



**CHRIS' ANXIETY SYMPTOMS TOWARD HER POSSESSED DAUGHTER IN WILLIAM PETER  
BLATTY'S *THE EXORCIST* – GEJALA KECEMASAN CHRIS TERHADAP PUTRINYA YANG  
KERASUKAN DALAM *THE EXORCIST* OLEH WILLIAM PETER BLATTY**

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**ABSTRACT**

This thesis entitled "Chris's Anxiety Symptoms toward her Possessed Daughter in William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist*" discusses anxiety disorder and the symptoms. Anxiety disorder often occurs in people life. There are some indications of anxiety disorder founded in Willam Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* experienced by Chris as the main character in the novel. This research purpose is to find the symptoms and the evidence that connects with anxiety disorder experienced by the main character by using psychological approach. Beside that, the writer also analyzed the general description of the main character and conflicts experienced by the main character in the novel by using structural approach. This is a descriptive-qualitative research that tried to describe the phenomena in the novel. The writer focused on the intrinsic and extrinsic elements. The intrinsic elements, those are general description of the main character, setting, and conflicts experienced by the main character, while the extrinsic element that is symptoms of anxiety. Based on the analysis, the conflicts was analyzed because the conflicts have close relation with the symptoms of anxiety. The writer concluded that the conflicts occurs because of symptoms of anxiety. The symptoms occurs because of the main character is worried and thinks too much about her daughter condition. The conflicts happened are internal and external conflicts experience by Chris. Based on the theory of anxiety disorder, there are several symptoms identified such as worry, irritability, bad dream, and restless.

**Keywords:** Anxiety, character, disorder, psychological approach, symptoms.

**INTRODUCTION**

Everyone must have problems in his/her life. Problems experienced by every person are certainly different starting from trivial problem, up to very serious problem. There is always a way to solve problem, ranging from the simple up to the extreme way. Moreover, for the sake of the beloved person, we are certainly willing to do anything to resolve that problem and willing to bear all the risks.

Problems that cannot be resolved and unresolved can make people experiences psychological disorders. Common psychological disorders are anxiety disorders. Anxiety here is caused by fear if something bad, even very bad happens.

According to Melinda Smith, M.A., Lawrence Robinson, and Jeanne Segal, anxiety is a normal reaction to stress. Most of us have worried or felt nervous when facing

challenges, making important decisions, or preparing for a big presentation, performance, or exam. But anxiety disorders are different. They involve persistent or severe fear or worry in situations where most people wouldn't feel threatened—and they interfere with your quality of life. There are many different anxiety disorders, including generalized anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorder, specific phobias, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and social anxiety disorder. (National Institute of Mental Health)

This disorder can be caused by things that make people think too much about something that make him/her worry. Such as worried when something harmful happen to her/his relative. This will make the sufferer do anything to make him calm and peaceful, especially if concerned about the dearest child, as will be discussed in this thesis by using the William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* as the main data.

William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* is one of famous horror novel at 1971's that tells about Chris MacNeil, who has a 12-year-old daughter experiencing possessed by the devil. After the doctors decide that an exorcism may be the only way to help Regan, Chris arranges a meeting with Karras, a priest. She was hopeless when Karras at first refuses to get permission to perform an exorcism, despite Regan now being completely possessed by the devil. Chris was devastated to see the condition of Regan. She was worried if the devil will endanger her daughter's body and soul. Regan eventually recover after the exorcism.

Anxiety disorder experienced by the main character in the novel due to fear if something bad even worse will happen to her daughter who had possessed by devil. It can be seen through some of the conflicts that occur in the novel. The writer uses the theory of Anxiety disorder by using psychological approach.

Based on the previous explanation, the writer decides to discuss how Chris MacNeil as the main character did a various way to heal her daughter because she was worried about her daughter. Finally the writer chooses "Chris's Anxiety Symptoms toward her Possessed Daughter" as the title of this thesis.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Data and subject**

The data of this study were novel *The Exorcist* by William Peter Blatty as the subject of the study.

### **Unit of Analysis**

The writer focused on the intrinsic and extrinsic elements. The intrinsic elements includes general description, setting, and conflicts of the main character, while the extrinsic element that is symptoms of anxiety.

### **Technique of Data Collection and Anaysis**

In conducting the research, the writer applied three steps. First, the writer did thorough reading of the novel. Second, the writer studied the sentences, phrases, paragraph to better understand the content of the novel. Third, the writer copy the data found in novel. Dealing with the secondary data the writer read the books, journal

articles from internet, and from other sources as references which related to the topic from the novel.

Example:

Quotation 22 (Data no.50):

He could feel her anxiety pounding like waves on an unknown beach. "Well, now, sooner or later, I'm going to have to tell one of my superiors what I'm up to, especially if I'm going to be coming by here at various unusual hours of the night."

"Do you have to?" She frowned at him worriedly.

"Well, otherwise, it might look a little bit odd, don't you think?"

She looked down. "Yeah, I see what you mean," she murmured.

"Do you mind? I'll tell him only what I have to. Don't worry," he assured her.

"It won't get around." (William Peter Blatty, 1971: 269)

The data were analyzed use descriptive qualitative method to. The writer describes the state of problems that has been mentioned. In this thesis, the novel is analyzed by structural and psychology approach. The writer has to read the whole story of *The Exorcist* by William Peter Blatty. The writer finds the conversation or sentences related with object of the analysis, such as, the conflict, general description of the main character and also the psychological phenomenon happened to the main character in the novel.

## DISCUSSION

### Finding

In general, the extrinsic element of literature was about the things that can't really be found inside the story itself. It wasn't the material but the facts and information that supports and surrounds the story. It could tell about the author; inspiration, life experiences, etc., it could also tell about the world situation; past, present or may be the future, and many other supporting facts.

### **Psychology In Literature**

According to British Psychological Society, Psychology is the scientific study of human mind and behaviour: how we think, feel, act and interact individually and in groups. Psychology is concerned with all aspects of behavior and with the thoughts, feelings and motivations underlying that behavior. It is both a thriving academic discipline and a vital professional practice.

### **Anxiety Disorder**

Anxiety is a feeling of impending danger. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) considered three types. *Objective anxiety* results from a real threat in the physical world to one's well-being, as when a ferocious-looking dog appears from around the corner. The other two types are derived from objective anxiety. *Neurotic anxiety* results from the ego feeling overwhelmed by the id, which threatens to express its irrationality in thoughts and behavior. There is a fear of external punishment for such expression. *Moral anxiety* is based on a feeling that one's internalized values are about to be compromised. There is a fear of self-punishment (e.g., guilt) for acting contrary to one's values. Moral anxiety is a function of the development of the superego. Whatever the anxiety, the ego seeks

to reduce it. Operating at the unconscious level, it employs defense mechanisms to distort or deny reality. (Hall, C. S. (1954))

### ***The Symptoms of Anxiety Disorder***

The symptoms of anxiety are sometimes not all that obvious as they often develop gradually and, given that we all experience some anxiety at some points in time, it can be hard to know how much is too much.

a. Worry

Deborah C. Beidel (2013: Chapter 4) states on her book about Abnormal Psychology, worry is thoughts, images and emotions of a negative nature in which mental attempts are made to avoid anticipated potential threats. As an emotion it is experienced as anxiety or concern about a real or imagined issue, usually personal issues such as health or finances or broader ones such as environmental pollution and social or technological change.

b. Irritability

According to Ryan Rivera (2009) Irritability is a common symptom of anxiety - especially anxiety attacks. Those with severe anxiety often find that they're easy to upset, and unfortunately this means that those close to you both literally (as in distance) and figuratively (as in close partners) are at risk for causing you to lash out because of this irritability.

c. Bad Dream

Bad dream usually happens in the second half of sleep. During bad dream, people may moan, babbling (talking to himself), or moves slightly, although these signs are not always appear. This condition may be associated with tachycardia, tachypnea, diaphoresis, and arousal. Full awakening and the memory of dream distinguish bad dream from night terrors.

d. Restless

Ryan Rivera (2009) states restlessness is one of the most common symptoms of anxiety. It's the feeling of being unable to sit still, or feeling as though you're on edge and something is about to or needs to happen.

### **Discussion**

The researcher will analyze the anxiety disorder described in *The Exorcist* by using psychological approach. The theories are applied to analyze extrinsic aspect of the story. The discussion focuses on the main character as the center of the story. The aspects that will be analyzed are her behavior, conflict with other character in the story.

#### ***Worry***

Chris as a mother is very worried if something bad happens to her beloved child. She will try to save her daughter.

Quotation 22 (Data no.50):

He could feel her anxiety pounding like waves on an unknown beach. "Well, now, sooner or later, I'm going to have to tell one of my superiors what I'm up to, especially if I'm going to be coming by here at various unusual hours of the night."

"Do you have to?" She frowned at him worriedly.

"Well, otherwise, it might look a little bit odd, don't you think?"

She looked down. "Yeah, I see what you mean," she murmured.

*"Do you mind? I'll tell him only what I have to. Don't worry," he assured her. "It won't get around." (William Peter Blatty, 1971: 269)*

Chris worried that Karras's superiors just does not allow ritual exorcism on Regan. Karras said that the ritual actually has been banned by the church because the ritual was once nearly killed a pastor and very dangerous. Chris was afraid that if the Church can not perform exorcism on Regan and she worried if her daughter would not survive. Karras tried to calm her down.

### ***Irritability***

In the story, Chris is actually a nice and friendly lady. However, anxiety disorder experienced by Chris makes her irritable. As stated by Ryan Rivera in sub-chapter 2.2.3.2 of irritability that those with severe anxiety often find that they're easy to upset.

Quotation 23 (Data no.42):

*"Yeah, sorry! Christ! Eighty-eight doctors and all you can tell me with all of your bullshit is..." (William Peter Blatty, 1971: 210)*

The above quotation tells that Chris was very upset because none of the doctors could help Regan. They even suggested that Regan must be treated at asylum. Chris had reject it outright.

Quotation 24 (Data no.51):

*"Go on, Karl, get out of here! Go see a movie or something! We can't all stay cooped in this house!"*

She turned back to Karras, picking up a cigarette packet and slamming it down on the table when Karl protested, "No, I look---"

*"Karl, now, I mean it!" Chris snapped at him nervously, raising her voice but not turning her head. "Get out! Just get out of this house for a while! We've all got to start getting out! Now just go!" (William Peter Blatty, 1971: 299)*

The above quotation tells that Chris gasped and angry at Karl. When she and Karras were chatting, Karl dropped a pot. Then a few moments later, he was careless and dropped it again. Chris who was talking seriously with Karras, became angry and scolded at Karl. This is due to a person who is in the anxious would be sensitive and irritable for little things or trivial.

### ***Bad Dream***

Too much thinking or anxiety can also cause a person to had a bad dream. It happened because when going to sleep, the brain is constantly thinking about something and become anxious, so that when asleep, the brain still works and fills the memory we think when before bedtime. Then the bad dream came.

Quotation 25 (Data no.6):

Chris slept. And dreamed about death in the staggering particular, death as if death were still never yet heard of while something was ringing, she gasping, dissolving, slipping off into void, thinking over and over, I am not going to be, I will die, I won't be, and forever and ever,(..)

She hung up. And for moments sat motionless, thinking of the dream. A dream? More like thought in the half life of waking. That terrible clarity. Glean of the skull. Non-being. Irreversible. She could not imagine it. (William Peter Blatty, 1971: 13)

The above quotation tells that Chris always be haunted curiosity by rapping sounds from the attic. Lately, the sound is often heard, but she never found anything

at the attic. Then the sound came again. After finding out the rapping sounds, Chris returned to her bedroom to finish the script until she fell asleep. In her sleep, she dreamed of a terrible death.

### **Restless**

Since experiencing some strange occurrences in her house, such as rapping sounds from the attic, her daughter's shaking bed, bad dream, her daughter behaving strangely, Chris became restless and too much thinking about the strange things that happened in her house. She was afraid of something bad would happen.

Quotation 26 (Data no.10):

She was slowly pouring vodka. "Ever think A dying?"  
"I beg your---"  
"Dying," she interrupted. "Ever think about it, Burke? What it means? I mean, really what it means?"(..)  
"I mean, the end--- the end!--- like I'd never even heard of it before." She shook her head. "Oh, Jesus, did that spook me! I felt like I was falling off the goddam planet at a hundred million miles an hour." (William Peter Blatty, 1971: 38-39)

The above quotation tells when Burke visit to Chris's house, they were talking in the bar. In the middle of conversation, Chris suddenly remembered about her bad dream of terrible death. She restless and tell him about what she dreamed and thought.

Quotation 27 (Data no.56):

Chris felt deeply and strangely moved. Here comes my big brother to beat your brains in, creeps! It was a feeling, she thought, much like that. She could feel her heart begin to beat faster.(..)  
(..)Chris turned questioningly to Merrin.  
"Father Karras knows best," said the exorcist quietly.  
(...)"What a lovely name," said Merrin warmly. He held her gaze for a moment, reassuring. Then he looked at the door, and again Chris felt it: that tension; that thickening of coiled darkness. (William Peter Blatty, 1971: 368-369)

The above quotation tells that Chris suddenly became tense when she saw Father Merrin and Father Karras was about to entered Regan's room when the exorcism was about to begin. As perceived everyone if they become like Chris. Chris became restless and anxious when the priests wanted to exorcise her daughter. She was very worried and afraid that if the ritual fail, or even worsen the situation and her daughter's condition.

### **CONCLUSION**

The previous chapters can be concluded into some paragraph from the general description of the main character until the anxiety disorder of Chris as the main character in *The Exorcist*.

There are two conflicts in this story, internal conflict and external conflict. The internal conflict experienced by Chris against herself. It can be seen from in the conversation, behaviour and her attitude in the novel. She was confused with what happened to Regan's, her beloved daughter. Regan's behavior often changed odd, its like not herself, it makes Chris getting confused and curious. What really happened. The doctors who handle was overwhelmed. Initially thought to the problem of brain nerves. However, after the check done by the various tools that painful, the results remain



negative. Finally the doctors gave up and advised to bring Regan to the witchdoctor. In addition, she was also baffled with a detective named Kinderman who said that Burke was killed horribly with his head is completely round 180 degrees. Kinderman suspect that Burke was murdered by a man who was very strong like having super powers. It makes Chris grew confused and like almost stressful to think all about it.

The conflicts between Chris against the others also occurs. Those are due to the efforts of Chris who wanted to heal and protect Regan, her beloved daughter to normal. This is called an external conflict. The first external conflict experienced by Chris is against the doctors whose handled Regan. Chris was upset with the doctors because none of them can handle Regan. They suspect that her daughter was mentally ill and needs to be cared to the asylum. Even they eventually suggest to took her to the witchdoctor. Chris does not agree with everything they say, because she convinced that Regan was not mentally ill and do not need to be brought to a witchdoctor. Then one of the doctors advise to do an exorcism, he said, this ritual is usually successful. Chris agreed.

Beside analyzing the general description of Chris as the main character, the writer also analyze the extrinsic element. The extrinsic element concerns on anxiety disorder experienced by Chris. In this novel the anxiety of Chris is caused by fear if bad things happen in her life, including her daughter who was possessed by an evil demon. From the story, it is found the symptoms of anxiety, there are: worry, irritability, bad dream, and restless. She is worried if something bad happens to her beloved child. She became sensitive and easy to angry. She also dreamed about something bad because she is too much to think about bad things who could happen. All of it makes Chris became restless. She was afraid that if bad things happen.

All of the symptoms experienced since some strange incident occurred in her house, included Burke's death and Regan who was possessed.

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