



Introspection Of A Child's Psychology: A Study On Lurlene Mcdaniel's Six Months To Live

Mr. A. Dhinesh^a, Dr. P. Nainar Sumathi^b

^aPh.D. Research Scholar, PG and Research Department of English, National College (Autonomous) (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli), Tiruchirappalli, Tamilnadu, India.

^bAssistant Professor, PG and Research Department of English, National College (Autonomous) (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli), Tiruchirappalli, Tamilnadu, India.

APA Citation:

Dhinesh, A., & Sumathi, P.N., (2021). Introspection Of A Child's Psychology: A Study On Lurlene Mcdaniel's Six Months To Live, *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(4), 3393-3396.

Submission Date: 11/10/2021

Acceptance Date: 25/12/2021

Abstract

Life has happy as well as unhappy situations. Unhappiness arises out of Disease, Death of closed one, Rape, War, and so on. The above mentioned factors produce trauma in the mind of a person. The present research emphasizes on the Trauma of an Ill-person. Trauma can be identified as Anxiety. Sigmund Freud explicates his theory on Anxiety and Defense Mechanisms to wipe out Anxiety from the minds of people. The research chooses Lurlene McDaniel's *Six Months to Live*. Dawn Rochelle is the protagonist of the novel, who is affected by Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia Cancer. She undergoes psychological pain when she is diagnosed with cancer. The present study focuses on the number of psychological anxiety of the character and how she overcomes it by using the defense mechanisms.

Keywords: Trauma, Anxiety, Defense Mechanisms, Psychology and Leukemia Cancer.

1. Introduction

Sigmund Freud propounds "trauma as any excitations from the outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield" (SMTL 29). According to Freud the concept of trauma necessarily implies a connection with a breach in an otherwise efficacious barrier against stimuli. Such an event as an external trauma is bound to provoke a disturbance on a larger scale in the functioning of the organism's energy and to set in motion every possible defensive measure. there is no longer any possibility of preventing the mental apparatus from being flooded with large amounts of stimulus which have broken in and binding of them. SMTL 29).

Freud is a Neurologist and the founder of Psychoanalysis. He is from the Republic of Austria. He is a Doctor and a Professor. He leaves Austria and enters United Kingdom to avoid persecution of Nazi Government. He divides Psyche into three forms as Id, Ego, Superego. Freud terms the Fear as Anxiety and he classifies three types of Anxiety. Morality Anxiety, Neurotic Anxiety and Reality Anxiety. Morality Anxiety arises from Superego which is a fear of violating moral values. Neurotic Anxiety arises from Id which is an unconscious fear. Reality Anxiety arises from Ego which is a natural fear of dangerous situations.

In order to protect one's own self we are in need of a defense mechanism which protects our self from unexpected situations. Ego plays a vital role in Defense Mechanism. Freud and his daughter Anna Freud suggest certain Defense Mechanisms to reduce Anxiety. 1. Denial, which denies the truth and makes it false, 2. Displacement, which redirects to other situations, 3. Intellectualization, which avoids emotions and focuses on the aspects of intellectual, 4. Projection, which makes others uncomfortable, 5. Rationalization, which justifies the false beliefs, 6. Reaction Formation, which denies the real and takes the direct opposite of the event, 7. Regression, which is going back to an earlier stage of development, 8. Repression, which is an act of wiping out the event from the conscious, 9. Suppression, which drives out the reason consciously, 10. Sublimation, which changes wrong urges into a morally acceptable act.

Lurlene McDaniel is an American author, chooses the character for her novel, who has Diabetes, Cancer, Suicide and Deaths, Organ Failure. She Interviews with the health professional for much accuracy in her work. She has written a number of novels and also Trilogies, namely, The Angels Trilogy, The Angels in Pink Trilogy, The Mercy / Journey of Hope Trilogy and a Quintets called The Dawn Rochelle Quintet consists of Six Months to Live, I want to Live, So Much to Live for, No time to Cry and To Live again.

The research paper focuses on the number of psychological situations like how the child reacts towards the disease, how she explains that to her friends and how she fights back with it.

Dawn Rochelle is Thirteen Years Old and diagnosed with acute Lymphocytic Leukemia Cancer. The family is scared about the disease. Dr. Galland confirms the disease after verifying the preliminary test. He is a kind hearted person and he explains meticulously about her disease. He directs her to another hospital for further treatment. He also suggests a period of stay in the hospital. The statement uttered by Dr. Galland bewildered her and her family. She has started worrying about herself. The following quotation shows that the protagonist is affected by a disease which produces an Anxiety over the mind of the girl.

A kid! That's what I am, Dawn thought. She was a kid, just two months over her thirteenth birthday... a seventh grader... cheerleader for Adams Junior High...daughter of Pete and Meggie Rochelle...kid sister of 18-year-old Rob Rochelle... super fan of Michael Jackson... collector of teddy bears... resident of Columbus, Ohio... now, a victim of Cancer. (SMTL 6)

The Protagonist, Dawn Rochelle facing Reality Anxiety and chooses Intellectualization as her defense mechanism in the novel. "Intellectualization involves a person using reason and logic to avoid uncomfortable or anxiety-provoking emotions." (Medical news today).

The paper chooses the second event from the novel, where Dawn is thinking about the stay in the hospital and the treatments. Dr. Galland informs Mr. & Mrs. Rochelle to pack up things for her daughter. He also insists that Dr. Sinclair is the best doctor to cure Cancer. He promises that he will come to the hospital regularly. Mr. & Mrs. Rochelle accepted half-heartedly and gone to home. Dawn compares herself to a rat which is used in the Science Experiment of her School. The following quote exemplifies,

His words should have comforted her. But they did not. They only made her feel small and scared and anxious - medical research. Suddenly, she felt like a white rat trapped in a experiment...caught in a maze of mind-boggling proportions...a maze with no exit...a rat with no future (SMTL 9).

Mrs. Meggie Rochelle expects to go for a second opinion. But Mr. Rochelle believes Dr. Galland and his words. He instructs her to pack up Dawn's things. Meanwhile Dawn thinks about her friends

and worries how she could address that she had cancer. She thinks about how her teacher Mr. Collins and her Grandparents think about her disease. Dr. Sinclair is specialized in Leukemia Cancer and he talks with Dawn quite often. He explains the treatments and the medicines to her. He informs her, the side effects of Chemotherapy. He enquires Dawn about the disease as a part of Psychotherapy. "Dawn tipped her head and thought for a minute. "I see some strong, powerful force eating up my good blood," she confessed". (SMTL 29). The above mentioned quote which explicates the Anxiety of the character meticulously.

The research paper moves further and takes the character of Sandy Chandler is from West Virginia, who is also affected by Lymphocytic Cancer. Sandy is Dawn's roommate in the hospital. Dawn Rochelle and Sandy become friends. Both of them take Chemotherapy treatment which results in a bald head. She worries about her health and thinks about how she could reply to her friends about her situation. She undergoes the pain which produces Trauma on her mind. Dr. Sinclair administers strong drugs to Dawn and she becomes weaker day by day. He also insists that the patients who are not taking treatments will die within a year. The word DEATH plays an impact over the Thirteen year old girl. She thinks that death is the exit point of the pain. But she is confident and brave enough to fight back against the cruel disease.

Dead! A kind of relief flooded through Dawn at the sound of the word. At last, someone had finally said it...Dead. All day everyone had avoided the word. Leukemia kills, Dawn realized. "I-I don't want to die," she mumbled softly. (SMTL 19)

The above mentioned quote shows the Anxiety of the central character Dawn Rochelle. This type of Anxiety is termed as Reality Anxiety. Throughout the novel the character undergoes trauma and she fights back with the disease as well as her mind. The braveness of the character arises from Intellectualization which is a Defense Mechanism. In another occasion, Mr. & Mrs. Rochelle kisses Dawn while they return from the hospital. When they kissed she started crying. But she consoles herself, and stops crying. She tells "helpless tears. "Stop it!" she commanded herself" (SMTL, 21). At the sight of Sandy Chandler, Dawn comprehends what will happen to her after a few weeks of treatment. She is again frightened but she said "I won't cry!" (SMTL, 23). Dr. Kneeland is a Psychotherapist, who informs that the patients should be involved in their own treatment. She insists that she stop thinking in a negative sense. She introduces a technique called "Imaging". She asks her to imagine the body as a Battlefield. Dawn imagines her body as Battlefield and Teddy bears as Soldiers. She has collected 103 Teddy bears in her room.

The following event shows that the protagonist diagnosed her Anxiety and uses Intellectualization as her Defense Mechanism. Dawn accepts her disease as the day past. She admits Intellectualization techniques in her life as a healing process for her Trauma/Anxiety. She also reads the page from the Bible which is sent from Chandlers. The page is kept in the diary of Sandy Chandler. The following words are in that page.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8
To everything there is a season, and da time to every purpose under the heaven:
2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;
4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;.... (SMTL 132)

Disease leads to trauma, which affects the physical and mental state of a person. The perspective of the person changes alternatively with respect to the before and after the discovery of disease. A

person with a positive attitude may change in to negative and vice versa. The disease not only disturbs the person but also the members of the family. The novel portrays how Mr. and Mrs. Rochelle are disturbed by their daughter's disease. It also shows the character called Sandy Chandler, who is the friend of Dawn Rochelle, also affected by Lymphocytic Cancer. Mr. and Mrs. Chandler are also disturbed like Mr. and Mrs. Rochelle. The above mentioned event explicates how a disease affects the person and their family even though the family members are not the victims of Cancer.

2. Conclusion

The research paper concludes that the trauma which she undergoes is Reality Anxiety. According to Sigmund Freud and his daughter Anna Freud, Reality Anxiety is worries about possible events happening in the real world. Reality anxiety can be cured by the Defense Mechanisms. Denial, Displacement, Intellectualization, Projection, Rationalization, Reaction Formation, Regression, Repression, Suppression and Sublimation are the Defense Mechanisms suggested by Sigmund and Anna Freud. The Protagonist, Dawn Rochelle chooses Intellectualization as her defense mechanism in the novel. "Intellectualization involves a person using reason and logic to avoid uncomfortable or anxiety-provoking emotions." (Medical news today).

References

- Corey Gerald, *Theory and practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*. 2008. Cengage Learning.
- McDaniel Lurlene, *Six Months To Live*. 1985. Darby Creek Publishing. USA. Print.
- Nelson, B. S., & Wampler, K. S. (2000). Systemic effects of trauma in clinic couples: An exploratory study of secondary trauma resulting from childhood abuse. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 26(2), 171–184.
- Strachey James & Freud Anna, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological works of Sigmund Freud*. 1955. Hogarth Press. London. Trans.
- <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/defense-mechanisms>
- <https://www.verywellmind.com/defense-mechanisms>
- Nainar Sumathi, P. (2013). Diaspora and its Impact in the select novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, *Shanlax International Journal of English*, 1(3), 47-54.
- Nainar Sumathi, P. (2020). Issues of Women Identity in Bharathi Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters*, *JAC:Journal of Composition Theory*, 13(8), 1-5.
- Nainar Sumathi, P. (2019). Post Modernism in Chetan Bhagat's *Two States*, *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, 6(3), 3.
- Nainar Sumathi, P. (2017). Diasporic Consciousness in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices*, *Shanlax International Journal of English*, 6, 5.
- Karthick Babu, R. (2021). The Depiction And Revolution Of Vampires In Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight Saga* & Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(3), 1883-1890.
- Karthick Babu, R., & Vishnuvardhan, V. (2021). The Impact of Fantasy and Symbolism in C. S. Lewis' 'The Chronicles of Narnia', *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(2), 1210-1214
- Karthick Babu, R., & Abdul Mohamed Ali Jinnah. (2015). The Exploration of Vampire and Horror Films and Its Influences in the Modern viewers and Readers of the World. *SMART MOVES JOURNAL IJELLH*, 2(10), 9.