#### **CHAPTER I**

#### INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of study

Ideal life is defined as the perfect life wished by many people in this world. Every people has their own ideal life. Sergio Calderon in The SIS Times "How Would an Ideal Life be?" states that an ideal life might be different for different people, depending on what people want. Some people may want to be a football player and score tons of goals, or others may want to be a businessman, and be a president. Ideal life could have different meaning to everybody but everyone agrees that ideal life should be based on happiness. As being cited in "Volume VII — In an Eastern Rose Garden" about Ideal Life the Prophet of Islam says, 'Every soul has its own religion.'(https://wahiduddin.net/mv2/VII/VII\_29.htm.). This means that every individual has a certain direction, a goal to attain during life. The ideal life of someone may change as he or she grows older. When they are still children, their ideal life might be in terms of having a lot of toys, and friends. But once they grow older, their ideal life might be oriented to get a lot of money, to marry a rich person, and others. But what would likely to happen when people do not obtain their ideal life? Distaste their life?

This is what happened in a novel written by Sylvia Plath, *the Bell Jar*. This novel focuses on the main character named Esther Greenwood. She is a bright nineteen-year-old girl working as an editorial intern at a popular women's magazine in New York City. Despite her academic promise and ambition, Esther feels isolated from society and discouraged about her future. These early

symptoms of depression are aggravated by the pressure she feels to conform to social expectations of what a young woman should be – a virgin until marriage, and after marriage, a wife and a mother.

Abused verbally by her boss for not having a clear career focus, Esther goes on a series of dates, the last of which ends with her date attempting to assault her. Esther escapes, and returns home the next morning to her mother's house. Here, we could also see Esther who sometimes flashes back to her past relationship with Buddy Williard. Having a bunch of problems, Esther consults Dr. Gordon, but he botches her electroshock therapy, after which Esther's behavior grows increasingly erratic. She tried to kill herself but then rescued. The novel ends in the winter of 1954 as Esther enters her exit interview, which will determine if she's ready to leave the institution.

Here, Esther is explained as the one having a mental illness. She cannot receive the reality happened in her life. In some parts, there are explanations how she actually felt oppressed by the ideal life held by the society. She was also feeling distasteful for many things in her life. She hated someone for no reason. She made an unreasonable judgment. She thought everything negatively. Then, it led her to a complicated problem regarding her mental health. As being cited in Mackenzie Patel "Psychological Analysis of the Bell Jar", Esther was deeply falling into the chasm of despair and being further smothered by the stale air in her personal "Bell Jar". (www.learntravelart.com/2015/06/psychological-<u>analysis-of-the-bell-jar.html</u>). This complicated self – conflict of Esther Greenwood is one of the most interesting things to analyze.

This novel also talks about many things relating to Esther Greenwood's distaste of life. Mind vs. Body is probably one of the most talked things throughout this novel. *The Bell Jar* is an exploration of the divide between mind and body. When we read the whole story, we will find out how Esther loses control over her body as she grows into mental illness. She becomes unable to sleep, read, eat, or write in her own handwriting. There are many things she could not do because of her mental illness. When it grows up more, she even tries to go for suicide. Esther could not handle her own mind. This whole thing happens as part of Esther Greenwood's distaste of life. But, as everything happens for reasons, Esther Greenwood's distaste of life was also resulted from many kinds of condition.

There are many things which might be stored in Esther's mind from her childhood experience and everything happened in her past. Those things existed in her mind unconsciously. As being cited in *The Unconscious Mind* by John A.

Bargh and Ezequil Morsella, the unconscious mind is viewed as the shadow of a "real" conscious mind (01). It is the part of mind beyond human awareness but it however motivates people words, actions, feelings. This is exactly what happened to the main character of *the Bell Jar*, Esther Greenwood. Esther's unconscious mind influences her in many ways till it seems like she does everything unconsciously. Esther Greenwood's distaste of life could be influenced by her unconscious mind till she does something which might others think weird. Many things also influence someone's unconscious mind as unconscious mind is resulted from the phenomena and experiences of a person.

The Bell Jar has been analyzed before by Zenithda Arief Fadlila. This research attempted to know how the psychological conflict of Esther Greenwood is reflected. The result of this research is that it is apparent that in *The Bell Jar*, Sylvia Plath wants to show a psychoanalytic circumstance in which an individual encounters an inner conflict that requires resolution. The necessity of value causes the violation between Esther's and other person as well as the society make her different. So, she has to adapt with a normal life bypassing some medical treatments in some hospitals.

Focusing on the main character, Esther Greenwood, this study attempts to explain the causes which influence Esther Greenwood to have a distaste of life.

Then, we shall also look at the defense mechanisms used by Esther as the effect of her distaste of life using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis.

# 1.2 Research problems

As this research will be focusing on the main character in the novel, thus, the problems can be seen as follow:

- 1. What are the causes of Esther Greenwood's distaste of life?
- 2. What are the effects of Esther Greenwood's distaste of life?

# 1.3 Objectives of study

Based on the problems above, the objectives of the study are aimed for:

- Understanding the causes of Esther Greenwood's distaste of life in Sylvia Plath's the Bell jar
- 2. Finding out the effect of Esther Greenwood's distaste of life

# 1.4 Significances of the study

A research is supposed to have significances. Those significances are expected to give some effects or benefits for those who read this study. It is hoped to be useful for everyone. Here, the significances are divided into two categories which are theoretically and practically.

Theoretically, this research will hopefully give the reader a deep understanding about psychoanalysis theory and how it is applied in a literary work. This is also expected to be useful for being a reference to whom who need to know about the novel itself. This research can also be studied by the students, lecturers or other people who feel interested in this novel and the theory used.

Practically, this research can also be the supporting reference for people who want to conduct a research using this subject particularly for students in university, lecturers or other researchers. It can also be a supporting source for learning and teaching process and be useful for people who want to know this novel deeply. The most important thing is that this study hopefully will be a help for everyone who is feeling distasteful of their lives to acknowledge what are the common causes and the defense mechanisms generally used by people as the effect of distaste of life.

# 1.5 Scope and limitation

In order to keep the analysis straight and does not go far from the topic of discussion, this study needs limitation. This will only be focused on the novel of Sylvia Plath's *the Bell Jar* and will pay full attention to the main character itself that is Esther Greenwood. It includes the psychological condition of Esther

Greenwood as the main character in Sylvia Plath's *the Bell Jar* and the problem she has that is her distaste of life. So, this study will keep focused on the causes of Esther Greenwood's distaste of life and the defense mechanisms as the effect of her distaste of life.

# 1.6 Method of the study

# 1.6.1 Type of research

In conducting this research, qualitative method is used. This method is called qualitative method because it presents the descriptive data, in forms of words, spoken or written by people and analyzed attitudes (Moelong 3).

Qualitative method is done in two ways. Those are library research and field research. Since this research will not focus on reader – response that is part of field research, so it will apply library research. One of the characteristics in doing library research is working through many books, journals, articles, and other supporting references to support the research itself. Anything including literature books, journals, and articles relates to the novel chosen that is Sylvia Plath's *the Bell Jar* will be used as the references.

#### 1.6.2 Sources of data

The data sources that are taken in this research will be divided into two categories:

#### 1.6.2.1 Main data source

The primary data is the main data used as the source in conducting the research. The data are taken from the novel itself that is Sylvia Plath's *the Bell Jar*.

# 1.6.2.2 Supporting data source

The supporting data or also called the secondary data are used to support the primary data. The data will be taken from the other sources such as the previous studies, journals, essays, articles, or any other relevant information.

# 1.6.3 Method of collecting data

The method of collecting data that is used in this research is documentation method. One prominent thing that is done is reading the novel itself repeatedly while taking a note of the novel. The secondary data also must be got by finding some other relevant sources. Here is the steps that are necessarily done. Those are:

- a. Reading the novel many times or repeatedly.
- b. Finding some other relevant sources that will be the secondary sources.
- c. Taking a note of the important parts in both primary and secondary sources.
- d. Classifying the data into two categories. Those are the causes and the effects of Esther Greenwood's distaste of life.
- e. Selecting the data by rejecting the information that are not relevant to the topic of the study.

# 1.6.4 Method of analyzing data

This research will be focusing on a literary work. So, the action that can be done is by doing criticisms. Descriptive criticism which focuses more on the content than the structure and the style will be used. Content analysis here means that it is going to focus on the conflict or event in the literary rather than focuses

on the elements which build the literary work itself. In analyzing the data, the proper data relating to the study is selected. Here, the character that has been chosen is Esther Greenwood. First, the researcher describes the causes of Esther Greenwood's distaste of life. It is analyzed deeply using Freud's psychoanalysis. Then, the analysis is continued to the effect of Esther Greenwood's distaste of life, whether for her own self or for her relationship with others. The last one is the analysis of the defense mechanism used by Esther every time her distaste feelings of her life appear. The last part, this study concludes the whole analysis.

# 1.7 The organization of the study

This study is divided into four chapters. The first chapter focuses on the background of the study, the statement of the problems, the objectives of the study, the significances of the study, scope and limitation, method of the study, the organization of the study and the last is the definition of key terms. The second chapter will be focusing more on the literature review which consists of the theoretical framework and some reviews of related studies. The third part or chapter in this study is about the analysis itself. Here, the focus is on the cause of Esther Greenwood's distaste of life. Then it also explains about the defense mechanisms used by her as part of the effect of Esther's distaste of life. The last part which is the fourth chapter will give a conclusion about the whole discussion.

#### 1.8 The definition of key terms

To avoid any different perceptions in in understanding this study, it is considered essential to give some of definitions of key terms used here. That is listed as follows:

Distaste: disliking or considering someone or something to be unpleasant, disgusting, or immoral (Collins Cobuild Dictionary).

