



## Defense Mechanisms of Marginalized People in the Novel *Sisi Tergelap Surga* by Brian Khrisna

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### ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the defense mechanisms of marginalized characters in the novel *Sisi Tergelap Surga* by Brian Khrisna. The research was conducted as a library study without a specific location, using primary data in the form of the novel's text and secondary data from books, journals, and relevant scientific articles. The population of the study includes all marginalized characters in the novel, while the sample was determined through excerpts depicting defense mechanisms. The researcher acted as the research instrument, assisted by a data recording guide using the read-and-record technique. Data analysis was carried out descriptively and qualitatively using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. The results show that marginalized characters face social pressures, internal conflicts, and injustice by employing defense mechanisms such as repression, projection, rationalization, and displacement. Repression is shown through the suppression of feelings and experiences that cause anxiety, projection through the transfer of guilt and faults onto others, rationalization through logical justification of painful actions or conditions, and displacement through the venting of negative emotions toward safer targets. These defense mechanisms enable the characters to maintain psychological balance amid a life full of pressure, while also reflecting the social, economic, and structural impacts on the mental condition of marginalized groups. The findings contribute to the study of literary psychology, particularly regarding the representation of mental health among marginalized groups in contemporary Indonesian novels.

*Keywords: defense mechanisms, marginalized groups, novel*

## Mekanisme Pertahanan Diri Kaum Marginal dalam Novel *Sisi Tergelap Surga* Karya Brian Khrisna

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisis mekanisme pertahanan diri tokoh kaum marginal dalam novel *Sisi Tergelap Surga* karya Brian Khrisna. Penelitian dilaksanakan sebagai studi pustaka tanpa lokasi khusus, menggunakan sumber data primer berupa teks novel dan sumber data sekunder dari buku, jurnal, serta artikel ilmiah yang relevan. Populasi penelitian adalah seluruh tokoh marginal dalam novel, sedangkan sampel ditentukan melalui kutipan-kutipan yang menampilkan mekanisme pertahanan diri. Instrumen penelitian adalah peneliti sendiri yang dibantu pedoman pencatatan data dengan teknik baca dan catat. Analisis data dilakukan secara deskriptif kualitatif menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman, meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tokoh-tokoh marginal menghadapi tekanan sosial, konflik batin, dan ketidakadilan dengan menggunakan mekanisme pertahanan diri berupa represi, proyeksi, rasionalisasi, dan displacement. Represi ditunjukkan melalui penekanan perasaan dan pengalaman yang menimbulkan kecemasan, proyeksi melalui pemindahan rasa bersalah dan kesalahan kepada pihak lain, rasionalisasi melalui pembenaran logis atas tindakan atau kondisi yang menyakitkan, serta displacement melalui pelampiasan emosi negatif kepada objek yang lebih aman. Mekanisme pertahanan diri tersebut memungkinkan tokoh menjaga keseimbangan psikologis di tengah kehidupan yang penuh tekanan, sekaligus merefleksikan dampak sosial, ekonomi, dan struktural terhadap kondisi mental kaum marginal. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap kajian psikologi sastra, khususnya mengenai representasi kesehatan mental kelompok marginal dalam novel Indonesia kontemporer.

*Kata kunci : mekanisme pertahanan diri, kaum marginal, novel*

Submitted  
14/02/2026

Accepted  
17/02/2026

Published  
03/03/2026

Citation	Khamdiyah, N. N. M., & Nugraha, A. S. (2026). Defense Mechanisms of Marginalized People in the Novel <i>Sisi Tergelap Surga</i> by Brian Khrisna. <i>Jurnal Pembelajaran Bahasa dan Sastra</i> , Volume 5, Nomor 2, Maret 2026, 1033-1046. DOI: <a href="https://doi.org/10.55909/jpbs.v4i3.1272">https://doi.org/10.55909/jpbs.v4i3.1272</a>
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Publisher  
Raja Zulkarnain Education Foundation

## INTRODUCTION

Literature has a broader role than mere entertainment because it can both reflect social reality and reveal the inner state of humankind. Through the depiction of characters, conflicts, and story settings, literary works reflect a variety of complex life issues, including mental health issues (Sari, 2025:2). One social group often depicted as experiencing psychological stress is the marginalized, namely individuals or groups who are marginalized socially, economically, or culturally. This marginalized condition places them in a vulnerable situation to structural injustice, limited access to life, and ongoing life pressures.

Representations of the mental health of marginalized people in literary works are generally depicted through the inner conflict, emotional tension, and traumatic experiences experienced by characters. Continuous life pressures can trigger various psychological disorders, such as chronic stress, excessive anxiety, depression, and deep trauma. These conditions encourage individuals to develop specific strategies to maintain psychological resilience (Khoirunnisa, 2023:3). These strategies are known in psychology as defense mechanisms, psychological processes that work unconsciously to reduce anxiety and maintain an individual's mental balance. Defense mechanisms in literary texts are not explicitly stated, but rather implied through a series of events, dialogue between characters, and actions that reflect inner dynamics. These defense mechanisms can manifest themselves in the form of denial of painful realities, suppression of emotions, diversion of conflict, rationalization, or even resignation as a form of acceptance of the situation. Through the depiction of these internal conflicts, readers can understand how social and psychological pressures influence how characters respond to and cope with the realities of life.

Brian Khrisna's novel *Sisi Tergelap Surga* depicts the lives of marginalized people with high levels of psychological pressure. The characters in this novel live amidst social and economic limi-

tations, so the conflicts they experience are not only personal but also rooted in oppressive social structures. The characters' inner struggles in the face of loss, suffering, fear, and helplessness give rise to various psychological responses in the form of defense mechanisms. Therefore, this novel is relevant for study through a literary psychology approach. This research uses a literary psychology approach, grounded in Sigmund Freud's theory of defense mechanisms. Freud stated that inner conflict arises as a result of psychological pressure, repression, and an individual's inability to adapt to the situation at hand (Abshar et al., 2025:4). According to Freud, to deal with this inner conflict, individuals use defense mechanisms as a way for the ego to protect itself from pressure from the id and superego (Hall, 2020:159). The concept of defense mechanisms refers to unconscious processes that function to protect individuals from anxiety (Minderop, 2010:29).

Several previous studies have demonstrated the relevance of studying defense mechanisms in literary works. Yunita Sari and Elsa Mulya Karlina's study, "The Main Character's Defense Mechanisms in Tsana's Novel "At Half Five"," examines the main character's defense mechanisms in the novel. Sutardi et al.'s study, "Personality Structure and Ego Defense Mechanisms of the Main Character in Khilma Anis's Novel Wigati: Lintang Manik Woro," focuses on the relationship between personality structure and the character's ego defense mechanisms. Meanwhile, Mei Wulandari et al.'s study, "The Characters' Defense Mechanisms in Tissa TS and Stanley Meulen's Novel Magic Hour: A Review of Literary Psychology," examines the variety of character defense mechanisms in popular novels. The difference between this study and the three previous studies lies in the focus of the study, which focuses on marginalized characters in Brian Khrisna's novel *Sisi Tergelap Surga*. The similarities lie in the study of the characters' defense mechanisms using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic approach. Based on this background, this research focuses



on the problem of how the forms of self-defense mechanisms developed by marginalized characters in the novel *Sisi Tergelap Surga* by Brian Khrisna and how these self-defense mechanisms are represented through the characters' inner conflicts. In line with these problems, this research aims to describe and analyze the self-defense mechanisms of marginalized characters as depicted in the inner conflicts they experience. The results of this research are expected to provide theoretical benefits in the form of contributions to the development of literary psychology studies, especially those related to self-defense mechanisms and representations of mental health of marginalized people in contemporary Indonesian novels, as well as practical benefits in the form of a deeper understanding for readers and literary researchers and as a reference for further research.

## METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive qualitative method, which emphasizes data analysis in the form of descriptions without involving numbers or statistical variables. Qualitative research has an ontological foundation that questions the nature of reality and the truth of the phenomena studied as something meaningful and interpretable (Azzuri, 2023:4; Abubakar, 2021:8; Razak, 219;219). This approach aims to understand and interpret phenomena in depth, holistically, and contextually through the presentation of descriptive data. According to Ratna (Umifa & Subandiya, 2024:2; Fraenkel et al., 2012:91), the researcher acts as the primary instrument, interacting directly with the research object in natural settings, focusing on the meaning of social phenomena rather than generalizations. This research is based on a constructivist paradigm, which views reality as dynamic and shaped through the experiences and interpretations of the subject (Naamy, 2019:230).

The research procedure began with the determination of the research object, namely the

novel *Sisi Tergelap Surga* by Brian Khrisna. The researcher conducted intensive and repeated readings of the novel text to understand the storyline, character traits, and conflicts related to the characters' psychological states. Next, the researcher identified and recorded quotes relevant to the characters' defense mechanisms based on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory. The final stage of the research procedure was interpreting the classified data and drawing conclusions based on these findings.

This research was a literature review and therefore not tied to a specific location. The primary data source was the novel *Sisi Tergelap Surga*, while secondary data sources were obtained from books, journals, and scientific articles relevant to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, as well as studies of literary psychology. Data collection was carried out in stages throughout the research process, from initial reading to data processing and analysis. The data collection tool in this study was the researcher herself, assisted by data recording guidelines, using the reading and note-taking method.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman (Hardani et al., 2020:163), which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification. The collected data was classified according to the characters' characteristics and types of defense mechanisms before analysis. The interpretation focuses on text excerpts that demonstrate the characters' defense mechanisms, such as repression, projection, rationalization, sublimation, and displacement, in accordance with Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory.

The results of the analysis are presented in descriptive form to depict the characters' psychological states in depth, contextually, and systematically. This presentation aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the characters' defense mechanisms operate within the

narrative context of the novel, so that the research findings can contribute to the study of literary psychology and the understanding of character psychology in literary works.

## RESULT

The results of this study indicate that Brian Khrisna's novel *Sisi Tergelap Surga* presents characters from marginalized communities as the main subjects, reflecting on their psychological experiences in social life. This novel specifically highlights how the characters face various pressures, challenges, and injustices arising from their social environment. The analysis of these characters' psychological experiences was conducted using a defense mechanism perspective, which provides an understanding of the psychological strategies individuals employ to cope with internal pressure and conflict.

Psychoanalysis is a psychological theory that seeks to explain the nature, structure, and development of human personality (Purba et al., 2026:5). Within this theoretical framework, defense mechanisms emerge as a form of psychological response that functions to protect individuals from feelings of anxiety, discomfort, threats to self-esteem, or things they perceive as impossible or unwilling to consciously confront (Faradisa & Nurmalisa, 2024:5). From a personality theory perspective, defense mechanisms do not represent a person's entire personality, but rather one aspect that plays a crucial role in shaping and influencing an individual's personality development. In other words, this mechanism can be understood as a psychological strategy used by individuals to cope with fear, anxiety, or situations that have the potential to harm them (Azizah et al., 2024:4).

In general, defense mechanisms have two main characteristics: first, they tend to deny or obscure realities perceived as threatening; and second, they operate subconsciously, so that individuals are not fully aware of the process

(Ahmadi, 2022:2). Sigmund Freud emphasized that defense mechanisms are unconscious psychological processes that function to help individuals cope with and reduce the anxiety they experience (Syahril & Alwi, 2024:4). This mechanism serves as one of the ego's efforts to maintain emotional and mental stability, as well as a tool to overcome pressures arising from instinctive id impulses and moral demands of the superego. Thus, the internal conflicts that arise are often not directly recognized by individuals, but they still influence their behavior and psychological responses (Afrikah, 2021:2).

According to Freud, defense mechanisms enable individuals to face threats from both the external environment and internal impulses that arise from within themselves. Overall, these mechanisms are strong psychological tendencies and are present in almost every individual. Some commonly known forms of defense mechanisms include repression, projection, rationalization, and displacement (Faradisa & Nurmalisa, 2024:4). By understanding defense mechanisms, we can see how individuals, including the characters in the novel, adapt to social pressures and the internal conflicts they face. The following are some quotes that illustrate the defense mechanisms employed by marginalized groups in Brian Khrisna's novel *Sisi Tergelap Surga*:

### 1. Repression

The quotes below demonstrate the defense mechanism employed by marginalized groups in the form of repression, which involves repressing feelings, disappointments, and inner conflicts into the subconscious.

Data

Nunung exhaled tiredly, then returned to twirling the toy Ujang had been playing with. She settled it down sadly.

"Sir, that's what Ujang was playing with just now, my lazy self."



Sobirin let out a short chuckle. "Ah, come on. The slave is on his own."

Nunung let out another heavy sigh. Heavy. Very heavy. Sobirin wasn't like this before. The Sobirin she married wasn't an uncaring man. He was the most attentive and responsive man Nunung had ever known. He even left his merchandise at the market to look after Dewi when Tomi was possessed, like tonight (Khrisna, 2023:35).

Thus, the character's tendency to remain silent and suppress her feelings demonstrates that repression is a form of ego defense used to suppress disappointment and emotional wounds so as not to disrupt her psychological stability, even though it ultimately still impacts her emotional state and social relationships.

## 2. Projection

The quote below demonstrates a self-defense mechanism employed by marginalized individuals in the form of projection. Projection is evident when a character shifts feelings of guilt, shame, or inner conflict onto others.

### Data 1

Esih has always sought only to find a scapegoat to shield her from the shame she currently bears. She continually seeks faults in others so she doesn't feel so guilty about her own actions.

If she can find someone who has caused more damage than she has in her life, she will feel a sense of relief. This relief then becomes her worst addiction, rendering her unable to see the good in the people she meets (Khrisna, 2023:132-133). This confirms that the character uses projection as a way to mitigate guilt and anxiety by attributing her inner conflict to others, allowing her to maintain a positive self-image and avoid confronting the mistakes that actually stem from her own.

## 3. Rationalization

The quote below demonstrates a defense mechanism employed by marginalized individuals in the form of rationalization. The rationalization mechanism is evident when a character provides seemingly rational reasons to justify actions that are morally and socially considered deviant.

### Data 1

To hell with sin.

Juleha threw away her cigarette butt and stepped on it until the embers went out.

If only that devil's child hadn't been born, I might have left this rotten place.

The sound of shouting and insults echoed from the Timbel stall, making Juleha flinch and rush back to her friends. Her junior was seen fighting with a strange woman. The Timbel stall suddenly became chaotic (Khrisna, 2023:73).

### Data 2

"Whose motorcycle is that out front?" her mother asked as she glanced out the porch.

"New order, Ma'am. No one wants to buy it yet," Gofar replied.

As far as her mother knew, Gofar worked as a motorcycle salesman. That's why he kept changing his motorcycle every week. Her mother didn't suspect a thing.

"Where's your money, son?" Mother asked again. A question that made Gofar's chest tighten.

"It's safe, Mom," he replied, trying to keep his tone calm. It seemed like the motorcycle had to be sold quickly so Gofar could steal another one. It didn't matter, as long as Mother could stay alive. God would understand (Khrisna, 2023:166).

### Data 3

"Yes, staying alive. Surviving. Do you think all the sinners like us out here do is just for fun? No. It's all for survival. Now, look at them." Danang pointed to the streets, where people were busy trying to make ends meet. There were gas

balloon vendors whose sales were unsold no matter how many kilometers they walked from morning to night, tofu vendors who had only sold five portions and couldn't cover their expenses for the next day's business, cuanki vendors, transvestites hanging around, silver people, parking attendants, veterans sleeping in pedicabs, and so on (Khrisna, 2023:135).

#### Data 4

"For them, morality is no better than horse droppings on the street. Fighting for morality is no guarantee of survival. Those who sell their bodies never discriminate against those who come to enjoy their bodies. We consider everyone equal, even though there's no guarantee they'll treat us the same way" (Khrisna, 2023:137).

#### Data 5

The echo of that voice still burns in Rini's mind. A simple question that has trapped her in hell to this day. Amidst the luxurious sofas in the air-conditioned room, the question was asked, and Rini had no choice but to answer. Poverty and the threat of dropping out of school made the fifty-thousand-one-hundred-thousand-dollar bills on the table seem tempting. What's the harm? After all, she only had to straddle them once, right? Just wait for the man to climax, and then Rini could continue her education. It was that simple (Khrisna, 2023:210).

#### Data 6

To them, Rini was like trash. And what is befalling her now is nothing more than the fate she deserves as a disabled woman. Being raped and forced to swallow vile liquids is a risk of her job (Khrisna, 2023:219).

The rationalizations in this novel indicate that social and economic pressures lead the characters to create seemingly reasonable defenses for deviant behavior as a strategy to calm moral turmoil and maintain inner peace amidst the limitations of life they face.

#### 4. Displacement

The quote below demonstrates a defense mechanism employed by marginalized groups in the form of displacement. The displacement mechanism is seen when a character vents anger, frustration, or emotional distress on those who are weaker or perceived as safer.

#### Data 1

"Watch your mouth! It's already a good thing I married you. A barren woman like you is useless. Nine years wasted. You think I don't know what people are talking about out there?! They're only afraid of my name. But if I die, it'll be like a concert, everyone singing about our childless marriage!"

A hard slap sent Dewi reeling, hitting the plastic cupboard behind her.

"Then just marry that prostitute friend of yours!" Dewi screamed.

Tomi became increasingly furious. Plates flew, rice scattered, glasses shattered, and yahu and tempeh jumped everywhere. Tomi clutched Dewi's shirt, his mouth already trembling with anger. Even though the bruises on Dewi's face hadn't healed yet, she was still a little upset.

"Don't bring Leha into this!"

"Well, is that right?! You love Leha. Not me?!"

"FOOL!"

Another slap flew and landed on Dewi's face. However, the woman was used to it. Even the genderuwo in the tree in front of the house wouldn't dare intervene when Tomi was like this. (Khrisna, 2023:46-47).

#### Data 2

Father snorted. "Son of a devil!" he said loudly, deliberately so his daughter could hear.

Brian, who had already arrived in the living room, could only hold back his annoyance. Stupid old man! he thought.

Mother came out of the room when she heard Brian's motorcycle. After greeting her, Brian divided his fried rice into two plates.



"Where's your father?" she asked.

"No need. Just let him die." Brian sat down and handed his spoon to Mother. "Who else came to the house? What other prostitute is demanding responsibility?" Brian asked sharply. Mother remained silent and didn't answer.

"Just get a divorce, Mom. Aren't you tired? What are you afraid of? You'll have no one to support you? There's Brian, Mom. If you get a divorce, you won't have to pay off that stupid old man's debt. Brian can find you a rental for us to live in together." (Khrisna, 2023:199).

Thus, displacement becomes a means of venting unresolved emotions, where anger and frustration toward the true source of pressure are diverted toward the weaker party, thus demonstrating how inner conflict can manifest as aggressive behavior in social relationships.

## DISCUSSION

Brian Khrisna's novel *Sisi Tergelap Surga* shows how marginalized characters deal with social pressure, inner conflict, and injustice by using defense mechanisms. Mechanisms such as repression, projection, rationalization, and displacement serve to protect themselves from anxiety, guilt, and emotional conflict. Each mechanism manifests itself in different ways, ranging from suppressing feelings, shifting guilt, justifying actions logically, to venting emotions to safer partners, thus helping the character maintain psychological balance amidst difficult life circumstances.

### a. Repression

Repression is an unconscious defense mechanism in which the ego suppresses impulsive urges, thoughts, or desires. These feelings can cause anxiety or be unacceptable to social norms, so they are stored in the subconscious and do not emerge into consciousness. Here are some quotes that demonstrate the defense mechanism of repression experienced by marginalized characters in Brian Khrisna's novel *Sisi Tergelap Surga*:

Nunung exhaled tiredly, then returned to twirling the toy Ujang had been playing with. She settled on the toy sadly.

"Sir, that was Ujang just playing with me, the lazy one."

Sobirin chuckled briefly. "Ah, okay. The slave is on his own."

Nunung exhaled heavily for the umpteenth time. Heavy. Very heavy. Sobirin wasn't like this before. The Sobirin she married wasn't an indifferent man. He was the most attentive and responsive man Nunung had ever known. Sobirin even left his merchandise at the market just to look after Dewi when Tomi was possessed, like tonight (Khrisna, 2023:35).

This quote demonstrates the repression defense mechanism experienced by Sobirin. Repression can be understood as a psychological process where someone unconsciously suppresses feelings, urges, or experiences that cause anxiety so that they don't arise in conscious awareness. This is evident in Sobirin's cold and unresponsive demeanor, as reflected in his brief and dismissive speech. When faced with events that should elicit empathy, Sobirin instead withdraws emotionally. This attitude is not merely a sign of indifference, but rather an indication of an attempt to suppress the emotional burden he is carrying.

This image of repression becomes clearer when compared to Nunung's memories of Sobirin in the past, who was caring and responsible. This flashback confirms that Sobirin actually possessed strong empathic abilities, but unresolved inner conflict led him to push this side of his consciousness aside. Repression then functions as a means of self-protection from feelings of fatigue, failure, or guilt that are difficult to face directly. As a result, pent-up emotions emerge in the form of passivity, denial of problems, and the creation of emotional distance from family, which ultimately affects the harmony of household relationships and the social environment.

## b. Projection

Projection is a form of self-defense mechanism that involves displacing internal conflicts or urges onto others. Here are some quotes that demonstrate the self-defense mechanism of projection experienced by marginalized characters in Brian Khrisna's novel, *The Darkest Side of Heaven*:

Esih has always wanted to find a scapegoat to shield her from the shame she currently bears. She constantly finds fault with others so she doesn't have to feel so guilty about what she has done.

If she can find someone who has caused more damage than she has in her life, she will feel a small sense of relief. This relief then becomes her worst addiction, rendering her unable to see the good in the people she meets (Khrisna, 2023:132-133).

This quote demonstrates the self-defense mechanism of projection, the character's tendency to displace her own guilt, blame, and negative urges onto others. Esih is depicted as constantly trying to find someone else to use as a scapegoat to shield her from the shame she bears. By continually highlighting the shortcomings and damage of others, Esih attempts to avoid responsibility for her own actions and suppress the shame and guilt she should face head-on.

The relief she feels when she encounters individuals in situations perceived as worse than her own demonstrates how projection functions as a form of emotional escape. This relief is temporary, but it slowly forms a cynical attitude and erodes Esih's empathy for others. Rather than resolving inner conflict, this projection defense mechanism actually reinforces the habit of blaming others and makes it increasingly difficult for the character to see the positive side of people. Thus, this quote confirms that projection has a destructive impact on the character's personality and influences her perspective on the social environment around her.

## c. Rationalization

Rationalization is a defense mechanism that involves providing reasons that seem logical and socially acceptable, but actually aim to cover up painful realities or feelings. The following quotes demonstrate the defense mechanism of rationalization experienced by marginalized characters in Brian Khrisna's novel *Sisi Tergelap Surga*:

To hell with sin.

Juleha threw away the cigarette butt and stepped on it until the embers went out.

If only that devil's child hadn't been born, I might have left this rotten place.

The sound of shouting and insults echoed from the Timbel stall, making Juleha jump, and she hurried back to her friends. Her junior was seen fighting with a strange woman. The Timbel stall suddenly erupted in chaos (Khrisna, 2023:73).

The quote above demonstrates Juleha's self-defense mechanism of rationalization. Rationalization is a way for individuals to justify thoughts, feelings, or impulses that actually contradict moral or social norms through seemingly reasonable arguments. This is evident in Juleha's blatant denial of the concept of sin and blaming the existence of "the devil's child," intended as her child, as the primary source of her suffering and downfall. By constructing this rationalization, Juleha attempts to suppress the guilt and inner conflict arising from her desire to leave the place and escape a life she feels oppressive and inhumane.

Through this rationalization mechanism, Juleha indirectly shifts responsibility for her suffering to external factors, thus avoiding the need to directly confront the anxiety, disappointment, and dissatisfaction stemming from her own internal conflict. Symbolic actions such as throwing away and stamping out cigarette butts, coupled with her reaction to the commotion at the food stall, further demonstrate the presence of pent-up emotional



pressure that has not been channeled in a healthy way. Thus, rationalization serves as a psychological defense mechanism for Juleha to maintain her emotional stability and self-image, even if it means obscuring or denying recognition of the true root of the problem.

"Whose motorcycle is that out front?" her mother asked, glancing out the porch.

"It's a new order, Ma'am. No one wants to buy it yet," Gofar replied.

As far as she knew, Gofar worked as a motorcycle salesman. That's why he kept changing motorcycles every week. Mother didn't suspect a thing.

"How about your money, son?" Mother asked again. A question that made Gofar's chest tighten. "It's safe, Ma'am," he replied, trying to keep his tone calm. It seemed like the motorcycle had to be sold quickly so Gofar could steal another one. It didn't matter, as long as Mother could stay alive. God would understand (Khrisna, 2023:166).

The quote above illustrates the defense mechanism of rationalization experienced by the character, Gofar. He deliberately lied to his mother about the motorbike on the porch and his financial situation to cover up his theft, with the main goal of keeping his mother calm and not raising suspicions. The short statement "It's safe, Mom" accompanied by a calm tone of voice reflects Gofar's attempt to justify his behavior psychologically, as if his actions were acceptable because they were done for his mother's good and out of the belief that God would understand his intentions.

Through this rationalization, Gofar attempts to alleviate feelings of guilt, anxiety, and fear of disappointing his parents, while maintaining his image as a responsible son in his mother's eyes. Although the reality is very different from what he's told, this strategy allows Gofar to navigate difficult situations without having to directly confront the emotional distress stemming from his mistakes. Thus, rationalization becomes the

character's way of managing inner conflict and maintaining psychological stability amidst complex moral situations.

"Yes, staying alive. Surviving. Do you think everything sinners like us do out here is for fun? No. It's all for survival. Now, look at them." Danang pointed to the street, where people were busy trying to make ends meet. There's a gas balloon seller whose sales are unsold no matter how many kilometers he walks from morning to night, a tahu genjrot (fried tofu) vendor who only sells five portions and can't cover the next day's expenses, a cuanki (food stall) vendor, a transvestite (a street vendor), a silver man (a man with a silver face), a parking attendant, a veteran sleeping in a pedicab, and so on (Khrisna, 2023:135).

This quote demonstrates a defense mechanism in the form of rationalization, the character's attempt to provide logical justification for living conditions and actions that are morally and socially considered deviant. Danang dismisses the notion that life outside is lived for pleasure, instead emphasizing that what "sinners" like them do is a struggle to survive. This perspective demonstrates the character's attempt to mitigate guilt, social stigma, and psychological pressure by interpreting his actions as inevitable necessities, rather than as free choices.

This rationalization is further emphasized through depictions of social realities on the streets, such as small traders suffering losses, exhausted informal workers, and marginalized groups living on the margins. These examples serve as a justification for the notion that suffering is a collective experience, not simply the result of individual failure. By framing their living conditions as the result of social and economic inequality, the characters attempt to protect their self-esteem from anxiety and feelings of helplessness. Through this mechanism, inner conflict is not resolved directly, but rather mitigated with acceptable psychological explanations, while

simultaneously reinforcing the author's critique of structural poverty that forces individuals to act for survival.

"For them, morality is no better than horse excrement on the street. Fighting for morality is no guarantee of survival. Those who sell their bodies never discriminate against those who come to enjoy their bodies. We consider everyone equal, even though there is no guarantee they will treat us the same way" (Khrisna, 2023:137).

This quote shows the self-defense mechanism of rationalization, namely the character's attempt to justify actions that are socially and morally considered deviant with reasons that are considered reasonable. Expressions that demean morals show an attitude of rejection of normative values which are seen as having no real benefit in ensuring survival. By positioning morality as something that is irrelevant in a situation of urgency, the character tries to frame the practice of selling one's body as a natural and logical action in oppressive economic conditions.

Furthermore, the character's view of treating everyone equally without discrimination serves as a form of ethical legitimacy for her work. This perspective serves to suppress inner conflict, guilt, and the social stigma attached to her. By interpreting her actions as part of a survival effort, rather than a moral violation, the character maintains her self-esteem and psychological stability. Through this rationalization, the author also reveals the harsh social reality that forces individuals to set aside moral values ??for the sake of survival, while also criticizing the social and economic structures that marginalize certain groups.

The echo of that voice still burns in Rini's memory. A simple question that has trapped her in hell to this day. Amidst the luxurious sofa in the air-conditioned room, the question was asked, and Rini had no choice but to answer. Poverty and the threat of dropping out of school made the fifty-thousand-one-hundred-thousand-dollar bills on the

table seem tempting. What's the harm? After all, she only had to straddle herself once, right? Just wait for the man to climax, and then Rini could continue her education. It was that simple (Khrisna, 2023:210).

This quote demonstrates Rini's use of a defense mechanism called rationalization in dealing with stressful life situations. Rationalization arises when Rini attempts to justify choices that morally and emotionally cause inner turmoil through seemingly logical reasons. Poverty and the threat of dropping out of school lead Rini to view the money available to her as a solution to her problems. In her desperate situation, she simplifies her actions by viewing them as momentary events, as reflected in her belief that she only needs to do it once to be able to continue her education.

This way of thinking serves as a rational justification for actions that are fundamentally contrary to her values and dignity. By emphasizing practical benefits and downplaying the emotional impact, Rini attempts to suppress the fear, guilt, and compulsion she experiences. Therefore, the rationalization in this quote functions as a defense mechanism that allows Rini to accept her decision as normal, even though it ultimately leads to profound and lasting psychological consequences. To them, Rini is like trash. And what is befalling her now is nothing more than the fate she deserves as a disabled woman. Being raped and forced to swallow dirty water are risks of her job (Khrisna, 2023:219).

This quote demonstrates Rini's defense mechanism of rationalization when faced with social stigma and the violence she experiences. This rationalization is evident in Rini's interpretation of suffering—such as rape and degrading treatment—as a natural and deserved consequence due to her identity as a prostitute. This perspective serves as a justification for traumatic experiences, viewing them as fate or a risk inherent in her job, thus making the violence seem justified.



Rini's portrayal of violence and humiliation as something she deserved demonstrates her attempts to suppress feelings of anger, fear, and deep psychological wounds. This rationalization mechanism allows Rini to mentally survive social pressure and repeated traumatic experiences. At the same time, this mechanism reinforces the internalization of negative stigma and prevents Rini from viewing herself as a victim deserving of protection and empathy.

#### **d. Displacement**

Displacement is a defense mechanism that involves venting unpleasant feelings, such as anger or disappointment, from the party or object that is the source of the problem to another, safer person or object. Here are some quotes that demonstrate the defense mechanism of displacement experienced by marginalized characters in Brian Khrisna's novel *The Darkest Side of Heaven*:

"Watch your mouth! It's already a good thing I married you. A barren woman like you is useless. Nine years wasted. You think I don't know what people are talking about out there?! They're only afraid of my name. But if I die, it'll be like a concert, everyone singing about our childless marriage!" A hard slap sent Dewi reeling, hitting the plastic cupboard behind her.

"Then just marry that prostitute friend of yours!" Dewi screamed.

Tomi grew increasingly furious. Plates flew, rice scattered, glasses shattered, and yahu and tempeh jumped everywhere. Tomi clutched Dewi's shirt, his mouth already trembling with anger. The bruises on Dewi's face hadn't even healed yet.

"Don't bring Leha into this!"

"Well, is that right?! You love Leha, not me?!"

"BODAT!"

Another slap flew and landed on Dewi's face. However, the woman was used to it. Even the genderuwo (genderuwo) in the tree in front of the house didn't dare intervene when Tomi was like this. (Khrisna, 2023:46-47).

This quote demonstrates Tomi's defense mechanism of displacement, where negative emotional impulses that cannot be channeled to their true source are redirected to a weaker object. This is evident in a household relationship filled with verbal and physical violence. Tomi's demeaning remarks about Dewi, particularly calling her a barren woman, are a form of verbal violence that serves to degrade her dignity and assert dominance. These statements also reflect Tomi's anxiety about society's judgments regarding honor, masculinity, and the continuation of the family, which is then redirected onto Dewi as a target for emotional outbursts.

This emotional diversion became even more apparent when Tomi's anger escalated into repeated physical violence, such as slapping, body-slammings, and destroying household items. These actions demonstrated Tomi's failure to manage emotional distress healthily, leading to his anger being vented on the powerless. Meanwhile, Dewi was portrayed as a victim trapped in a cycle of violence, evident in her resigned attitude and habitual acceptance of such treatment. The symbolic expression about supernatural beings "not daring to intervene" reinforced the impression of Tomi's extreme anger, while also emphasizing his critique of the unequal power relations and patriarchal culture that enable domestic violence. Father snorted. "Son of a devil!" he said loudly enough for his son to hear.

Brian, who had already arrived in the living room, could only suppress his irritation. "Stupid old man!" he thought.

Mother came out of the room when she heard Brian's motorcycle. After greeting her, Brian divided his fried rice into two plates.

"Where's your father?" Mother asked.

"No need. Just let him die." Brian sat down and handed Mother the spoon in front of him. "Who else came to the house earlier? What other prostitute is demanding responsibility?" Brian asked curtly. Mother remained silent.

"Just get a divorce, Mom. Aren't you tired? What are you afraid of? You'll have no one to support you? There's Brian, Mom. If you get a divorce, you won't have to pay off that stupid old man's debt. Brian can find you a rental for us to live in together." (Khrisna, 2023:199).

This quote illustrates Brian's defense mechanism of displacement. Displacement is a psychological process in which an individual shifts negative emotions, such as anger and frustration, from the primary source of conflict to another object perceived as safer. In this context, Brian's anger stems from his father's provocative remark, "son of the devil." However, Brian doesn't express his anger directly to his father, but rather suppresses it in the form of internal curses. This indicates unexplained emotional distress due to Brian's inability or unwillingness to confront his father openly.

This emotional displacement is then evident in Brian's interactions with his mother. Brian expresses his anger through harsh, extreme, and cynical remarks, including statements like "let him die" and insulting accusations. His mother, who maintains a more passive and non-confrontational stance, becomes a safer target for Brian to vent negative emotions that are actually directed at his father. Brian's call for a divorce from his mother also reflects a form of displacement, as he attempts to remove his father as a means of alleviating his inner conflict. Thus, displacement serves as Brian's attempt to reduce emotional tension, even though this displacement negatively impacts others who are not the primary source of the problem.

## CONCLUSION

An analysis of Brian Khrisna's novel *Sisi Tergelap Surga* shows that characters from marginalized communities use various defense mechanisms as psychological strategies to deal with social pressure, inner conflict, and injustice. These defense mechanisms include repression, projection, rationalization, and displacement. Repression occurs when a character suppresses

feelings or urges that cause anxiety, creating emotional distance and passivity. Projection occurs when a character transfers guilt or negative impulses to others as a form of emotional escape. Rationalization involves providing seemingly logical reasons to justify actions or situations that trigger inner conflict. Displacement occurs when negative emotions are expressed on safer objects rather than the primary source of conflict.

This novel consistently depicts the psychological experiences of marginalized communities through the inner struggles of its characters. The representation of defense mechanisms in literary texts allows readers to understand how social pressure and difficult living conditions influence how characters deal with internal conflict. The results of this study provide theoretical contributions to the development of literary psychology studies, as well as practical benefits for understanding the psychology of characters, particularly regarding mental health and the survival strategies of marginalized communities.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to thank his supervisor for providing invaluable guidance, direction, suggestions, and input during the research and writing of this article, entitled "Self-Defense Mechanisms of the Marginalized in Brian Khrisna's Novel *Sisi Tergelap Surga*."

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