

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Study

Humans essentially will suffer from stress and depression in certain circumstances as living beings with emotion. According to the survey called *Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health* that was conducted by SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration) in 2020, stated there two stages of mental illness which the first one is Any Mental Illness, and the second one is Serious Mental Illness. For Any Mental Illness (AMI), it is defined as a mental, behavioural, or emotional disorder. Its impact's range can be varied for each person. AMI can cause mild, moderate, or even severe impairment. Unlike AMI, Serious Mental Illness (SMI) is a mental, behavioural, or emotional disorder that interferes with someone's life activities, such as having bipolar disorders and schizophrenia. In America, SAMHSA records that AMI is dominated by female on 24.5% than male on 16.3%. Furthermore, female in SMI is recorded on 6.5% than male on 3.9%. The cause of mental illness itself is dominantly because of stress and psychological trauma. Based on those percentage, female is more likely suffered mental illness more than male in both Any Mental Illness and Serious Mental Illness.

Therefore, the survey has proven a particular phenomenon where women tend to be more vulnerable to mental illness than men.

To illustrate, drama, as one of the literary devices, has done its job to depict women in literature. Case (1988, as cited in Normington, 2004) stated that women are designed either only have a 'positive roles' focus as an independent person, goddess and virgin, or as a 'misogynistic roles' which have to play the role of witch, vamp, and whore in a drama. Although it is divided into good and evil roles, they still share the same idea of fragile and lesser women than men. Hence, it limits the interpretation of women trapped in binary opposition. While being marginalised by binary opposition, women develop their vulnerability toward mental illness because of the burden of stress and trauma. Moreover, this study illustrates how women can be vulnerable from period to different periods through drama.

Additionally, drama is one of the literary devices most known for its performance. As the viewer, we can feel the dynamic of the play by its gesture, and it is the one who operates the meaning for the whole story (Adams, 2007). Drama contains the message of its writer, and it is formed as an expression of the writer feelings, thoughts, or even ideologies. To illustrate, many dramas' authors issued matters that revolved around society, such as poverty, oppression, love, and betrayal. In the *Glass Menagerie* and *Medea*, the dominant issues that can be found are oppression, love, and betrayal. Throughout history, such a significant gap has existed between men and

women in the social sphere. For example, in the Middle Ages, women were restricted from being active in a public role as they were tied in household activity (Normington, 2004).

From such an example, women could gradually widen their gap from men, leading to dominant vulnerability. This dominance then developed into what Feminist critics called the patriarchal system, where most of the important roles in society are taken by men, which only leave less significant roles for women. Because of the men dominance, women suffered from either physical or mental oppression. It happened due to women being suppressed and undermined by men (UK Essays, 2018). From those causes, women, as victims, generate a psychological disorder because of trauma and stress. Hence, significant theory to analyse that phenomenon is needed where in this case, psychoanalysis is functions to interpret the absence of emotional control in a person's psychology.

In the 1890s, Sigmund Freud as an Austrian Neurologist introduced a new idea about analysing and examining human current mental behaviour based on their realms of the mind. This method then developed into a theory called Psychoanalysis. A study from the branch of psychology talked about the development of the mind from childhood to adult mental states, the nature of unconscious mental phenomena, and a practice treatment for the patient who had a mental disorder (Bateman & Holmes, 2001). In this study, psychoanalysis can still be developed into a defence mechanism.

According to Freud (Castle, 2007), the explosion of emotion out of control or sudden drastic change from point to another is called *hysteria*. This attribute is made from personal memories suffered from depression, stress, phobias, or compulsive disorder. Hysteria can lead people into action as their emotion reliever. In Freudian, this is called a defence mechanism. This action can be manifested into some sub-categories such as projection, denial, and so forth.

Likewise, one mental illness recognisable from uncontrolled emotion is 'inferiority complex'. It is a situation where someone lacks the self-esteem to cope with stress and depression. Although the result of this condition varies depending on the individual, the bearer of inferiority can suffer from a lack of optimism, fear of creating mistakes, aggressive behaviour, and so forth. Afshar (2004, as cited in Bozorgbigdeli 2017) added that an inferiority complex can also be referred to as an agonising mental sense represented by human behaviour and speech in any forms such as cries or wraeks seclusions, and so on.

Furthermore, Moradi (2004, as cited in Bozorgbigdeli 2017) stated that inferiority complex is one of many mental disorders that commonly occur to people who suffer from their problem behaviour in society. An example of the phenomenon of inferiority complex is when humans always feel inferior or self-blaming to themselves continuously without considering their mental condition.

To outcome the symptom of mental illness of someone, he or she needed a specific method to recover from stress and depression. Defense mechanism functioned as a tool to defend someone ego against memories that recall or disturb his or her trauma. It is also can be referred as a process of an action to reduce the disproportion of someone mental state and it is converting this process depends on the circumstance of an event that he or she occurred (Vaillant, 1993). The example of it, when someone gets depressed because of his homework, the viable way for him to get the ease of it is by distributing their stress or negative emotional into an action. The form of defense mechanism itself can differ from person to another person, it depends on the personality they have. This person who gets depressed may talk about his depression to someone else as the stress reliever who will make him feel better. Sigmund Freud classified this defense mechanism into several types, they consist of *repression*, *denial*, *self-deception*, and so forth (Paulhus, Fridhandler & Hayes, 1997).

To illustrate how inferiority complex and defence mechanism exist in a play, the researcher uses two plays as the main data sources of it. Those plays are *Medea* by Euripides which represent women in the Greek era and *the Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams which represent women in modern time. These plays are significant to be analysed because both have the same issue about the dysfunctional family in a patriarchal society which causing them to be oppressed.

As a play, *Medea* is well known as a representation of female movement, and it already won three times in female lead character on the American Theatre Wing's

Tony Award in 1948, 1982, and 1994. This is indicating that the female character in this play is having a big role in the story decision, and a crucial character. Furthermore, if we look back throughout the history in Ancient Greek, women's existence was nothing but powerless. They were restricted and had less possibility to participate in their political and social states (Dominick, 2007). This also supported by Cameron (1993) statement, "women neither had nor sought political power, but worked through their husbands or fathers or sons, people often object." It means that women at that time, could only participate 'freely' on household. Even they had a chance to participate in social sphere, it was because on behalf of a male relative. As in Euripides' Medea, when she capable to challenge the status quo of patriarchy, Medea labelled as a *witch* and *mad woman*, this happened because as the emphasis of someone who violates established custom in Ancient Greek (Cameron, 1993).

On the other hands, the *Glass Menagerie* won the New York Drama Critic's Circle award in Best American Play category in 1945. The interesting aspect of this drama lies in its American dream value which conveyed in the female characters, and their psychological states. Also, as a family-themed play, *The Glass Menagerie* portrayed a household matter in 1930s era where the men as the head or leader of their family, left to participated in World War II. Women, thus, as a mother were forcibly led their nuclear family. This thing then made Feminist concern about this value where women are supposedly getting a mental support from their husband. However, because of this flaw, 'the family' become as a source of women's oppression itself (Kelly,

1986). This happened because the mothers need to know and how they carry out their society's forms of work by way of families (Kelly, 1986). If they unable to maintain the sustainability of their families, then the family's structure begins to collapse and mother who responsible for this is feeling fail to take on maternal responsibilities.

Cramer (2002) proposed that most of the women will use defense mechanism as their escapement of negative emotion, and mostly it causes because of anxiety and depression. This matter is unique to be analysed through plays. Therefore, the defense mechanism is chosen as the focus of this paper, specifically based on Freudian psychoanalysis. Also, analysing the character's defense mechanism in a play is possible to do because it has been created based on the author personality, or in other words, it is reflecting the author's ego.

There are several studies that have been conducted with the same corpus and issue as what the writer does. The first is a journal called "Medea by Euripides: Psychic Constructions for Preverbal Experiences and Traumas" by Manolopoulos (2015). In his paper, the author categorised three stages of mind; id, ego, and superego that happened in Medea's life which referred to Sigmund Freud's theory. The second journal is conducted by El-Hommos (2015) which titled "Defense Mechanisms and Their Interpretation in Tennessee's Williams's The Glass Menagerie". It is talking about the portrayal of the outcome from the psychological perspective of each character. She highlighted the psychological factor that determine the behavior of characters in the story through psychoanalysis framework. The third study was

conducted by Niraula (2017) titled “New Womanhood in Tennessee Williams’ *The Glass Menagerie*”. Niraula explored the absence of women equality through radical feminist theory, specifically New Woman. In there, she emphasised the abusive role of men in American society where women should be suppressed, marginalised, and exploited. The result stated that Amanda, as the character, resembled a new type of woman, which is New Woman who is not dependable towards man.

As the writer has been mentioned before, this study is aimed to analyse and highlight how women from era to different era survived from inferiority complex and oppression with the help of defense mechanism based on Sigmund Freud framework which occurred in the play *Medea* and *the Glass Menagerie*, and it will be descriptive-analytical research. The study of psychoanalysis itself is important to be discussed nowadays because it is only a viable tool to analyse and determine a person’s behaviour based on their mental perception. Also, the issue of inferiority complex is still significant enough until today in human society where it is the most common of mental illness that still occurred. Furthermore, the writer believes that this study will help people to get a better understanding of how defense mechanism and inferiority complex works in someone mind and what is its impact on themselves and the others.

## **1.2 Research Question**

Based on the reasons for choosing this topic and the background of the study, this study intends to answer the question:



1. What aspect of inferiority complex that revealed in *Medea* and *The Glass Menagerie*?
2. How do women characters survive from mental oppression through defense mechanism in the drama *Medea* and *the Glass Menagerie*?

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purposes of the studies are:

1. To analyse how women from period to period able to survive through mental illness and oppression.
2. To mention the aspect that cause defense mechanism appeared in the characters from both plays.

### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

This study only focuses on the women characters from both plays as the data that will be mostly analysed using a defense mechanism framework by Sigmund Freud.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The writer hopes that this study will help people to get a better understanding on how defines mechanism & inferiority complex works, and its impact to an individual. Moreover, from this paper, the writer hopes it will inspire many women to challenge the status quo of patriarchal system and create sustainable social sphere

where both genders are live and treated equally. Also, hopefully, this study will be helpful as a reference in literary criticism which based in psychoanalysis.

