes that Freud proposed three types of anxiety: moral anxiety, neurotic anxiety, and reality or objective anxiety.

#### **a. Reality Anxiety**

The fear of danger in the real world is known as reality anxiety. Some people may fear fire, darkness, cockroaches, or something else. Reality anxiety is beneficial because it guides our behavior to protect us from real threats. When the danger is removed, our fear goes away.

#### **b. Neurotic Anxiety**

Neurotic anxiety is an unconscious fear of being punished for impulsively displaying id-dominated behavior (Schultz & Schultz, 2017:48).

#### **c. Moral Anxiety**

The conflict between the id and superego causes moral anxiety. Moral anxiety is triggered by a sense of danger from the

conscience and manifests as feelings of guilt or shame in the ego.

### **1.6.3. Defense Mechanism**

Defense mechanisms come into play as the ego's unconscious strategies to handle anxiety. They have several types and they always have two things in common: (1) they are all denials or distortions of reality—necessary ones, but distortions nonetheless, and (2) they all operate unconsciously. We are unaware of them, which mean that on the conscious level, we hold distorted or unreal images of our world and ourselves (Schultz & Schultz, 2017:49).

#### **a. Repression**

Repression is a mechanism that forces unwanted memory, idea, or perception from entering consciousness and sets up a barrier against any form of motor discharge (Hall, 1979:86).

#### **b. Projection**

Another way of defending against disturbing impulses is to project them onto someone else. This form of defense is referred to as projection (Schultz & Schultz, 2017:50). For instance, someone who is unconsciously upset may accuse someone else of being angry and ascribe their anger to them.

#### **c. Reaction Formation**

In reaction formation, we defend ourselves against a disturbing impulse by actively expressing the opposite impulse



(Schultz & Schultz, 2017). It is a method of dealing with unacceptable desires or impulses by acting in an entirely opposite way. For example, someone who has unconscious homoerotic impulses may retaliate by vocally expressing their dislike of gay people.

**d. Regression**

When a person may retreat to an earlier level after reaching a certain stage of development due to fear is called regression (Hall, 1979:95).

**e. Denial**

The defense mechanism of denial is related to repression and involves denying the existence of some external threat or traumatic event that has occurred (Schultz & Schultz, 2017:50). For example, a person with a life-threatening illness may deny the imminence of death.

**f. Rationalization**

Rationalization is a defense mechanism that involves reinterpreting our behavior to make it seem more rational and, therefore, more acceptable (Schultz & Schultz, 2017:50). By convincing ourselves that there is a logical explanation for something, we can explain or justify a threatening thought or action. For example, the loved one who rejects you now seems to have a lot of flaws.

**g. Displacement**

If an object that satisfies an id impulse is unavailable, the person may shift the impulse to another object. This is known as displacement (Schultz & Schultz, 2017:50). For example, students who hate their teacher but are afraid to express their hostility for fear of punishment may transfer their anger to someone less likely to retaliate.

**h. Sublimation**

Sublimation involves altering the id impulses themselves. The instinctual energy is thus diverted into other channels of expression that society considers acceptable and admirable (Schultz & Schultz, 2017:50-51). For instance, a person with a strong urge to strike someone might use a punching bag at the gym alternatively.

**i. Fixation**

Freud believed that fixation occurs when a child cannot successfully navigate a particular psychosexual stage due to excessive gratification or frustration. For example, suppose a child is fixated on the oral stage. In that case, they may have an oral fixation, manifesting as an over-reliance on oral pleasures such as eating, smoking, or talking.



## **1.7 Method of Research**

This chapter describes the study's type of research, data sources, data collection technique, and data analysis technique.

### **1.7.1. Type of Research**

The researcher uses a qualitative method to do the research. Qualitative research is an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:41).

### **1.7.2. Data Sources**

The sources of data are taken from Naima B. Robert's novel entitled *She Wore Red Trainers*. This novel contains 49 chapters and uses a first-person point of view. This study's primary data source is conversations, descriptions, plots, and events in the novel related to anxiety and defensive mechanisms based on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis theory. In this study, published research studies, books, and websites are used as secondary sources to provide additional context and support for the analysis of the primary data source.

### **1.7.3. Data Collection Technique**

The method used to gather data for this study is documentation. There are some steps the researcher takes to collect the information. Firstly, the researcher selects and reads the whole story of the novel. The researcher also read additional materials such as books, websites, and articles to enhance knowledge related to the topic. Then the researcher notes

Amirah's conversations, narrations, and descriptions, which relate to the anxiety and defense mechanism of the character. In the last step, the data were arranged based on psychoanalysis theory.

#### **1.7.4. Data Analysis Technique**

In this study, a descriptive analysis is used to analyze the anxiety and defensive mechanisms in the novel *She Wore Red Trainers*. The research was guided by Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis theory, which provided a lens for interpreting the novel's characters' behavior and experiences. Specifically, the analysis focused on identifying patterns in the novel's conversations and descriptions related to anxiety and defensive mechanisms. The researcher then draws a conclusion as a result of the data analysis.

### **1.8 Paper Organization**

This paper is divided into four chapters. The first chapter talks about the background of the study, the research question, the objective of the study, the significance of the studies, the literature review, the theoretical approach, the methods of study, and the paper organization. The second chapter contains the intrinsic elements of the novel. Then the third chapter discusses and analyzes the anxiety, the cause, and the defense mechanism of Amirah using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis theory. The fourth chapter is the conclusion and the suggestion of the paper.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Throughout this study, the researcher explores the anxiety experienced by the character Amirah. Besides that, the researcher also looks for defense mechanisms used by Amirah to deal with her anxiety. In this final chapter, the researcher presents the conclusions drawn from the research and recommends a suggestion for the next researcher.

#### 4.1 Conclusion

From the analysis that has been done, it is concluded that Amirah experiences conflicts that make her feel anxious in her life. The character of Amirah feels all types of anxiety that reflect her struggles in facing challenges and conflicts. The first type of anxiety she feels is called neurotic anxiety. There are seven times when she feels this kind of anxiety. First, she is anxious when Abu Malik leaves home because it changes the atmosphere in her home. Second, she is nervous when she has to tell about Abdullah's disability. Third, she is afraid of getting married. Fourth, she is panic when Ali suddenly shows up in front of her house. Fifth, she is panic because Zayd hears her talk with Rania. Sixth, she is nervous while waiting for Hassan to come over her house. Seventh, she is panicked when she cannot find Ali at the airport. The second type of her anxiety is realistic. It happens when she feels danger in the presence of Abu Malik. The last type is called moral anxiety. It happens when she is embarrassed to meet Ali after being caught secretly drawing a picture of him. Later she feels guilty for not desiring

marriage. Also, she feels guilty towards her mom due to her low exam grade. Additionally, when Ali confesses his love, she is overwhelmed with shame, believing herself to be worthless. The factors that cause anxiety feels by Amirah involve several things, including feelings of love or affection, past trauma experiences, and environment.

To deal with her anxiety, Amirah applies defense mechanisms such as displacement, denial, sublimation, repression, regression, reaction formation, and rationalization. For instance, Amirah uses displacement when she channels her frustration towards Abu Malik by generalizing that all men are the same. There are situations where she denies her feelings and desires to decrease her anxiety; this is known as denial. Amirah also practices sublimation by turning to reading the Qur'an and praying. Furthermore, she is panic when she encounters Ali, she represses her emotions to appear composed. During challenging times, she seeks comfort from others, which is referred to as regression. Later, when Amirah experiences anger and the urge to cry, she responds by laughing instead. This is called reaction formation. Lastly, Amirah employs rationalization to justify her reluctance to marry by finding excuses that seem reasonable to her.

#### **4.2 Suggestion**

In this study, the researcher acknowledges the presence of certain limitations in both the writing and presentation of the analysis of anxiety and defense mechanisms. Nevertheless, the researcher hopes that this study will benefit readers and contribute to their understanding. While this study

explains the relationship between anxiety and defense mechanisms, some theories for future research could help us understand this novel even better.

This novel can be analyzed using feminism or comparative approach.



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