

Jimmy McGill's Conflicts and Defense Mechanism by Anna Freud in *Better Call Saul* (2015)

Achmad Zulfani Daffa

English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Surabaya
achmad.19064@mhs.unesa.ac.id

Abstrak

Konflik memicu emosi yang kuat dan menimbulkan perasaan sakit hati atau ketidaknyamanan (Segal & Robinson, 2023). Mekanisme pertahanan merupakan proses psikologis yang melindungi individu dari emosi negatif, yang biasanya terjadi ketika seseorang dihadapkan pada situasi atau peristiwa yang dianggap stres, mengancam, atau menantang secara emosional. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap konflik dan mekanisme pertahanan dalam menanggapi konflik yang digambarkan pada tokoh utama *Better Call Saul* (2015), Jimmy McGill. Seri karya Vince Gilligan dan Peter Gould, *Better Call Saul* (2015), berfungsi sebagai sumber data. Proses menonton, mencatat dialog naskah, dan mengambil tangkapan layar adegan dari serial tersebut digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data. Data yang terkumpul diperiksa dan dianalisis berdasarkan teori yang dipilih, yaitu teori konflik dalam sastra berdasarkan Islam (2016) dan teori mekanisme pertahanan berdasarkan Anna Freud. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Jimmy McGill mengalami tiga konflik; dua dari tiga konflik tersebut sebagian besar merupakan konflik (orang vs. orang), yang dikategorikan sebagai konflik eksternal; yang lainnya adalah konflik (orang vs dirinya sendiri), yang dikategorikan sebagai konflik internal. Menanggapi konflik tersebut, Jimmy McGill mendemonstrasikan tiga bentuk mekanisme pertahanan, yaitu regresi, penolakan, dan sublimasi.

Kata Kunci: *Mekanisme pertahanan, Konflik, emosi, psikoanalisis, Jimmy McGill*

Abstract

Conflicts trigger strong emotions and lead to hurt feelings or discomfort (Segal & Robinson, 2023). Defense mechanisms are a psychological process that protects the individual from negative emotions, which usually occur when a person is confronted with a situation or event that is considered stressful, threatening, or emotionally challenging. This research aims to uncover the conflicts and defense mechanisms in response to the conflicts depicted in the main character of *Better Call Saul* (2015), Jimmy McGill. The Vince Gilligan and Peter Gould's series, *Better Call Saul* (2015), served as the data source. The process of watching, taking notes on the scripted dialogue, and screenshotting the scene from the series was used to collect the data. The collected data were examined and analyzed based on the chosen theory, which are the conflicts in literature theory based on Islam (2016) and the theory of defense mechanisms based on Anna Freud. The results of this research indicate that Jimmy McGill experiences three conflicts; two of the three conflicts are mostly (person vs. person) conflicts, which are categorized as external conflicts; the other one is (person vs. himself) conflicts, which are categorized as internal conflicts. In response to the conflicts, Jimmy McGill demonstrated three forms of defense mechanisms, which are regression, denial, and sublimation.

Keywords: *Defense mechanisms, conflicts, emotions, psychoanalysis, Jimmy McGill*

1. INTRODUCTION

In every literary work, such as novels, prose, and films, we are no strangers to the term "character". Characters is a term that is applied to a literary form. It is a person, animal, or creature present in a literary work that performs the actions in carrying out the storyline (Holman, 2009). Characters in literary works often reflect on the real life. They embody a wide spectrum of emotions, motivations,

and experiences that occur in the real world. Therefore, every character that is present in literary works always portrays a human experience, and it has become a general intuition about literature, which states that literature represent the essence of our real-life experiences by depicting them through imaginative and fictional descriptions (Davidsen, 2018). When it comes to examining literary characters, there is a tendency to explore literary characters through a psychological lens.

Psychology and literature itself are two things that cannot be separated because there is a close correlation, between the treatment of people and their reactions and experiences. In terms of characters, the psychology of character is more than just likes and dislikes; it's about what actually drives the character to behave in the first place (Humpage, 2015).

One aspect of understanding a character's behaviors is the conflicts faced by the characters. Conflict is an issue or struggle that usually occurs among the characters in the story, which creates tension within the characters. Conflict is also a turning point in which a person had struggle to achieve a certain psychological quality (Anggraeni et al., 2022). Conflicts can be categorized into two main types of conflicts, such as internal conflicts and external conflicts. The conflicts that occur in characters often have a certain influence, especially on their personality or emotions because of the tension from the conflicts that have a certain impact, which shapes their thoughts and behaviors. In addition, these things are also reflected in real life, when people continuously face conflicts, it can cause affect in the human mind. According to Segal & Robinson (2023), conflicts trigger strong emotions and lead to hurt feelings or discomfort.

When facing conflicts, each individual has different abilities and ways to resolve them. From a psychoanalytic point of view, there is a psychological design that serves as a method to reduce or overcome the emotional impact that is felt due to the tension that arises from the conflicts. This can be referred to as defense mechanisms. Defense mechanisms are a psychological process that protects the individual from negative emotions. Defense mechanisms usually occur when a person is confronted with a situation or event that is considered stressful, threatening, or emotionally challenging. According to Di Giuseppe & Perry (2021), the concept of defense mechanisms are defined as psychological processes that help individuals mediate their reactions to emotional conflicts and internal or external stressors. As Anna Freud in her book "*The Ego And The Mechanisms Of Defense*", it is a psychological design used by the Ego to decrease painful or unendurable ideas or other emotional distress (Freud, 2018). Furthermore, the use of defense mechanisms occurs because of a neurotic conflict between the two impulse (Uwe Hentschel, Gudmund J.W. Smith, 2012).

Following the description above, the researcher wishes to conduct research regarding the use of defense mechanisms in response to the conflicts that cause an emotional impact on the main characters of literary works. One literary work that might be suitable to discuss this topic is the drama series *Better Call Saul* (2015). *Better Call Saul* (2015) is an American television drama series created by Vince Gilligan and Peter Gould, which is

considered to be one of the best series. The series serves as a spin-off prequel to Vince Gilligan's series, *Breaking Bad* (2008), which takes place before the events of *Breaking Bad* (2008). The series explores the backstory and transformation of Jimmy McGill, a former conman and struggling lawyer who later becomes an eccentric criminal lawyer, Saul Goodman. The series tries to delve into the main character's journey, who seems to have struggled with his life and has a repeating cycle of making terrible choices that shape him into the character seen in *Breaking Bad* (2008) as Saul Goodman.

What makes this series interesting is how well the characters are developed, especially Jimmy McGill, who is given more development and expansion to their character. This extensive development adds a new layer to their arc and shows us how the characters end up the way they were in the previous series, *Breaking Bad* (2008). Furthermore, not only expands on the backstory of the characters, the series also offers a unique perspective on the complex interplay of personal choices, moral dilemmas, and external influences that contribute to their complex characters. In essence, *Better Call Saul* stands out for its meticulous character studies, providing viewers with a deeper appreciation for the intricate web of narratives that connect both series.

In *Better Call Saul* (2015) series, the main character, Jimmy McGill, is introduced as a struggling public defender who is determined to make a name for himself and make an honest living as a lawyer. Before that, Jimmy was a low-level con artist in his hometown, Cicero, with no serious ambitions or direction in life, wasting away his days scamming people. Furthermore, Jimmy hits rock bottom when he encounters the incident that leads to his downfall, but his older brother Chuck manages to get him off and help him. This is a major turning point for Jimmy. He is inspired by his brother Chuck to leave his swindling past behind to become a lawyer, just like his brother. However, as Jimmy struggles to become a lawyer, his life seemingly gets worse at every turn as he faces several conflicts and setbacks that create tension in his life, which lead to the dramatic and unexpected turn that Jimmy McGill will experience that affects his personality due to personal struggles and external pressures, leaving him with uncomfortable emotions, which he tries to overcome. These things are very closely related to what the researcher is attempting to discuss regarding the use of defense mechanisms in resolving conflicts that cause emotional impacts. Conflicts are one of the various sources of tension that can develop someone's personality. When someone is faced with conflicts, it will give rise to anxiety or any negative emotions, which forces them to learn how to reduce it, which might also happen in the case of Jimmy McGill in *Better Call Saul* (2015).

The researcher chose this topic because this issue also happens in real life as unconscious thoughts or behaviors that protect individuals from negative emotions. Defense mechanisms are always present and embedded in human behavior, and often appear during moments of discomfort or hurt feelings. In order to shield themselves from negative emotions, humans may resort to defense mechanisms to manage their emotions by using defense mechanisms and their types based on the situations and conditions experienced.

There are several previous studies that discuss defense mechanisms in literary objects such as novels, films, or other literary works that can be used to support the research, such as the study written by Tery Angela Monica entitled "Self Defense Mechanisms as a Tool for Overcoming Anxiety in the Novel *Me Before You* by Jojo Moyes". The study's result showed that the character in the novel shows four defense mechanisms, but the most effective mechanisms that arise in the character are rationalization and displacement (Monica et al., 2021).

The next previous study is from Annisa Febriana, entitled "Defense Mechanism as a Strategy to Overcome Jacob's Anxiety in William Landay's *Defending Jacob*". From the result of the study, the researcher found three types of anxiety experienced by Jacob Barber. In addition, there are five types of defense mechanisms used by Jacob Barber to overcome the anxiety, namely projection, rationalization, displacement, denial, and reaction formation, but the most often used to overcome the anxiety that arises in Jacob Barber are projection and displacement (Febriana, 2022).

Another previous study was done by M. Aprianto Budie Nugroho and Sely Viladinia, entitled "Audrey Turner's Conflicts And Defense Mechanisms in Kinsella's *Finding Audrey*". Based on the research, the study's result revealed that the main character in the novel faces internal and external conflicts. It was also revealed that the main character copes with her conflicts by using three defense mechanisms, but denial is the most frequently used defense mechanism by the main character (Nugroho & Viladinia, 2018).

Another previous study was done by Budi Febriani, Ruwaidah, and Yuannisah Aini Nasution, entitled "The Mechanism Of Self Defense Of The Protagonist In The Play Of Barabrah By Motinggo Bousje". Based on the research, the study's result revealed that the self-defense mechanism to the conflict faced by the main characters in barabrah drama are found to include repression, sublimation, projection, diversion, reaction formation, regression, aggression, fanatics, and stereotyped. It also revealed that the implications of self-defense mechanism of the main characters in Barabrah drama of learning in the

form of maintaining family harmony, generous not greedy, and understanding the religious norms (Febriani, 2017)

Another previous study was done by Vivien Christy, entitled "Defense Mechanism Seen Through Behaviors in the Character of Barney Stinson from *How I Met Your Mother*". Based on the research, the study's result revealed that the character of Barney Stinson has a broken personality, which came out due to the internal and external conflicts within Barney Stinson. The external conflicts that are visible in Barney are his issues with his family and his father. Meanwhile, the internal conflicts in him are Barney's struggles against his self and his insecurity. To overcome this problem, Barney Stinson uses three defense mechanisms: repression, projection, and displacement (Christy, 2018).

Another previous study was done by Lola Viona and Delvi Wahyuni, entitled "Defense Mechanisms Employed Adopted Teenagers in *Far From Tree* (2017) By Robin Benway". Based on the research, the study's result revealed that the character of adopted adolescents uses defense mechanisms as a form of self-protection from the problems they face, including projection, denial, repression, rationalization, and displacement (Viona & Wahyuni, 2022).

The last previous study is from Ritsnaini Zulfaisya and Hasnini Hasra, entitled "Defense Mechanism of The Main Character in Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak* Novel". Based on the research, the study's result revealed that the main character used several defense mechanisms in handling internal and external conflicts, which include repression, projection, regression, sublimation, isolation, reaction-formation, turning against the self, and identification (Hasra & Zulfaisya, 2020).

The research that the researcher will carry out is different from the previous studies mentioned. In the previous studies, most studies mainly discussed the role of defense mechanisms in overcoming anxiety and stated that the theory used was mostly based on Sigmund Freud, and mentioned the type of defense mechanisms in the result of the study. However, the previous study did not add any note to point out that Sigmund Freud only introduced the concept of defense mechanisms and did not comes with the type of defense mechanisms. Therefore, in this study, the researcher uses defense mechanisms based on Anna Freud. The researcher uses Anna Freud's defense mechanism because it focuses on the role of the ego in managing conflict and balancing the demands of the Id and Superego. Also, Anna Freud's defense mechanism is one of the defense mechanisms theories developed by experts that comes with various types of defense, which are very common to this day, such as repression, displacement, denial, projection, rationalization, sublimation, regression, reaction formation, etc. Moreover, added to the lack of

study on the *Better Call Saul* (2015) series as an object and the characters in the series display behaviors that lead to the defense mechanisms described by Anna Freud, make this research different from the previous study. The research that the researcher will carry out will involve an in-depth analysis of Jimmy's diverse character traits across episodes and seasons in order to thoroughly understand his complex conflicts and defense mechanisms in the face of conflicts.

Based on the explanation and background above, the researcher chose the series *Better Call Saul* (2015) by Vince Gilligan and Peter Gould as the object of analysis in this research. The researcher aims to uncover the conflicts, and reveal the defense mechanisms in response to the conflicts of Jimmy McGill in *Better Call Saul* (2015) as the basis of this research. In this study, the researcher argues that Jimmy McGill uses defense mechanisms as a response to the conflicts that cause emotional impacts. This is done because of how interesting the character of Jimmy McGill is due to his unique personality depicted in the previous series (*Breaking Bad*); he is a sleazy, flamboyant, and charismatic character. However, in *Better Call Saul* (2015) series, we see Jimmy struggle with all the setbacks and conflicts he faces that give him stress, trauma, and anxiety that affect him in a certain way and make him start to show certain behaviors, which would eventually shape him into the character seen in *Breaking Bad* (2008) as Saul Goodman. This raises the question of whether Jimmy McGill used defense mechanisms throughout his life to manage or hide the negative emotion caused by the tension of his conflict, which can be a good discussion of this research.

2. METHOD

This research is only limited to analyzing Jimmy McGill as the main character in the series *Better Call Saul* (2015), who tries to hide stress, trauma, or any other negative emotions because of conflicts. This research is expected to contribute to broadening the understanding of defense mechanisms developed Anna Freud. Furthermore, this research is expected to be the reference for the reader to the analysis of fictional characters in psychological perception. To help with the analysis, the researcher applies the conflicts in literature theory by Islam (2016). With this theory, the researcher will identify and describe the conflicts that give rise to negative emotions in the main characters. Furthermore, the researcher applies a psychoanalysis approach, focusing on the defense mechanisms theory based on Anna Freud, who proposed that the human mind uses various mechanisms to protect itself from anxiety and negative emotions (Freud, 2018). These defense mechanisms include repression, denial, projection, regression, sublimation, rationalization, etc.

With this theory, the researcher will reveal the defense mechanisms that occur in Jimmy McGill in response to the conflicts. For the relevance of this study, the researcher will only utilize three types of defense mechanisms, which are prominent in the main character, Jimmy McGill, based on the information or evidence found, such as regression, denial, and sublimation. These three defense mechanisms are part of the unconscious psychological operations to protect the individuals, which have their own functions and collectively offers a comprehensive lens to understand Jimmy McGill's behaviors, providing a theoretical framework that not only dissects the character's actions but also reveals the underlying psychological mechanisms at work. In addition, the concepts of Id, Ego, and Superego will be utilized in this research to provide a framework for understanding the complexity of human behaviors in the use of defense mechanisms.

This research uses the six seasons of *Better Call Saul* (2015), which aired and was released by AMC on February 8 2015, as the main source of research data. The process of watching, taking notes on the scripted dialogue, and screenshotting the scene from the series was used to collect the data. After the data were collected, there are several steps that the researcher did in the process of data analysis for this research: (1) remove any irrelevant information to ensure the data is relevant to the classification; (2) divides the data according to the research question; (3) analyze the data that has been classified based on the chosen theory; (4) draw the conclusion based on the analysis.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section will include two parts. Each part will contain an analysis to answer the research question. The first part will focus on the conflicts that Jimmy McGill faces Throughout the *Better Call Saul* (2015) series. This part will delve into the conflicts experienced by Jimmy McGill, which creates tension within the characters. In the second part, the researcher will reveal the various defense mechanisms that Jimmy employs to cope with conflicts.

3.1 Jimmy McGill's Conflicts

Conflicts are a series of memories and emotions that have the power to shape our character. In literature, conflict often finds its roots in the depths of an individual's personal history, unveiling a series of struggles and dilemmas, which creates tension that affects a character's behaviors. Throughout the series, we see Jimmy McGill grapple with a wide range of conflicts that affect his personality and behaviors due to the tension that arises from the conflict. Moreover, there are several conflicts found in Jimmy McGill, which shape his behaviors due to

the trauma and anxiety resulting from the conflicts, which will be discussed in further discussion below.

3.1.1 Jimmy's Conflict With His Brother (External)

The external conflicts faced by Jimmy McGill revolve around his rivalry with his older brother. In the series, Jimmy has always adored his brother Chuck as a role model and wants to impress his brother by becoming a lawyer like his brother. However, Jimmy's older brother, Chuck, silently harbors a deep resentment toward Jimmy because of his personal biases towards Jimmy. He sees Jimmy as a constant source of disappointment and embarrassment because of Jimmy's past as a Con Artist, and he has been trying to undermine and sabotage Jimmy's career. The conflict with his older brother starts to arise as Jimmy finds out that his older brother has been secretly undermining and sabotaging Jimmy's career, and Jimmy wants to know why. This is supported by the scene and dialogue below:



Figure 1: Jimmy Confront his brother (44:14, Season 1, Episode 9, *Pimento*)

Jimmy McGill: I'm your brother, we're supposed to look out for each other. Why were you working against me, Chuck?

[At 44:11, Season 1, Episode 9, *Pimento*]

In this dialogue, Jimmy tries to confront his older brother about his betrayal toward him. From The dialogue of Jimmy McGill, which says, "Why were you working against me, Chuck?" points out Jimmy's desire for an explanation to understand the motives behind the betrayal he received from his own brother, whom he always admired. The scene is supported by the use of long shots seen in Figure 1 (44:14), capturing the entire character from head to toe and the surrounding area of the dimly lit house, filled with eerie sound, which adds a layer of discomfort and unease, highlighting the emotional distance between Jimmy and his older brother Chuck as Jimmy sit face to face with his older brother while his anger is seething just beneath the surface. From there, Chuck starts to tell about his betrayal toward Jimmy. This is supported by the dialogue below:

Chuck McGill: You're not a real lawyer! "University of American Samoa", for Christ's sake? An online course?

*What a joke I worked my ass off to get where I am! And you take these shortcuts and you think suddenly you're my peer? You do what I do because you're funny and you can make people laugh? I committed my *life* to this!*

[At 44:16-44:46, Season 1, Episode 9, *Pimento*]

In this dialogue, his older brother, Chuck, reveals that he never takes Jimmy seriously as a lawyer, which points out by the dialogue, "You're not a real lawyer". He disdains Jimmy and questions Jimmy's abilities as a lawyer. Also, Jimmy's older brother Chuck, expresses his resentment toward Jimmy and implies that Jimmy's law education is unworthy of his respect, which points out by the dialogue "University of American Samoa, for Christ's sake? An online course? What a joke! I worked my ass off to get where I am! And you take these shortcuts and you think suddenly you're my peer?". According to his view on Jimmy, Chuck sees Jimmy's legal practice career as a mockery of his hard work and dedication as a respected lawyer because Chuck thinks that Jimmy is the kind of guy who will take shortcuts to get what he wants. The idea of Jimmy being a lawyer has always been absurd to Chuck because of his strong belief that people cannot change their true nature. This is supported by the scene and dialogue below:



Figure 2: Chuck unveil his deep resentment (45:02. Season 1, Episode 9. *Pimento*)

Chuck McGill: I know you. I know what you were, what you are. People don't change, you're Slippin' Jimmy, And Slippin' Jimmy I can handle just fine. Slippin' Jimmy with a law degree is like a chimp with a machine gun.

[At 45:02. Season 1, Episode 9. *Pimento*]

In this dialogue, Jimmy's older brother views Jimmy's recent actions and behaviors as nothing more than a temporary act and believes that Jimmy will resort to his old ways to get what he wants based on Jimmy's past and refer to him as Slippin' Jimmy, a label that resonates Jimmy in the past as a small-time con artist, which points out by the dialogue "People don't change, you're Slippin' Jimmy". Chuck also implies that Jimmy cannot be trusted with something as sacred as the law a believes that Jimmy will abuse the law to his advantage without thinking about the consequences, which is proven by the dialogue

"Slippin' Jimmy with a law degree is like a chimp with a machine gun". The cinematography also plays a huge part in this scene. As we can see in Figure 2 (45:02), the use of a medium shot helps to enhance the emotional impact by capturing the facial expression and body language, which allows the viewers to observe the emotion of Chuck as he lashes out at Jimmy throughout the scene. This confrontation sets the stage for their complex relationship as Chuck's resentment towards Jimmy continues to unfold throughout the series. Jimmy's attempts to prove himself are in vain with Chuck's lack of support. Chuck's constant criticism only serves to make Jimmy feel more worthless and makes him hate Chuck throughout the series, and eventually leads to their breakup, which leaves Jimmy McGill with uncomfortable emotions regarding his relationship with Chuck.

In conclusion, the conflict that happens between Jimmy and his older brother Chuck is centered around deep-seated tensions of resentment, which creates immediate tension between both brothers. This conflict includes a "Person vs. Person" conflict, which occurs when the protagonist (good guy) and antagonist (bad guy) are at odds with each other. The conflict between Jimmy and Chuck is characterized by heated arguments between the two siblings, which is in line with Islam (2016) explanation of "Person vs. Person" conflicts, in which the conflict is external and happens when the main character is in direct confrontation with another character.

3.1.2 Jimmy's Conflict with Lalo Salamanca (External)

The external conflicts faced by Jimmy McGill also revolve around his interactions with clients from the criminal underworld. In the series, as a person who's trying to make a name for himself in the legal community, Jimmy is constantly involved in situations that test the limits of his integrity. The meeting with Lalo Salamanca becomes one of the key points in the conflict that affects him in a certain way throughout the series. Their tense first meeting illustrates how hard it is for Jimmy to find the balance between his desire to stick to morality and the pressure that Lalo puts on him. It can be seen from the series as Lalo seeks the services of Jimmy McGill to help with legal matters. This is supported by the dialogue below:

Lalo Salamanca: We need our friend to tell the cops some things, some important things. We want him to say exactly what we tell him no more, no less. But the cops can't know it's coming from us. So we send you in there, you tell him how to do it, and they can't listen.

[At 07:02-07:32. Season 5, Episode 3, *The guy for this*]

In the dialogue above, it reveals that Lalo needs for Jimmy's service to carry out his plan to manipulate his

subordinates into providing information to the police without revealing their involvement. Lalo trusts Jimmy's legal expertise and relies on his knowledge of attorney-client confidentiality to ensure the success of his plan. On the other hand, Jimmy is reluctant to represent Lalo because he is concerned about his own safety and reputation as a lawyer, as Jimmy understands that Lalo Salamanca is a dangerous and unpredictable figure. This is supported by the dialogue below:

Jimmy McGill: In good conscience, I think I have to warn you that my rates have gone up. Uh, so going this way could be expensive.

Jimmy McGill: it's a full day of my time, and prep work, transportation, rush fees Uh, do the math. It's like seven thousand eight nine hundred and twenty-five dollars.

[At 07:02-07:32. Season 5, Episode 3, *The guy for this*]

In the dialogue above, the line "*I think I have to warn you that my rates have gone up. Uh, so going this way could be expensive.*" implies that Jimmy tries to talk himself out of the job by telling Lalo that hiring him can be expensive. Also, the line "*It's like seven thousand eight nine hundred and twenty five dollars*" reveals Jimmy's manipulation strategy to plant seeds of doubt in Lalo's mind about hiring Jimmy. However, Jimmy's intention to get himself out of the job is shattered when Lalo agrees to the amount of money Jimmy demands. This is supported by the dialogue of Lalo below:



Figure 3: Jimmy being handed money from Lalo (09:29. Season 5, Episode 3, *The guy for this*)

Lalo Salamanca: Sure. (in a calm and collected tone while taking money out of his back pocket) For your trouble, let's make it eight.

[At 09:07-09:24. Season 5, Episode 3, *The guy for this*]

In this dialogue, we can see there is a sense of confidence in his voice while delivering the line "*sure*" showing Lalo's expression that he is not bothered by giving out the amount of cash that Jimmy proposes while also trying to assert his dominance and mess with Jimmy's mind, which Jimmy has no choice to accept the payment

and represent this dangerous client. As a viewer, we can also see the tense atmosphere that happens in Figure 3 (09:29) while the use of a long shot capturing the full length of the surrounding area of a dimly lit warehouse and the body language of Jimmy McGill which shows a feeling of unease while receiving the money as seen in Figure 3 (09:29).

After Jimmy did what Lalo asked for in their first meeting, Jimmy had no interest in continuing to work with Lalo. Jimmy knows that if he keeps associating himself with Lalo Salamanca, it could expose him to significant risks. Therefore, Jimmy wants to resign from his job to represent Lalo, which apparently cannot happen. This is supported by the dialogue below:

Jimmy McGill: Um, you're gonna have to find a different attorney for future endeavors, 'cause my schedule is just very, very tight.

Lalo Salamanca: You'll make time.

[At 09:07-09:24. Season 5, Episode 3, *The guy for this*]

In the dialogue above, the line "you're gonna have to find a different attorney for future endeavors, 'cause my schedule is just very, very tight" points out that Jimmy tries to assert his will to resign from his job while avoiding the potential danger of Lalo's violent tendencies. However, the line "You'll make time." reveals that Lalo is unwilling to let Jimmy go and expects him to continue to work with him, showing that he has authority over Jimmy, which makes Jimmy deeply involved with Lalo Salamanca, leaving him wondering how he will navigate this situation.



Figure 4: Jimmy and Lalo interaction (06:05. Season 5, Episode 8, *Bagman*)

Inevitably, Jimmy's involvement with Lalo Salamanca eventually reaches a different level as Lalo starts to order Jimmy to certain tasks that lead to danger for Jimmy. In this stage, Lalo has been held by the police, and he demands to be released from prison on bail and assigned Jimmy to act as a bagman by going to the desert to collect seven million dollars of bail money. Jimmy was of course reluctant at the idea of going to the desert for Lalo because it was too dangerous. This is supported by the dialogue below:

Jimmy McGill: I have an idea, why not have these cousins of yours bring the money just all the way here? Cut out the middleman.

Lalo Salamanca: look, maybe this isn't your thing, you know? I mean, that's okay. I get it. You did good in court. We'll leave it at that.

Jimmy McGill: Well, thanks, that's I appreciate that.

Lalo Salamanca: Don't worry about it. I'll find somebody else, you know?

[At 04:53. Season 5, Episode 8, *Bagman*]

In the dialogue above, the line "why not have these cousins of yours bring the money just all the way here? Cut out the middleman." implies Jimmy's attempt to get himself out of the job. He is essentially proposing a solution of how the job should be done without him getting involved so that Jimmy can avoid putting himself in harm's way by going out to the desert, as he is aware of the danger that he will face if he accepts the job. However, the line "look, maybe this isn't your thing, you know? I mean, that's okay" reveals that Lalo is once again trying to mess with Jimmy's mind by making it seem like he understands Jimmy's limitations and the line "Don't worry about it. I'll find somebody else, you know" highlighting Lalo's manipulation as he tries to lead Jimmy into thinking that he will be replaced, suggesting that Jimmy wasn't the only option that he could easily find someone to work with him. This, of course, creates pressure on Jimmy that makes him feel afraid to refuse the job, considering what Lalo is capable of if he tries to refuse Lalo, while the use of a long shot captured the entirety of both characters and the settings of interrogation room effectively draws out the tension in the scene, allowing the viewers to experience the simmering unease that seen in Figure 4 (06:05).



Figure 5: Jimmy survived the ambush (18:10. Season 5, Episode 8, *Bagman*)

Eventually, Jimmy had no choice but to accept the job to go to the desert to collect seven million dollars, which Jimmy thought would be a quick and easy drive, but it turned into a warzone as Jimmy was surrounded by a group of armed men, which would have led to certain death if it weren't for Mike Ehrmantraut, a former client of Jimmy who works for a certain group tasked to ensure

that Jimmy's tasks as Bagman are running smoothly. Even though there is no dialogue available for Figure 5 (18:10), the Figure 5 (18:10) above shows how Jimmy was trying to survive by sitting behind his car for cover as gunfire erupts around him. His decision to sit behind his car was critical to his survival instincts, as it protected him from dangerous situations that Lalo put on him. Furthermore, the use of a long shot in Figure 5 (18:10) highlights the danger and vulnerability of Jimmy's position, which reveals Jimmy as a small and powerless figure in the desert, highlighting the danger and isolation that Jimmy faces. This harrowing experience leaves Jimmy shaken and in doubt of every decision he's ever made in life.

The conflict between Jimmy McGill and Lalo Salamanca is centered around the psychological game that Lalo plays on Jimmy as Lalo continuously messes with Jimmy's mind and manipulates him to do the job that leads to an underlying danger while Jimmy tries to talk himself out of the job, but he can't get out due to Lalo's formidable presence. This conflict creates tension, which affects Jimmy mentally and emotionally, causing deep trauma and leaving an indelible mark on him, which makes this conflict a "person vs. person" conflict, as Lalo's actions as the antagonist constantly place Jimmy in danger, which leaves Jimmy with trauma, which is in line with Islam (2016) explanation of "Person vs Person" conflicts, in which the conflict is external and happens between character.

3.1.3 Jimmy's Conflict With His Own Insecurity (Internal)

Despite the external conflicts that he faces, the character of Jimmy McGill also grapples with a profound internal conflict against his insecurity within him. In the series, Jimmy has a desire to be a respected lawyer and prove that he's not the same person as he was in the past, but he tends to get swayed by his sense of insecurity. He often feels that he is not good enough or deserves the success he wants, which emerges from the dismissive attitude he receives from everyone, including his brother, which often makes him feel unsure about himself and affects his behaviors throughout the series. This conflict is highlighted at moments such as when Jimmy has the opportunity to meet a potential employer who wants to hire Jimmy in their firm.



Figure 6: Jimmy is deliberating with himself (06:07. Season 2, Episode 1, *Switch*)

When Jimmy was presented with the opportunity to join the law firm of Davis & Main, he felt a mixture of fear and doubt. This opportunity offered him an entry into the more exclusive and prestigious world of law, which he had dreamed of for a long time. However, his internal conflict begins to arise as his deep sense of insecurity starts to approach him. Even though there is no dialogue available, the Figure 6 (06:07) above shows how Jimmy is deliberating with himself as he feels that he may not be good enough for this opportunity and whether he truly belongs in the world of law. Added with the high expectations that the firm expects from Jimmy, making his insecurities suddenly grow stronger. In the scene shown in Figure 6 (06:07), the use of a medium shot helps create emotional closeness between the viewer and the characters as the shot helps to capture half of Jimmy's upper body, showing half of his facial expression, which was full of uncertainty. Furthermore, his strong sense of insecurity finally took him over, making him walk away from the opportunity for a short period of time. This is supported by the dialogue below:

Jimmy McGill: Listen, I just want to say thank you, sincerely, For your interest in me. It's an honor to be considered, But at this time. At this time Um, i'm gonna have to take myself out of the running, thanks.

[At 08:08. Season 2, Episode 1, *Switch*]

In the dialogue above, Jimmy's decision to skip over the opportunity at Davis & Main is a poignant moment of his internal conflicts. The dialogue "*It's an honor to be considered, But at this time. At this time Um, i'm gonna have to take myself out of the running*" reflects his genuine gratitude for the opportunity, but the hesitation and uncertainty in his voice reveal the internal conflict he is experiencing. He knows that he could have taken a significant step toward legitimacy and success, but his insecurity outweighs the allure of prestige. This moment exemplifies how the uncertainty and doubt within him create a strong inner battle, which is in line with Islam (2016) explanation of internal conflicts (Person vs himself), in which the conflict happens within an individual's mind.

3.2 Jimmy McGill's Defense Mechanisms

After experiencing several conflicts that caused discomfort to him, Jimmy McGill seemed to develop the use of defense mechanisms in response to the conflicts that allowed him to navigate the emotional impact caused by the tension of his conflicts while maintaining his self-

image and sanity, which arose due to the drive of his Ego to protect itself. Anna Freud stated that the Ego used a psychological design to decrease painful or unendurable ideas or other emotional distress (Freud, 2018). Furthermore, the researchers discovered several defense mechanisms that Jimmy used to maintain his emotional distress, which will be discussed further below.

3.2.1 Regression

According to Anna Freud cited in (Feist & Feist, 2009), regression is a form of defense mechanism in which an individual temporarily regresses to an earlier stage of development to cope with stress or trauma. It involves reverting to an earlier stage of psychological development or adopting behaviors from a time when a person felt more comfortable. In the case of Jimmy McGill, this mechanism is often seen in Jimmy McGill when he feels pressured or afraid after he experiences several conflicts. His conflict with his older brother was one of the conflicts that triggered a regression as a defense mechanism. As previously explained about Jimmy's external conflicts, Jimmy McGill had a conflict regarding his relationship with his brother. He has a desire to impress and prove to his brother, Chuck, that he can be a capable lawyer. However, after several moments, which reveal Chuck's deep resentment for Jimmy, Jimmy feels a range of emotions, including anger and hurt. At this point, the emotional impact of Jimmy's conflict with his brother causes him to trigger a behavior that indicates regression. It is shown in the data below:



Figure 7: Jimmy fall back into his old pattern (27:27 & 28:54. Season 1, Episode 10, *Marco*)

In the first picture on Figure 7 (27:27), we can see the behaviors that indicate regression in Jimmy. It shows that

Jimmy fell back into his old behaviors when he was younger as he wasted his time screwing around in a bar with his friend. His regress to his old behaviors even brought back his old habit of deceiving people as he once again pulled off various scams to scam people for the sake of quick cash and having fun. Even though there is no dialogue available for the second picture on Figure 7 (28:54), we can see how Jimmy really enjoys the moment, as he is having the time of his life with his friend without thinking about the pressure of the conflicts, showcasing his attempt to relieve his stress temporarily by focus on the thrill of being young, rather than dwelling on his negative emotions.

The regression is also seen when Jimmy tries to protect himself after experiencing internal conflict. In the previous discussion regarding Jimmy's internal conflict, it can be seen that Jimmy was having a conflict around his mind when he deliberated with himself as his desires are crashed with his sense of insecurity, which creates a strong inner battle that stops Jimmy from having the allure of prestige.



Figure 8: Jimmy relaxing in a pool (16:38. Season 2, Episode 1, *Switch*)

Jimmy, who previously turned down a prestigious job offer from the law firm Davis & Main due to his insecurities, was seen relaxing in the hotel pool like a child, as shown in Figure 8 (16:38). Even though there is no dialogue available for Figure 8 (16:38), we can see the regression of Jimmy as he enjoys the moment in the pool, reviving the feelings of freedom and happiness he may have experienced as a youth, which highlight the regression of Jimmy in which a person exhibits behaviors or reactions that are more commonly found at a later developmental stage in their lives (Feist & Feist, 2009). Moreover, the use of long shots that capture the entirety of the characters and the pool setting in Figure 8 (16:38) emphasizes his detachment from the conflicts.

Jimmy's regression can be seen as an expression of Id, Ego, and Superego. His Id represents his impulse that seek pleasure and avoid suffering from the stress of his conflicts, regardless of the consequences. However, Jimmy's Superego, which acts as a moral compass, urges Jimmy to morally address the emotional impact, which may conflict with his desire. In this case, Jimmy's Ego, which is

supposed to mediate between his Id and his Superego, failed to find a balance. When Jimmy faced with stressful situations or personal challenges, his Ego leans on to the Id, which created regression as a defense mechanism to maintain his negative emotions by returning to more carefree behaviors.

3.2.2 Denial

Denial is a form of defense mechanism in which an individual refuses to acknowledge or accept the reality, acting as if the stressful or traumatic event did not exist as a way to avoid dealing with the pain or anxiety (Freud, 2018). In the case of Jimmy McGill, this mechanism is seen in Jimmy McGill as he experiences emotional distress due to his external conflict with Lalo Salamanca. As previously explained about Jimmy's external conflicts, Jimmy McGill had a conflict with Lalo Salamanca as he constantly got manipulated by Lalo, which led to a certain danger, which damaged Jimmy mentally and emotionally, causing deep trauma and leaving an indelible mark on him. At this point, the conflict that caused deep trauma in Jimmy triggers behaviour that indicates denial in Jimmy McGill. It is shown in the dialogue between him and Kim Wexler:

Kim Wexler: You can still go to a doctor, you know. No harm in getting checked out.

Jimmy McGill: I'm fine. I, uh, think I just need food. I haven't eaten since, um well, really before everything.

[At 42:54. Season 5, Episode 9, *Bad Choice Road*]

In the dialogue above, it is shown that Kim Wexler, who was both Jimmy's wife and fellow lawyer, was concerned for Jimmy's well-being after everything Jimmy had gone through as he was in the midst of danger caused by Lalo Salamanca. She suggests that Jimmy can go to the doctor to check out his condition. Instead of admitting that he needs help, Jimmy deflects her concern and acts as if he is fine, which is pointed out by the dialogue "*I'm fine. I, uh, think I just need food*". He denied that he needed help to overcome or minimize the severity of his situation and downplayed his emotional trauma, which highlights the defense mechanism of denial in Jimmy McGill, in which he refuses to acknowledge or accept the reality, acting as if the trauma did not exist (Freud, 2018).

In this part, Jimmy's Id is the intense fear and trauma resulting from his interaction with Lalo Salamanca. His Id is overwhelmed by the sense of vulnerability and concern for survival, which urges him to escape and seek safety. However, Jimmy's Superego, which is driven by Kim's concerns and the moral implications of the situation, urges Jimmy to morally address the emotional impact. Jimmy McGill's Ego is caught between the impulse and recognizes the urgent need for safety and reacts by generating denial

to maintain the emotional impact of his trauma. In this way, Jimmy's denial can protect him from the emotional turmoil that would make him look vulnerable and allow him to maintain a sense of control.

3.2.3 Sublimation

According to Anna Freud, sublimation is a form of defense that pushes or blocks traumatic memories or unwanted feelings by directing unacceptable impulses or emotions into productive and acceptable forms that are beneficial (Freud, 2018). In the case of Jimmy McGill, this mechanism was seen in Jimmy McGill because the previous two main defense mechanisms that Jimmy used did not protect him in the long term. In this stage, even though Jimmy McGill may have successfully overcome or reduced some of the emotional distress caused by the tension from his conflicts, the memory of his conflicts still bothers him because the defense mechanisms that appeared in Jimmy previously were only temporary. At this point, it was found behaviors that indicate sublimation in Jimmy McGill.



Figure 9: Jimmy fully dedicate to his work (51:54. Season 6, Episode 9, *Fun and Games*)

Jimmy McGill: Hit me. I'm hearing your report didn't use the magic words, Doc. Soft. Tissue. Damage. Doesn't matter what the X-rays show, tissue damage gets my client paid. Hey, hey. You're not listening. My client isn't just suing your company, he's coming after you personally.

Jimmy McGill: Listen, you have a choice, okay? you can pay up now or, uh, bleed to death in court. So, I say be smart and write that check. You have till E.O.D. I'm so sorry, i am getting another call.

[At 51:30-52:06. Season 6, Episode 9, *Fun and Games*]

In this part, we can see Jimmy's behaviors that indicate sublimation based on the dialogue and Figure 9 (51:54). It is shown that Jimmy McGill tried to stay positive to overcome the emotional impact from all of his conflicts by intensively focusing on his work and his aggressive pursuit of legal, which is characterized by how Jimmy acts as he wakes up and starts his morning talking about clients and business, focusing on the details of his legal works. In this part, Jimmy shifts his pain, stress, and trauma from his conflicts into something more productive, which is his

work as a lawyer, which also comes with a new persona. This transformation allows Jimmy to achieve success in the legal world and serves as a socially acceptable output for his emotional distress. Aided by the medium shot seen in Figure 9 (51:54) that captures the motion details in depth while maintaining a general view as it captures the subject and some of the surroundings, showing us Jimmy's detachment from his emotional distress, which can be told by the look on his expression and body language through the mirror reflection as he makes himself busy making a business phone call with his earpiece, highlighting Jimmy's ability to transform his pain, stress, and trauma into productive legal work, which is a form of sublimation that helps him to function in society while maintaining his true emotions. This sublimation lasts for a long time to the point where Jimmy's sublimation becomes a critical factor in his transformation into a sleazy, flamboyant, and charismatic persona as Saul Goodman.

In this part, Jimmy's Ego is under enormous pressure due to the conflicting demands of his impulse. Jimmy's Id, which is driven by the intense emotional distress that he feels due to all the conflicts he experiences, desperately tries to seek pleasure, while his Superego enforces societal and moral standards that may conflict with his desires. In this case, Jimmy's Ego leans on to the Superego, as the Superego is likely to exert encouragement or pressure to the Ego to find more positive solution to deal with the emotional distress, which gives rise to sublimation, which involves channeling unacceptable impulses or emotions into productive and acceptable forms, which is in line with Anna Freud's explanation (Freud, 2018). In this way, Jimmy transforms or directs his negative emotions into something more productive, one that aligns with Superego standards, which helps him maintain a semblance of control as he tries to navigate the emotional distress caused by all of his conflicts.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the analysis of the main character, Jimmy McGill, has provided invaluable insights into the complex nature of his character. Over the course of the research, it becomes evident that Jimmy McGill used defense mechanisms to navigate the negative emotions caused by his conflicts. This begins with the findings that Jimmy McGill experienced a conflict that had a significant impact on him mentally and emotionally. Based on the research findings, there are three conflicts found in Jimmy McGill. Two of the three conflicts are mostly (Person vs. Person) conflicts, which are categorized as external conflicts; the other one is (Person vs. himself) conflicts, which are categorized as internal conflicts.

In response to the conflicts, Jimmy McGill demonstrated defense mechanisms in response to the

conflicts that had a major impact on Jimmy McGill. One of the prominent defense mechanisms employed by Jimmy McGill is regression. When Jimmy McGill gets overwhelmed by the external and internal conflicts, Jimmy retreats to old behaviors that were once comfortable for him. This regression allows him to temporarily relieve the pain and stress caused by his conflicts by focusing on the thrill of being young rather than dwelling on his negative emotions. Another defense mechanism employed by Jimmy McGill is denial. When Jimmy McGill was faced with the overwhelming external conflicts that caused deep trauma and left an indelible mark on Jimmy McGill, he refused to admit that he was hurt, acting as if his trauma didn't exist and downplaying his emotional trauma. In addition, sublimation is also a defense mechanism employed by Jimmy McGill. The Sublimation emerged because the previous two defense mechanisms that Jimmy used did not protect him in the long run. Sublimation allows Jimmy to shift his emotional energy from the conflicts to more productive and constructive activities. This form of defense helps protect Jimmy in the long run to the point where Jimmy's Sublimation becomes a critical factor in his transformation into a charismatic persona, Saul Goodman, as he tries to navigate the emotional distress caused by all of his conflicts.

5. SUGGESTION

After doing the analysis, there are several things can be suggested to the future researchers who is interested in analyzing the same series with the same approach. Due to Jimmy McGill's complex nature, there are still many conflicts that can still be identified in depth, especially the internal conflicts of Jimmy McGill. Also, with Jimmy McGill's use of defense mechanisms, the future researchers can also pay attention to the evolution of the character's defense mechanisms so that future researchers can further examine on the effects of defense mechanisms on Jimmy McGill. In addition, the *Better Call Saul* (2015) series also has lots of interesting characters besides Jimmy McGill, such as Mike Ehrmantraut, Chuck McGill, Kim Wexler, Lalo Salamanca, and Gus Fring, who you might be able to use as objects of further research.

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