

**SOCIAL PHOBIA IN NINA LACOUR'S NOVEL
WATCH OVER ME (2020)**

THESIS

*Submitted as Partial Fulfillment of Requirements to Obtain Strata One (S1) Degree
in English Department*



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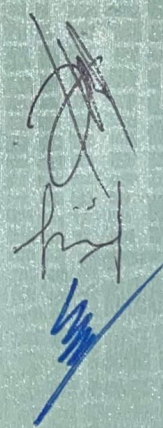
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ABSTRACT

JAFANI, RAISA HANIFA. 2023. *Social Phobia in Nina LaCour's Watch Over Me (2020)*

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This research is an analysis of the novel *Watch Over Me* by Nina LaCour (2020). The analysis reveals the issue of social phobia which is one of the anxiety disorder types experienced by the main character in the novel. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method and the data is taken from quotations related to the topic. The theory used in this study is Psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud, which examines how anxiety develops and is influenced by several factors in three parts of the human psyche: id, ego, and superego. The purposes of this research are to find out the symptoms of the main character's social phobia, factors that influenced the causes of social phobia, and the role of peers in overcoming the social phobia suffered by the main character in the *Watch Over Me* novel. The result of this study is that the main character can overcome social phobia with the help of friends where she works.

Keywords: social phobia, symptoms, causes, role of peers, *Watch Over Me*

ABSTRAK

JAFANI, RAISA HANIFA. 2023. *Social Phobia in Nina LaCour's Watch Over Me (2020)*

Advisor: Desvalini Anwar, S.S., M.Hum., Ph.D

Penelitian ini merupakan analisis terhadap novel *Watch Over Me* karya Nina LaCour (2020). Analisis ini mengungkapkan isu fobia sosial yang merupakan salah satu jenis gangguan kecemasan yang dialami oleh karakter utama dalam novel tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif dan data diambil dari kutipan-kutipan yang berkaitan dengan. Teori yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah psikoanalisis oleh Sigmund Freud, yang meneliti bagaimana kecemasan berkembang dan dipengaruhi oleh beberapa faktor dalam tiga bagian dari jiwa manusia: id, ego, dan superego. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui gejala-gejala fobia sosial yang dialami oleh tokoh utama, faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi penyebab fobia sosial, dan peran teman sejawat dalam mengatasi fobia sosial yang diderita oleh tokoh utama dalam novel *Watch Over Me*. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah tokoh utama dapat mengatasi fobia sosialnya dengan bantuan teman-teman di tempatnya bekerja.

Keywords: social phobia, symptoms, causes, role of peers, *Watch Over Me*

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Padang, August 2023

The Researcher

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Research

Most human beings have experienced anxiety as a normal human emotion that happens at certain times or events. The National Institute of Mental Health (2016) reports that anxiety symptoms can lead to several kinds of anxiety disorders, one of them is social anxiety disorder or social phobia. This kind of anxiety can occur in childhood where this is the first stage of personality development and may last for a long period of lifetime if left without treatment. For that reason, it is certain to say that anxiety disorder is a serious matter because it is a common problem during the teenage years and needs special attention.

In a society where social interaction and communication with one another are essential, people with anxiety disorders may be unable to perform social interaction properly, which can lead to failing express their ideas, thoughts, opinions, or being misunderstood by others. People with anxiety tend to feel fewer opportunities to enjoy themselves or act in their best interest. Rector (2016:1) states that:

“Someone may experience anxiety when dealing with an important event, such as an exam or job interview, or when perceiving a threat or danger, such as waking up to strange sounds in the middle of the night or seeing a ghost.” (Rector, Bourdeau, & Kitchen, 2016:1)

Adler & Rodman (1991:30) explain two factors that can cause anxiety disorder. The first is negative experiences in the past and the second is irrational thinking. Someone will feel anxious if they imagine something bad happening in the future, which can be called negative thinking. Negative experiences in the past can cause anxiety because this experience is not considered as a good experience that makes an impression and overshadows what will happen in the future. As a result, the person with anxiety feels worried about facing the future. Meanwhile, in irrational thinking, anxiety does not happen because of the situation, but it appears because of the belief about the situation. Irrational thinking means that someone does not think logically and is only concerned with emotion. In conclusion, these causes are the responses when someone interacts socially and feels judged by others, then the emotions and thoughts negatively come up in their mind which make them anxious.

Excessive anxiety disorder can turn into a phobia. Phobia is an irrational fear caused by an event or particular situation. Someone who has a phobia will feel afraid and anxious if they are facing or seeing something that is the cause of the phobia. According to Henderson et al (2014:5-6), there are many kinds of phobias, one of which is social phobia, defined as a marked and persistent fear of one or more situations where the person is exposed to possibly being observed by others and may do something or act in a way that will be humiliating or embarrassing.

The causes of phobias are varied, but most of the causes can be caused by a traumatic event experienced by the sufferer in the past or when they were still a child. According to Fausta, L., & Purnamasari, A. (2023:2), social phobia is

caused by negative thoughts or beliefs about the situation socially and it makes symptoms of anxiety perceived by individuals increase. Social phobia is a serious and disabling mental health condition that usually develops before or during adolescence, associated with a major impact on social functioning, and lower quality of life.

Many university students develop social phobia symptoms or their current symptoms worsen. Social phobia commonly happens in adolescents who fear being noticed by others and could lead to avoidance of social situations. Social phobia is frequently associated with low self-esteem and a fear of criticism. Thus, when confronted with a social situation, the individual fears that they will be judged negatively by others.

Several studies have found that many social phobias begin in childhood. Children who are rejected, neglected, or have negative interactions with peers are more likely to suffer from social phobia because children require social acceptance. Peer relationships are important in encouraging the development of emotional and social functions in children. As a result, a bad relationship can influence children to have negative perceptions of society and make them reluctant to interact.

There are several cases of social phobia that attract the world's attention, one of them is Emma Stone. Even though she is known as an award-winning actress, she has also been struggling to deal with anxiety disorder and panic attacks. In her interview on *The Late Show* (2017), Stone said that she suffered from anxiety when she was a child and still does until that time. She shared her story of one of her therapy sessions with described a picture of a small paper book

titled *I Am Bigger Than My Anxiety*. The small paper book was one of the ways that helped her overcome the anxiety. She wrote anything she worried about before sleep and it really helped calm the anxiety. Even though she has difficulty with her anxiety, she always still manages to perform well in public although sometimes her anxiety shows up like when she is in an interview or on the stage.

This phenomenon can also be found in literary works such as Nina LaCour's novel *Watch Over Me*. This novel is very interesting to discuss because it exposes the issue of anxiety that leads to social phobia. The main character of this novel, Mila, can no longer live with her foster family who will have a baby. Her mother left her when she was a child after her stepfather died in a fire accident. After graduating from high school, she chose to work instead of continuing to college. She bravely applies for a job in a remote area since she has no choice because she has no family or friends. She is forced to be mature by her life condition and will live in an unfamiliar place on a farm that is haunted by 'the ghost'. She is always hiding her insecurities; the past that she is afraid people would know and judge her negatively. The bad memories in her past make her difficult to interact with others and it always haunted her like a ghost. The ghost is a symbol that represents the traumatic memories in the past for the people on the farm and they should be dealing and accepting it to live a normal life.

Several studies have been done previously related to this topic. The first is from Meli Yuniarti (2022) with the title "Social Anxiety Disorder in the Novel Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine by Gail Honeyman". This study used Sigmund Freud's theory to support the analysis of the causes and symptoms of social anxiety disorder experienced by the main character. Next, research from

Amalia Kaskita (2020) entitled “The Social Phobia of Audrey Turner in Sophie Kinsella’s *Finding Audrey*”. This research also used Sigmund Freud's theory to support the analysis about the process of anxiety work and the type of anxiety the main character suffered. Another study written by Sitti Nihayah (2017) analyzed the factors of acrophobia and social phobia causes from the main character. Another research is from Leslie Hunt (2019) entitled “Social Anxiety and Fear of Evaluation in Middle Schoolers”. This research focuses on the impact of social and test anxiety with two forms of evaluation (fear of negative evaluation and fear of positive evaluation) in the middle school population. Then, research from Adhi Pranata (2015) with the title “An Analysis of Judith’s Anxiety Based on Traumatic Experience Portrayed in Judy Westwater’s *Street Kid: A Freudian Psychoanalysis*”. This paper discusses the female main character’s anxiety about traumatic experiences related to childhood trauma. Based on the above research, the researcher sees the gaps which not only analyze the symptoms of social phobia and the causes but also discuss how the role of peers on the farm helps in overcoming the main character’s social phobia in *Watch Over Me* novel.

The author of this novel is Nina LaCour, an American writer and also the Printz Award-winning author of *We Are Okay*. She has been writing and contributing to several novels. This novel was published in 2020 but has already been named one of the best young adult books of the year by several libraries and companies. In addition, this novel has received YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association) as Best Fiction for Young Adults in 2021. This is the second novel that the researcher has read from this author. The researcher finds the author’s writing style and how the story is described in a structured way by

differentiating the past and future times of the story. This novel depicts the process of dealing with social phobia from past trauma. It is about the power of letting people see who you are, the healing process of accepting past trauma, and overcoming social phobia.

Watch Over Me is a psychological fiction novel that uses one of the anxiety disorders as the conflicts suffered by the main character which is social phobia. This conflict can be analyzed by using the psychoanalysis theory of Sigmund Freud which focuses on the importance of early childhood experiences and parental relationships as guiding forces that shape personality development. In addition, the unconscious mind and motivation are much more powerful than conscious awareness (Feist, Feist, & Roberts, 2018:8).

1.2 Focus of Research

The researcher focuses on the symptoms of social phobia, the causes of social phobia, and how the female main character with the support of peers overcome her social phobia in the novel *Watch Over Me* (2020) by Nina LaCour.

1.3 Research Questions

Social phobia is an essential issue to be discussed in *Watch Over Me* (2020) by Nina LaCour. Therefore, there are several research questions to analyze the issue of social phobia, which are formulated as follows:

1. What are the symptoms of the main character's social phobia in the *Watch Over Me* novel by Nina LaCour?

2. What are the causes of the main character's social phobia in the *Watch Over Me* novel by Nina LaCour?
3. How do the main character and her peers on the farm overcome social phobia in the *Watch Over Me* novel by Nina LaCour?

1.4 Purpose of the Research

Based on the formulation of the problems above, the aims of the research are as follows:

1. To find out the main character's symptoms of social phobia in Nina LaCour's *Watch Over Me* novel.
2. To find out the causes of the main character's social phobia in Nina LaCour's *Watch Over Me* novel.
3. To find out the main character and the role of peers on the farm in overcoming her social phobia in Nina LaCour's *Watch Over Me* novel.