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**Unhealed Wounds, Unstable Minds: The Dark Legacy of
Suppression—A Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Jamie in
Adolescence**



Angabeen Kanwal

Department of English Language and Literature
Qurtuba University D.I.Khan-
kanwalangabeen05@gmail.com

Naina Shehzin

Department of English Language and Literature
Qurtuba University D.I.Khan-
nainashehzin786@gmail.com

Abstract

This Study “Unhealed Wounds, Unstable Minds: The Dark Legacy of Suppression — A Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Jamie in *Adolescence*” explores the psychological complexities of Jamie in *Adolescence* series and uses Freudian psychoanalysis particularly defense mechanisms such as repression, denial, displacement, and projection. This study uses qualitative research design and visual analysis of selected episodes. Primary source is the series and its script itself while secondary source includes the studies on psychoanalytic theory. This study explores how Jamie encounters bullying, humiliation and rejection leading to repression of his own emotions. This repression leads to violent behaviour ultimately killing of his classmate, Katie. The study highlights that how continuous repression and unresolved inner and outer conflicts leads to harming self and others. It also shows prolonged influence of repression, highlighted through the use of defense mechanism by Jamie in the aftermath of killing. The findings highlights the importance of identifying hidden psychological complexities in order to prevent the destructive outcomes.

Keywords: *Psychoanalysis, Defense Mechanisms, Repression, Adolescence, Bullying, Psychological Conflict, Jamie Miller, Visual Analysis, Netflix, Aggression.*

1. Introduction

Literature creatively depicts human experiences and shows itself through different genres. Drama is one of the most important and long lasting being among them. Before it was presented on stage but over time it developed and now presented in digital world such as Netflix where the cinematic techniques and serialized plots are used to redefine the genre. Vidmar Jovanovic in his article “Glazing, gazing and binging : on the appeal of contemporary television series (2023)” explains that serial dramas caught attention of audiences and maintain connection through the blend of four key unique characteristics such as smooth visual technique, complex and detailed storytelling, vibrant emotional pull, and logical representation.

The British crime drama “*Adolescences*” released on Netflix on march 13 , 2025 revolves around the story of a 13 years old boy , Jamie Miller , who was arrested in charge of killing his classmate, Katie Leonard. The story is told in 4 episodes and in single continues take that follows Jamie’s journey from arrest, to investigation in school, an intellectual judgment and the effect of this on himself and everyone involved. His journey exposes deep psychological tensions that can be well interpreted through Freudian lens particularly the concept of defense mechanism which play a key role to unwrap the inner world of Jamie .

Multiple researchers used Freudian psychoanalytic framework to analyze the rang of texts to unwrap the unseen psychological anxieties in character, authors , and even readers.

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Mardewi et al., (2023) in their research article titled “ The Analysis of Agoraphobia and Defense Mechanisms in Joe write`s Woman in the Window Movie” uses psychoanalysis particularly defense mechanism and analyzed Anna`s physical , behavioral , and cognitive symptoms, and how Anna uses defence mechanism to cope from anxiety, concluded that the main cause of her agoraphobia is the psychological trauma she faced.

Sari et al., (2023) , in their research article titled “ Exploring Freudian Defense Mechanism in the portrayal of Paul Atreides in the Movie “ Dune’ ” analyzed the intellectual complexities of Paul Atreides and identify Paul Atreides uses defence mechanisms in response to To protect himself from the anxiety occurred through the chaotic events on the desert planet.

Damayanti , (2023) thesis titled “ Freud`s Psychoanalytic Perspective On The Character Antonio Sandoval In Movie The Big 4 ” uses Sigmund Freud psychoanalytic framework and examines the psychological complexity of the antagonist , Antonio, in the film The Big 4. She identified how Antonio uses defense mechanism to cope from anxiety and how Antonio`s violent behavior and emotional detachment are influenced by these defense mechanisms.

Setyo and Nugroho, (2024) in their article titled “ Defense Mechanism in No Longer Human Movie: A Psychoanalytic Approach” analyze the main character`s psychological defense by using Sigmund Freud`s psychoanalytic Framework and identify the defense mechanism the main character uses to handle trauma, guilt, and identity crises.

The Review of the existing previous studies exposes that no significant analysis has been done yet on this drama namely “Adolescence” particularly on the main character Jamie. Since the drama is totally new thus there is a complete lack of scholarly focus that uses psychoanalytic framework on this literary work. This absence of scholarly work on this drama provides a clear gap in the existing literature. Thus this study aims to fulfill this existing gap by presenting a unique and original approach through psychoanalytic framework , therefore this study ask;

- i. How is the defense mechanism of repression displayed in Jamie`s behavior before the crime?
- ii. How does emotional rejection, humiliation and collapse of hope triggers Jamie`s repressed injuries eventually lead to aggression?
- iii. In what ways defense mechanisms such as denial, displacement, and projection are appeared in post-crime scenes?
- iv. How does these defense mechanisms exposes the continuity of Jamie`s repressed wounds and unresolved psychological conflicts?

After analyzing these questions not only our understanding of the drama increases but also it highlights that how human mind's inner war is mirrored through literary characters, positioning the worth of this study in both academic and analytic context.

2. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

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Qualitative method is used in this research to conduct the analysis. The primary source which is the heart of analysis include the movie itself “Adolescence” and it’s script, available at Springfield while the secondary sources to support this research includes the theory books, journal articles, dissertations, and others.

The birth of psychoanalysis was marked through the publication of “The Interpretation of Dreams” by Freud in 1900. He proposed theories such as the concept of unconscious, repression, and the Oedipus complex. The concept of defense mechanism is central to psychoanalysis , especially in grasping the idea that how ego uses defense mechanism to protect the mind during internal conflict and anxiety . In 1894 Sigmund Freud introduced the term “ defense ” in his work “ The Neuro-Psychoses of Defense” , where it referred to how ego protects itself from emotional suffering . Later Anna Freud unfolds the layers of defense mechanisms. The primary defense mechanisms Anna recognized include repression , projection , denial , displacement , sublimation and others .

2.1 Repression:

The most basic Defense Mechanism is Repression because it is the root from which all other aspects stems. When the ego reacts to threatening impulses it arises by shoving them out of conscious perception and into the unconscious mind. To avoid the overwhelming anxiety this action aid the individuals . Repressed impulses can also appear through other defence mechanisms that allow for disguised expression of the actual drives.

2.2 Denial:

According to Anna Freud (1936) denial is a defense mechanism through which the ego of a child decline to recognize the painful external realities.

2.3 Displacement:

Displacement is a defense mechanism where an individual redirect their unacceptable emotions and feelings such as anger, fear or desires on safer or weaker target rather than the actual one that triggers those feelings.

2.4 Projection :

According to Freud’s concept as mentioned in Feist and Feist,2009 when a person want to reduce his inner stress they project their own unwanted and unacceptable feelings and thoughts by blaming others and this techniques is called defence mechanism of projection, which means viewing the negative feelings and attitude in other people but they are actually present in unconscious mind of one’s own.

2.5 Aggression:

According to Freud aggression has the same power as the sexual drive has and it emerges from the destructive force. The last of the aggression is self destruction. The reason behind applying this theory is justified Since the centre of the focus of this research is on unconscious motives, repressed impulses, and defense mechanisms, psychoanalysis is considered as the most appropriate framework for analysis so it directly supports the aim of the study and provides a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study.

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3. Results and Discussion

Extract 1:

Psychologist
bullied. The
bullied.
Psychologist
ostracized.



Source 37 : 32

You said you were
three of you were

The three of you felt

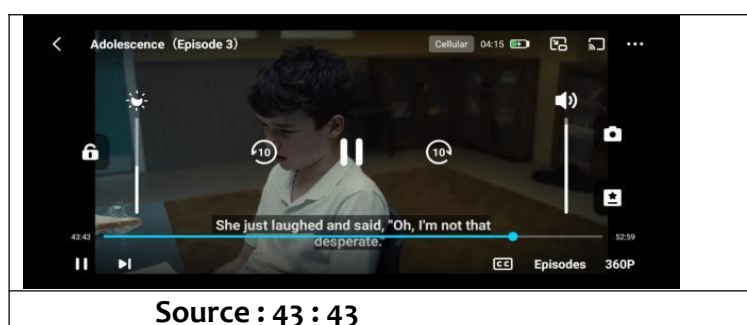
Jamie : She's pretending like I'm part of one of those truth groups.

Psychologist : What truth groups?

Jamie : The ones that say that women don't want us and don't care.

This scene portrays that Jamie and his friends were dealing with prolonged bullying and because of this act Jamie and his friends felt ostracized. Jamie also faced bullying through social media. So here repression is apparent as Jamie faced constant bullying that create extreme feelings of humiliation, aggression, and desire for acknowledgment but instead of confronting these feelings Jamie unconsciously buries them as Katie repeatedly bullied him in person and through social media he replied with silence or neglect. However these repressed feelings do not disappear completely but later they become more vibrant in destructive form.

Extract 2:



Source : 43 : 43

Jamie : Everyone else did. The picture got passed around the school. Snapchat, you know. It was just her top half. I did ask her out after the photo. I went round and said I was sorry that they'd done that to her. Showing everyone her tits. Her chest. And I wanted to know if she'd come to the fair with me.

Psychologist : And what did she say?

Jamie : She just She just laughed and said, "Oh, I'm not that desperate."

Psychologist : the emoji messages came after that?

Jamie : Uh, yeah.

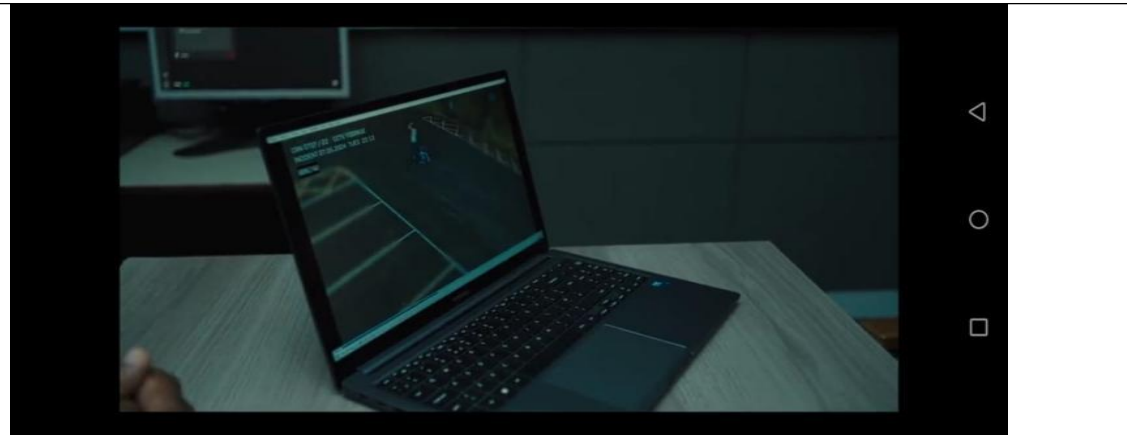
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This scene clearly shows Jamie's need for recognition, love, and acceptance. After the naked photo of Katie went viral Jamie's repressed emotions triggered as he want love and recognition and to fulfill his desires. But when he went to her and asked her out she rejected him in most humiliated way. This is the key moment that exposes how his repressed desires transformed into aggression and eventually leading to act of killing her when faced rejection.

Extract 3:



"Police officer : I'm now going to play you some footage. This is of you and Katie from the car park last night where a confrontation happened, okay? There will be blood on those trainers, Jamie. And with this tape as evidence, it's not looking good."

This scene clearly shows Jamie's act of killing through CCTV footage that the police recovered as an undeniable evidence. Jamie's psychological transformation from suppressed frustration after rejection and humiliation to destructive form is clearly shown in this aggressive and killing scene. His aggression was not something random or impulsive but it is the outcome of long-term bullying, humiliation, and feeling of unlovable and unworthy.

Extract 4



Jamie : Dad
Eddie :

done? What have you done? Why?

Source : 01 : 06 : 09

Dad? Dad? Dad?
What have you

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Jamie : Dad, it wasn't me I've not done anything.

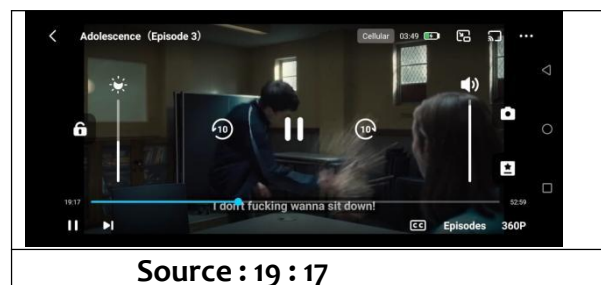
This scene clearly shows that Jamie completely neglect to accept the painful reality of his action. From the start to end of the episode one he continually denied even after encountering the truth through CCTV footage that clearly hows that Jamie killed Katie with knife and stabbed her seven times still he reject to take the responsibility of his actions. This continuous rejection of his action clearly shows his use of defense mechanism of denial to himself from anxiety.

Extract 5 :

Psychologist :
sit

Jamie : I don't

down! You do not tell me when to sit down! You do not control what I fucking. Look at me now! You do not control what I do in my life! Get that in that fucking little head of yours! Fucking hell!



Jamie, if you do not

fucking wanna sit

In this scene the defense mechanism of displacement is being shown as he asked for help and she refuses eventually he get angry and started shouting but the reason of Jamie's actual frustration is the judicial system that keep him in secure training centre.As he is unable to expresses his anger directly toward the higher authority he displaced it on psychologist. His shouting , aggressive act of throwing the cup and aggressively refusing to sit down shows the clear displaced anger.

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Extract 6 :



Psychologist :

Source : 48 : 04

My job was to assess

you

Jamie : No, don't you even like me a bit. What did you think about me, then ? Decide, come on!

Officer ; hey !

Jamie : Fuck

Officer : Come on, man, please

Jamie : Don't you even like me a bit ?

This scene shows the defence mechanism of projection. In this scene the psychologist tells Jamie that this is their last meeting and upon hearing this Jamie got shocked and panicked and started questioning her whether she liked him because he liked her but psychologist continued to maintain professional relation so here Jamie started pleading for emotional validation. This point also reflect the continuous influence of his repressed wounds which he still carried. Upon hearing her professional response he become frustrated and started shouting and cursing while forcefully being removed from the room.

Discussion

The first thing that is observed in Jamie is the element of repression that set the base for his later actions and psyche. As during school he faced bullying continuously not only in person but also through social media , his classmates spat on him and his friends , they also called him with names and on social media one of his classmate , Katie Leonord, was bullying him by commenting on his photos humiliated him by supporting the idea that he and his friends are undesirable and unwanted to woman. Jamie did not confronted these painful emotions directly instead he buries them into unconscious mind which later showed in his violent behaviour. This act of repression continuously influence his future behaviour.

As in Extract 2 this viral photo incident is one of the most key turning point in Jamie's psychological state. When the nude picture of Katie, who was bullying Jamie circulated on social media. It becomes the trigger point which activated Jamie's repressed wounds of humiliation and rejection. The circulated image for him symbolized both , Katie's vulnerability and Jamie's opportunity to recover value and gain control over her and awakens Jamie's past painful experiences of rejection and bullying. The painful memories that he already buried through repression reappeared in distorted form. His understanding of achievability is shaped by the history of bullying and feeling of unworthy which make this specific

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event as a rare opportunity to fulfil his sexual desires and deeper need for acknowledgement.

The key moment where Katie rejected him becomes the climax of Jamie's repressed wounds as after the viral photo he went to Katie and asked her to go out with him but she responded coldly and humiliated him by saying "oh I am not that desperate". The psychological outcomes and the fingerprints of deeper injuries it leaves on Jamie's sense of self is shown in this key moment. Here he encountered directly with the reality he is unwanted to woman. Psychoanalytically this moment of rejection and humiliation is the significant turning point to anger and frustration. This rejection and humiliation is not just outwardly but it become as an evidence that he is ugly, unworthy and unlovable. He didn't accepted this reality which fueled hatred and provoke aggression. Thus the repression can no longer suppressed the pain then his frustration transform into aggression and ultimately leading him to engage in act of killing. The out burst of his aggression and violence does not happened by chance but it is the the destructive shift of this longing and need for acknowledgement. Here aggression act as both as a defense mechanism and as a harmful release. The rejection and humiliation symbolizes the repetition of all previous humiliations such as bullying, rejection, ostracism, and unfulfilled desires which gather into a one single unbearable wound. His violent behavior can be seen as revolt against continuous Even after killing her his behaviour in post-crime scenes shows that he still carried the repressed wounds. humiliation and rejection and his attempt to recover the value that society neglect him.

Even after killing her his behaviour in post-crime scenes shows that he still carried the repressed wounds.

Jamie uses the defense mechanism of denial. He denied his engagement in killing even after encountering the undeniable evidences. he refuses to accept the reality and started crying and continuously saying to his father "Dad, it wasn't me". This prolonged pattern of denying to accept the responsibility of his actions can be seen as his psychological attempt to block the overwhelming reality of his actions and choices. Taking the responsibility of his action would means encountering not only the crime but also the repressed injuries which led to it.

Following the crime , in extract 5 we can clearly see that Jamie got frustrated and his reaction can be interpret through the lens of defence mechanism of displacement. The refusal from psychologist triggered him and he started shouting here the actual reason of his anger and frustration is judicial system that kept him in the secure training centre. Since he was unable to express his anger toward the judicial system because it has power so he displayed his frustration on psychologist. This frustration can be seen as prolonged influence of repressed wounds as repressing painful emotions can not completely remove the trauma this can be seen when the psychologist tell him to sit down three to four times this moment triggers his repressed wound as he was bullied and controlled by Katie and other people, at that point Jamie got frustrated and here his frustration

like throwing a cup and shouting “ you do not control what I do in my life” can be seen as the prolonged influence of repressed wounds. Even after killing Katie he still carried the trauma.

Another defense mechanism evident in Jamie’s behaviour is projection. In the last scene we can clearly see the Jamie’s dependency on defense mechanism. He started questioning that whether she likes him and this desperate interrogation reflects his dependent needs that surface under emotional stress. Instead of recognizing his own weakness and desire of affection and approval, he projects his own feelings to the psychologist, demanding validation and highlights the intensity of continuous influence of his repressed longing for closeness, love, and attachment. Hence the scene shows that how projection works in conjunction with repression showing the continuous influence of repressed injuries.

Hence the whole analysis shows that Jamie’s actions and choices are continuously influenced by the repressed wound and how inner and outer conflicts when remains unresolved leads to mental instability resulting in aggression and violence.

Conclusion and Finding

The analysis of the study highlights that Jamie’s journey can only be completely interpreted by using Freudian psychoanalytic framework, where repressed urges and internal conflict kept reappearing again and again and affecting his behaviour and actions.

The findings highlights the how the inner and outer conflict and repression if unresolved not only misinterpret the reality but also how it shapes behaviour and leading to psychological instability. As Freudian framework is applied here which reveals that when the unresolved conflict and unconscious desires dominate then individual can be pushed toward destructive actions and choices, resulting in damaging both the individual itself and the others being involved.

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