

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

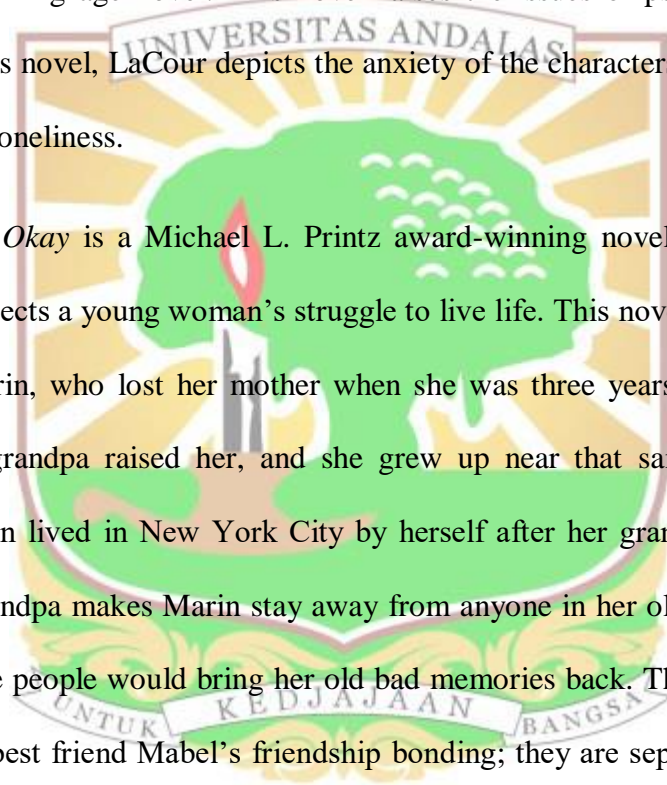
1.1 Background of the Research

Literary works mean not only about what is written but also what is voiced, invented, and expressed in whatever form. There are several issues depicted in literary works; psychological issues are one of them, especially with an anxiety condition. Usually, the anxiety depicted in the literary work is based on the author's experience or commonly happens in society. People deal with anxiety in different ways, and the anxiety can come from loneliness, loss, habit, or something that people think even exists. In some cases, anxiety can make people feel lonely.

In general, some literary works depicted the characters suffering from psychological issues such as anxiety in order to tell the readers that many people in the world have to deal with anxiety. Usually, that anxiety can have detrimental consequences on teenagers and children that can happen in the long and short term. Anxiety can lead to a bad impact on their life. Teenagers and children who experience anxiety will have problems with academic performance and have problems with social life. It generally happens because they have problems in the social or family environment and some other problems.

Talking about anxiety, J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* is the most famous literary work that depicts the main character's anxiety. The story about Holden Caulfield's struggles to deal with anxiety is very popular in the '90s until nowadays. Not only Salinger but Nina LaCour is also one of the writers that make a story about the difficulties of dealing with anxiety. *We Are Okay* by Nina LaCour is a young adult, coming age novel. This novel raises the issues of psychology. At the beginning of this novel, LaCour depicts the anxiety of the characters that comes from guilt, loss, and loneliness.

We Are Okay is a Michael L. Printz award-winning novel written by Nina LaCour that reflects a young woman's struggle to live life. This novel is the story of a young girl, Marin, who lost her mother when she was three years old in a surfing accident. Her grandpa raised her, and she grew up near that same beach in San Francisco. Marin lived in New York City by herself after her grandpa's death. The death of her grandpa makes Marin stay away from anyone in her old life; Marin was afraid that those people would bring her old bad memories back. This novel portrays Marin and her best friend Mabel's friendship bonding; they are separated for quite a long time before meeting again in Marin's college dormitory. The novel takes place in the present and splitting time between Marin's freshman college winter break and Marin's memories with grandpa and her friend Mabel's in her last year of high school in California. Nina LaCour describes Marin's character, who suffers anxiety in her life.



Nina LaCour is a young adult American novelist. In her career, LaCour has published four books: *We Are Okay*, *The Disenchantments*, *Hold Still*, and *Everything Leads to You*. According to Nina LaCour, after her grandfather's death, LaCour felt sad and depressed at every thought about her grandpa. A year later, she wrote the *We Are Okay* novel and depicted how she felt when her grandpa was gone in this novel. Nina LaCour's *We Are Okay* first, published on 25 September 2009, has received an award that was the Michael L. Printz Award (2018). The Michael L. Printz award is the best book award written for teens, and this award is administered by American Library Association (ALA). Angela Carstensen, the Printz award committee chair, revealed that LaCour's *We Are Okay* is a good book, and she said the combination story of betrayal and grief. The New York Times Book Review stated, "the power of this book seeing how Marin survives her grief and LaCour made the world in this novel fragile but beautiful."

After reading *We Are Okay* novel, the writer feels tempted and interested in studying psychoanalysis in this object because LaCour depicts the major characters in this novel dealing with complicated issues, which leads the major characters to experience psychological issues. That complicated problem owned by the major characters makes the writer excited to do the research about it. The writer is curious about how LaCour demonstrates the major characters' struggle to face the psychological issue, especially the anxiety, because it will help the readers clearly understand the anxiety of the major characters in this novel. The writer wants to expose how Nina LaCour depicts the anxiety of the major characters in *We Are Okay*

novel. The writer also wants to discover the types of self-defense mechanisms that major characters use to overcome anxiety. In analyzing the novel, the writer uses the psychoanalysis theory of Sigmund Freud, anxiety, and self-defense mechanism. The writer decided to make the research titled “Anxiety and defense mechanism of the Major characters in Nina LaCour’s *We Are Okay*.”

1.2. Identification of Problem

We Are Okay is about a young woman who struggles in her life. The novel reflects several psychological issues of the characters such as anxiety, depression, delusional disorder. Still, in this research, the writer decided to focus the study on the characters’ anxiety in this novel. Marin and Mabel are presented as the characters that experience anxiety in this novel; Marin’s anxiety arises because of some problem. Marin’s first problem was growing up without parents, and her grandfather never told stories about her Mom, which irritated her life. Marin feels like she does not know anything about her family, even about her grandpa, which makes her anxiety arise. Another problem is that her grandpa’s death makes Marin feel lonelier and guilty, making her anxiety worse. Not only Marin but Mabel also deal with anxiety. Mabel felt guilty because she was not there when Marin was still grieving, and the fact she does not know about how Marin lived the life after her grandpa’s death makes the anxiety come to Mabel. To reduce the anxiety, Marin and Mabel developed several self-defense mechanisms.

The writer wants to expose complicated psychological issues in *We Are Okay*, and the anxiety of the major characters occurs as the strong and impressive elements. In that case, without a comprehensive understanding of the anxiety and defense mechanism, the readers will not completely discover the truth of psychological issues felt by the major characters in this novel. Therefore, this study reveals how LaCour depicts the anxiety and self-defense mechanism of the major characters in this novel in order to help the readers get the meaning of the anxiety issues described by LaCour in this novel.

1.3. Review of Previous Study

To enrich the research, the writer conducts this literary review to find out what other researchers say about *We Are Okay* by Nina LaCour, anxiety, defense mechanism, and other articles to help the writer in this research.

First, an article by Muktar Hasan Hasibuan (2019) from the University of Sumatra Utara entitled "*Lesbianism Portrayed in Nina Lacour's Novel We Are Okay*" He discovers that the environment and romantic friendship was the cause Marin and Mabel become lesbian, the loneliness that Marin felt was also the fact that made Marin become lesbian, the author explains that the attention and love from Mabel made Marin fall for her. He also found out that LaCour portrayed lesbian life in *We Are Okay* novel as similar to straight people. This article used the same novel as the writer but with different aims. Hasibuan focuses on lesbians portrayed in *We Are Okay* novel, and the writer's research focuses on anxiety and self-defense

mechanisms in *We Are Okay* novel. The strengths of this article are shown in how Hasibuan clearly explains the factor that causes the characters in Nina LaCour's *We Are Okay* to become lesbian. At the same time, this research will enrich my research and help me understand the major characters in *We Are Okay novel* from a different point of view that will help the writer find out the anxiety experiences by Marin and Mabel.

Second is a journal article by Essalih Bougherara and Nor El Houda Bellakhdar (2018) from the University of Mohamed Boudiaf entitled "*Defense Mechanism and Tragic Downfall in John Green's The fault in Our Stars*". This article reveals how the main character, named Hazel, struggled in order to overcome her anxiety. Hazel's anxiety came from her stage four cancer, and she was afraid that when she died, her parents would deeply grief about it. Hazel feels threatened when she is around her friend because they treat Hazel differently from other people, irritating her. As a result of this research, the authors describe Hazel using self-defense mechanisms to get a better life. Thyroid cancer made Hazel obsesses thought over death before she started to employ some self-defense mechanism. The author describes Hazel choosing to read a book in her room instead of meeting other people because she thinks that socializing with people is threatened to her life, which is the first defense mechanism Hazel employs. The author also describes Hazel employing other defense mechanisms. Finally, she chooses to open herself to other people and motivate others on social media, and she also visits the cancer support group. In this article, the author also discovers the other main character named August by using the

theory tragic hero by Aristotle. August is a tragic hero willing to sacrifice for his loves, and he does not regret his choice. The strengths of this research are that the author perfectly describes the development of Hazel's defense mechanisms to overcome her psychological issues. In the writer's opinion, the explanation about the main character's defense mechanism in this story is interesting. The author of this research tries to explain in detail how the main character's hopelessness turns into a good passion after employing several defense mechanisms.

The next is a journal article by Khair Sumalani from the University of Balochistan (2018) entitled "*Study of Ego Defense Mechanism of the Main Character in Tehmina's My Feudal Lord*" In this study, Khair describes the main character named Durani, who struggles with her anxiety. In her childhood, her mother's preferences for the daughter have a light-skin, but Durani has dark skin that causes her to be shunned by her family. Khair also describes that Durani's anxieties became worse after she married Mustafa Khar. Mustafa is a violent and possessive husband, he locks Durani in the house for fourteen years, and Durani spent her time alone during that time. In this study, Khair discovers that a defense mechanism helps Durani continue her life. Durani uses several types of defense mechanisms to overcome her anxiety. Khair explains that Durani uses repression defense mechanism to throw away the unpleasant feeling to the subconscious. Durani realizes that she cannot completely solve her anxieties. She chooses to repress the feeling because remembering her problems will make her anxieties worse. The weakness of this study lies in how Khair mentions that Durani experiences anxiety, but he does not describe

it clearly. He only mentions the causes that made Durani experience the anxiety; Khair did not clarify what types of that anxiety.

The next is M Fauzan's thesis (2019) entitled *Self Defense Mechanism in the Main Character of Emma Donoghue's Room*. He discovers several results from his research, Ma the main character in this novel, gets depression because of some elements and symptoms. Even though this thesis applied to a different novel, this thesis has similar aims to the writer's research. The writer's research focuses on the way major characters overcome anxiety. The findings in this thesis, Fauzan describes the symptoms of depression experienced by Ma, caused by her past, she got kidnapped, and she locked in a room for some years. Ma cannot enjoy her life as before after she escapes from that room. That irritates her life, and Fauzan also explains that the self-defense mechanism helps Ma overcome that psychological issue. Ma cannot enjoy her normal life, so she decided to start a new life to live in a new apartment and stay in a room like in the past when she was locked in the room. That makes her feel better because she is uncomfortable with the outside world anymore, so instead of forcing herself to live like normal people, she chooses to lock herself in the apartment. That kind of self-defense mechanism makes her feel better. The strength of this thesis lies in how Fauzan analyzes detailed psychological issues suffered by Ma, how Fauzan describes the symptom of depression felt by Ma in detail. He explains that bad experiences made Ma lose interest in everything, get insomnia, and think of suicide. Fauzan also explains that at the end of the story; Ma

distress to get rid of the symptoms of depression, and Ma cannot return to a normal person, her depression keeps haunted her. Fauzan reveals that the defense mechanism employed by Ma can't get rid her depression, but she can overcome it. The writer argues the weakness of this article that Fauzan did not explore the self-defense mechanism used by Ma in detail.

The last is Wa Ode Nia Fadillah's thesis (2018) entitled *Self Defense Mechanism of Character in Lawrence's Lady Chatterley's Lover*. She reveals how Clifford, the main character of this novel, tries to be a developed character; he has some unstable condition after the battlefield that accidentally makes his body in bad condition. Use to be a handsome man makes Clifford frustrated with his current condition. Clifford isolates himself because he hates looking bad and weak from other people, especially from a lower class. As a result, Wa Ode finds out Clifford uses some defense mechanisms to make his life better. She reveals that Clifford finally opens himself to do something positive. He chose to become a writer, write a book about the people he knew and become a famous writer. This thesis has a detailed explanation of the self-defense mechanism Clifford uses, how the main character struggles with his life, and the impact of the self-defense mechanism to solve his problem. She presents it with good storytelling sentences that make the readers easy to understand. This study uses the same theory as my research, both using the self-defense mechanism theory by Freud. The weakness of this study is that the author did not explain what kind of psychological issues suffered by Clifford in

detail. Vice versa, my research will examine the main character's psychological issues in detail and also mention how to overcome them.

Those five studies above help the writer to enrich the knowledge about the writer's research. Those related studies not only topic about *We are okay* novel but also related to psychological issues and the self-defense mechanisms. Some of those studies help the writer understand how anxiety is portrayed in different objects. Some of it helps the writer to understand how to apply defense mechanisms in psychological issues.

1.4. Research Question

To examine the analysis of the psychological issues of the novel, the writer proposes two research questions. Therefore some questions will go as follows:

1. What kind of anxiety does Nina LaCour portray that experience by the major characters in *We Are Okay*?
2. What types of self-defense mechanisms do the major characters use to overcome their anxieties?

1.5. Scope of the Research

In this research, the writer limits the discussion on the anxiety and self-defense mechanism of the major characters in this novel because the writer wants to explore the anxiety and self-defense mechanism as the main issues in *We Are Okay*.

The writer will not explore other psychological issues portrayed in this novel, such as delusional disorder and depression. This study focuses on the types of anxiety felt by Marin and Mabel in LaCour's *We Are Okay* novel. The writer also discusses how LaCour depicts the self-defense mechanisms of the major characters in *We Are Okay* to overcome the anxiety.

1.6. The Objective of the Study

This research aims to reveal the types of anxiety of the major characters in Nina LaCour *We Are Okay* and what kind of self-defense mechanism the major characters use. The anxieties that will be analyzed are realistic anxiety, moral anxiety, or neurotic anxiety; this will help the readers know that the major characters experience some types of anxiety. This research also explains the types of self-defense mechanisms Marin and Mabel use to overcome the anxiety. The writer includes this analysis to help the readers understand that the major characters use several types of self-defense mechanisms in this novel. Additionally, this research is to enrich the analysis of *We Are Okay* in the literary work-study.

