

# **Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy in the Main Character of Dianne Sherman in Aneesh Chaganty's *Run* (2020)**

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## **Abstract**

*This study aims at analyzing the representation of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy in Aneesh Chaganty's Run, and the mental condition of the character who suffers from Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy in Aneesh Chaganty's Run (2020). The method used in this research is qualitative approach. The object of this study is Aneesh Chaganty's Run and the subject of this study is the dialogues between the characters and action pictures in Aneesh Chaganty's Run. In collecting data, the techniques applied by the researcher are watching, reading, identifying, classifying, and selecting. To analyze the data, the researcher uses Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy study and Johari window's theory of psychology. It is done through some steps as displaying, explaining, and interpreting. The result of this research shows that: first, the representations of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy in the main character who suffers from Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy exists in this study. Those are; Striving to appear self-sacrificing and devoted, inducing symptom to her child, concerned about child's health, being very knowledgeable about medical stuff, switch doctors and medical staff, falsifying diseases symptom. Second, the mental condition of the character who suffers from Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy reflect a balance and wholeness of her personality. It is described through 3 points, those are; manipulative behaviour, maladaptive daydreaming behaviour, and suffered from depression.*

**Keyword:** *mental condition, psychology, munchausen syndrome by proxy.*

## **Introduction**

Humans are social creatures who live side by side with other humans, so human behavior patterns arise because of interactions with other humans. In interacting with others humans use attitude, feeling, and other basic human beings, these things underlie people in coexisting. According to Bughra (2016) Mental health is that the individual has the ability to form and maintain affectionate relationships with others, to perform in the social roles usually played in their culture and to manage change, recognize, acknowledge and communicate positive actions and thoughts as well as to manage emotions such as sadness or happiness.

According to Diken (2017) Munchausen syndrome by proxy (MSbP) as a form of child abuse where parents falsify or induce symptoms in unnecessary harmful medical procedures in children to impose an illness on another person, usually somebody that's in that case. It describes the situations in which the parents or the caregivers, almost always the mother, invent illness stories about their children.

Munchausen by Proxy Syndrome also known as factitious disorder by proxy can be described as the deliberate fabrication of physical or psychological signs / symptoms in another person who is under the care of the person (perspective, 2021).

## **Literary Review**

### **Psychology of Literature**

Psychology is the study of human behaviour and mental processes. The Psychology describes the behavior and inner experience of individuals as spontaneous activity, with a continuity between various problem solving and the creative capacity of individuals.

Psychological perspective can be used to understand the subject's constitution and the role of the other in childhood as essential to the normal maturing process (Leite & Schmid, 2004) As result, literary works can be used to teach psychological concept. According to Wellek and Warren (1949), knowing the psychology of literature allows the reader to understand the psychology of the writer and the psychology of the character in the literary work, which then giving an impact to the reader.

### **Theory Johari Window**

The Johari Window was originally designed to encourage self-awareness and communication about behaviour (Oliver & Duncan, 2019). Rather than use it to investigate knowledge about ourselves as individuals, have adapted it to analyse knowledge (and assumptions) about our world accrued from the perspective. In actuality, the Johari window aims to provide us a clearer understanding of how we relate to both ourselves and other people.

It considers that Johari Window can help us to understand ourselves and the aim of the technique is to recognize your weaknesses that may put you in a difficult situation, to eliminate your deficiencies and to improve your group compliance behaviors with effective communication to others (Ince, 2020).

### **Quadran of Theory Johari Window**

According to Mukherjee et al., (2023) that The Johari Window model comprises four quadrants, offering a visual representation of the knowledge held by society and scientific experts on a specific entity. The four quadrants are:

#### 1. General state (Open Area)

This refers to open information about the individual's behaviours, attitudes, emotions, experiences, skills and how he/she looks. This area represents the dominant where both the individual (self) and others possess knowledge about the individual, from normative perspective and normal perspective, this area is considered the most desirable state for ongoing relationship.

#### 2. Special State (Hidden Area):

This hidden or avoided self includes the information that a person knows about himself/herself but consciously wants to hide. Information about one's concerns, fears, feelings of jealousy is kept in this area.

#### 3. Suspicious State (Blind Area):

It includes the information that is known by others about the person yet is not known or rejected by the person. The blind area can also be named as the ignorance about oneself. This is an area of increasing self-consciousness.

#### 4. Unknown State (Unknown):

It includes the remarkable characteristics of the individual that are not known much by both himself/herself and others. Unknown subjects can be emotions, behaviours, attitudes, abilities or they can be deeper aspects of a personality, and these unrecognized features can affect the individual's behaviours in various ways.

### **Theory Cognitive Behavior (ABC)**

Albert Ellis is a clinician who came up with the rational emotive behavioral therapy (REBT) and developed his theory since 1955. Ellis's thoughts are

influenced by previous philosophers, one of them is Epictetus, who has the assumption about humans that what disturbs the human mind is not an event, but a judgment. disturbs the human mind is not an event, but their assessment of the event (Latipun, 2017). According to Ellis, there are three fundamental things in humans. First, thoughts and emotions are closely related. Second, the interconnectedness of thoughts and emotions usually makes thoughts and emotions accompany each other, and certain things are basically the same, so that one's thoughts become one's emotions, and vice versa. Third, thoughts and emotions tend to take the form of self-talk or internalized phrases and for all practical purposes, the sentences that people always say to themselves will become their emotional thoughts (Colledge, 2002).

### **Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy**

Munchausen is referenced after Baron K.F.H. von Munchausen, an 18th century minor nobleman who embellished his insignificant military adventures into tales of heroic adventure. In the 1950s, British psychiatrist Richard Asher coined the term “Munchausen’s syndrome” to describe individuals who fabricates/falsifies their medical records to deceive doctors (Squires & Squires, 2013).

According to Vadysinghe & Dayaratne (2015) MSbP (Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy) is a relatively uncommon form of maltreatment, pediatricians need to have a high index of suspicion when faced with a persistent or recurrent illness or an unusual symptom or sign that cannot be explained.

### **Characteristics of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy**

Brown et al (2009) is stated, that the characteristic of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy are :

- a. A parent or other caregiver fabricates an illness.
- b. The perpetrator denies the cause of the child’s illness.
- c. Acute symptoms and signs of the illness stop when the child and perpetrator are separated. Although boys and girls are equally likely to be victims of MSBP, the condition is seen more commonly in younger children.
- d. The child is presented persistently for medical assessment, and often resulting in multiple procedures

## **Symptoms of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy**

Symptoms of a person with Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy in (Healthwise staff, 2019):

- a. Most are mothers with young children. Others are adults who care for the elderly and sometimes striving to appear self-sacrificing and devoted
- b. Inducing symptoms to her child
- c. Caregivers usually work in health care and know a lot about health care.
- d. The sufferer usually appears to be very fond of their child, which making it difficult for health professionals to diagnose MSP or concerned about child's health
- e. Switch doctors if they are confronted with doubts or resistance by medical staff
- f. Falsifying diseases symptom

## **Type of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy**

According to (Squires & Squires, 2013), there are three forms of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy. They are : 1) covert Injury; 2) fabrication or falsification; 3) Exaggerated Symptoms.

### **1. Covert Injury**

Covert injury induced in secret by caregiver. So, covert injury to a child occurs in many ways to apply it.

### **2. Fabrication or Falsification**

Fabrication of symptom by perpetrator or falsification of symptoms is challenging to identify.

### **3. Exaggerated Symptoms**

Symptoms neither induced nor fabricated, but emphasized and exaggerated by the caregiver who is not reassured, which prompts additional medical tests, interventions, and procedures.

## **Etiology**

The cause of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy is still debated. However, it can be concluded that this is closely related to his childhood or past experiences and family background who were his caregivers as a child, the violence he has

experienced, the emotional availability of his parents, lack of love, wrong parenting, the form of discipline applied, and the expectations of parenting.

According to Sousa Filho et al (2017) MSP sufferer benefits from the condition of their children who are not well, these benefits include attention, sympathy, support, and material benefits. Possible predisposing factors for factitious disorder can include presence of other mental disorders or medical conditions in childhood or adolescence that lead to long-term treatments and hospitalizations.

## **Research Methodology**

The researcher uses qualitative method as the principle instrument of the research. Analysis of text or pictures, representation of information in figures and tables, and personal interpretation of the findings all inform qualitative methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The object in this research is film entitled *Run* directed by *Aneesh Chaganty* published in hulu 2020, hulu is a movie streaming platform that is only available in the US, and cannot be accessed by other countries including Indonesia. The primary data collected from dialogues and pictures in *Run* (2020) directed by Aneesh Chaganty. The film is 90 minutes in length. The method of collecting data in this research is by doing observation. The procedures are watching the movie and reading the scripts of dialogues, identifying the data from the scripts and pictures, classifying data those are dialogues and pictures and selecting the data.

After the data are collected, the next step is analyzing data by following: displaying the data, explaining data, and interpreting data.

## **Finding and Discussion**

The research analyzes the issue in this chapter. The issue is about Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy and human's mental condition that found in the main character of *Run* movie (2020).

### **1. The Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy of the Main Character in Aneesh Chaganty's Run**

#### **Striving to Appear Self-Sacrificing and Devoted**

In object of research, the symptoms Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy are suffered by Dianne Sherman as main the character, one of the symptom is striving to appear self-sacrificing and devoted. Gaining the sympathy and validation from others, she manipulate her circumstances by exaggerating it. This is purposed to get validation from other that she is very good mother because she takes care her child with very good parenting.

It can be seen under this dialogue:

Dianne : Okay. First of all, we haven't heard back from colleges yet so nothing's confirmed. But as far as how I feel? I've taken care of Chloe for 17 years. And in all that time, I haven't travelled, gone out, or dated. She's going somewhere where she gets to do all those things. And more, if you know what I mean. So yeah, I feel fucking great.

The dialog above presents in the early minutes when the scenes tell about parents meeting and talking about their concerns to their children who want to study at college in the room . All of the parents felt worry and sad but only one mother not feeling sad at all, that is Dianne. After that, one of mother asked Dianne's feeling. And without worry she answer that question by exaggerating her life as Chloe's mother.

### **Inducing Symptoms to Her Child**

In this condition, Dianne convert injury to Chloe in many ways. Like poisoning and injecting white liquid to her. Dianne did this by secretly and overtly. The dialogue not involving Dianne as main character, but the whole dialgue talk about the fact that Dianne was poisoning Chloe. In that moment, Chloe was in hurry to go to pharmacy because she wants to ask about the pill that she get from her mother. And surprisely, she get that fact that the green pill is Lidocaine that is medicine to animal specially dog. For several years Dianne gives that pill to Chloe, so make her can not walk normally and has to sit on the wheelchair.

### **Concerned About Child's Health**

People with munchausen syndrome by proxy will usually have a very close relationship with their children, like Dianne who is very close to Chloe. The conversation occurs when every morning, after Chloe has showered and taken the medicines provided by Dianne, she must then do workouts to loosen her leg

muscles, and do breathing exercises because Chloe has asthma. Dianne and Chloe always do this activity, and checks are carried out regularly every day, from checking blood sugar, working out leg muscles, breathing exercises, skin rash ointments, to medicinal pills that are taken every day.

### **Being Very Knowledgeable About Medical Stuff**

In this condition Dianne is a person who knows a lot about the world of health and medicine. There is a scene occurs when Dianne will take medicine for Chloe. As seen that many types of drugs in their medicine cabinet at home, this shows that of course Dianne is a person who understands medicine. Because it is impossible if she doesn't know about medicine. Dianne can be that detailed in choosing drugs and taking care of Chloe.

### **Switching the doctors and medical staff**

This syndrome causes Dianne behaving strangely. Because she would change doctors or health workers for Chloe, if she felt she did not get satisfaction with the services of the medical party. There is a dialogue occurs at the hospital, when Chloe is in surgery, Dianne is asked for information by the hospital. Because Dianne reported that Chloe had attempted suicide in her house. But the doctor found that over the past 6 years Chloe had changed doctors 12 times. With this medical record record making the doctor confused. because to which doctor to be asked about Chloe's illness.

### **Falsifying Diseases Symptom**

Even though that Dianne being very fond of Chloe and paying attention to the details of her child. But on the other hand Dianne will fake Chloe's symptoms to her doctor. So, she can still exaggerate the symptoms of her child's illness and still be able to take care of Chloe wholeheartedly and get recognition as a good mother. After that Dianne will feel that she seems to really know what is best for Chloe and is very concerned about Chloe's health, even though it is Dianne's tactic so that she get in touch with hospitals, doctors and medicines for Chloe.

### **The Mental Condition of the Character Suffering from Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy in Aneesh Chaganty's Run (2020)**

chapter the researcher will conduct a study about the mental condition of the character who suffers from Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy named Dianne



Sherman. In this research there are 3 types mental conditions of Dianne Sherman, those are manipulative behaviour, maladaptive daydreaming and suffering from depression.

### **The Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy of The Main Character as a Manipulative Person**

In this condition, Dianne has a power imbalance that leads to more problems down the road. Although seemingly harmless, it can create an emotionally abusive to Chloe. And leaving her feeling confused, anxious and fatigued. So, Dianne's manipulative behaviour can be done consciously or subconsciously with ill or good intentions. It can be seen in dialogue bellow :

Dianne : Your asthma needed to be treated.  
Chloe : You poisoned me.  
Dianne : Don't say that word.  
Chloe : What am I supposed to say then?  
Dianne : Protected, baby. I protected you

The above conversation occurs when Chloe asks Dianne about her childhood. Dianne kept Chloe in the basement with the intention of poisoning her. However, when they got into an argument by talking about Chloe's childhood. Making Dianne angry and manipulating the fact that Chloe is a normal and healthy child.

### **The Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy of The Main Character as a Maladaptive Daydreaming Person**

In this condition Dianne experiences maladaptive daydreaming. which is often involved in prolonged daydreams and often creates a series of stories in her mind about Chloe. There is a scene that shows Dianne is in her basement. And drinking a glass of wine and watching a documentary video of Chloe's childhood, Dianne seems to daydream for a long time when she sees Chloe in the video, while daydreaming Dianne drinks little by little the wine she holds. The scene above shows Dianne's maladaptive behavior, because she can daydream for hours just to create scenarios in her mind. In terms of ABC theory, the Antecedent Event (A) is the initial cause of Dianne behaving like this: occurs in the initial scene when Dianne at minute 0:48 - 02:01 this scene shows the scene that Dianne gave birth to her baby in the hospital in a premature state so that it only lasted 2 hours before dying. And the latest fact that Chloe found was that Dianne stole the baby at the

same hospital. Belief (B) from the events that befell Dianne made Dianne believe that the way to love Chloe was to not let Chloe get away from her side, so Dianne faked Chloe's health a lot and even had to harm her by giving her dog medicine. Emotional Consequence (C) of the events that befell Dianne and the belief system she held, then she behaved maladaptive daydreaming by the computer from a distance dreamily.

### **The Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy of The Main Character Suffered From Depression**

In this state Dianne experienced deep depression. So that she cannot distinguish between the good and bad deeds she did to Chloe. Dianne's depression allows her to commit crimes such as holding Chloe captive, killing Mailman and attacking the police with a gun at the hospital, daydreaming of Chloe's childhood that looks like a healthy child in general. There is a scene that shows Dianne has locked Chloe in her room. Dianne went to buy poison at the drugstore. Chloe realizes that she is being held by her mother, she tries to break free and escape through the window.

This scene shows Dianne's distress behavior because Dianne has kept Chloe in her own room while she went to buy poison. Reviewed from the ABC theory. This antecedent event (A) occurs because the previous scene occurred. Chloe asked about the pills Dianne always gave Chloe. And it turns out that the drug is dog medicine, knowing this fact makes Chloe short of breath and very scared. Belief (B) with events like that make Dianne believe that Chloe should be locked up so she can't travel anywhere. Emotional Consequence (C) so that Dianne keeps Chloe and will poison her with the house poison she bought at the drugstore.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the results of the analysis in chapter four, the researcher concludes that Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy is reflected in Aneesh Chaganty's *Run* (2020). In this study, researcher has two problem statements. Those are the representation of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy and the mental condition of the character who suffers from Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy in *Run* by Aneesh Chaganty. The first is striving to appear self-sacrificing and devoted. In nurturing and caring

for Chloe. Dianne is attention-seeking by presenting a self-sacrificing. The second is inducing symptoms to her child. Dianne did not want Chloe to be away from her side because Chloe was the only closest person she had. The third is concerned about child's health. In caring for Chloe, Dianne shows a very loving attitude towards her child and is even very protective. This aims to show Dianne's great affection for Chloe even though in the wrong way. The fourth is being very knowledgeable about medical stuff. In this condition, Dianne is a mother figure who really understands and knows about medicine and the medical world. The fifth is switch doctors and medical staff. This mental condition makes Dianne a mother who often deals with medical personnel, especially doctors. In this case, Dianne managed to change doctors 12 times over the past 6 years for Chloe's health. The sixth is falsifying diseases symptom. Dianne often fakes the symptoms of the disease experienced by Chloe. In fact, she often deliberately does many ways so that the symptoms of Chloe's illness become real, such as being poisoned or given drugs that endanger Chloe's health. From the Johari Window's Theory that there are 15 open areas, 3 hidden areas, and 1 blind spot area and there is no unknown area.

Then, the second problem statement about and the mental conditions of the character who suffers from Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy is answered into three points, those are; manipulative person, maladaptive daydreaming persons, suffered from depression. The first is manipulative person. Dianne shows the manipulative behaviour. She behave like this because she has a very heartbreaking past trauma, thus triggering Dianne to take actions that make Chloe always have to be beside her. The second is maladaptive daydreaming person. Dianne shows the maladaptive daydreaming, she behave like this because she has traumatic in the past. The third is suffered from depression. Dianne shows the depression, this depressive condition arises because of the mental stress experienced by Dianne.

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