

Traveler's Cafe: Exploring How One's Level of Emotional Maturity Has an Impact in Their Decision to Marry

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Abstract: Chick Lit usually focus on how the main character finally finds her true love after several times meeting the wrong guy. However, through the issues of marriage that I make, I am stressing more on their psychological emotional maturity before they decide to get married. The story talks about a woman who has a boyfriend but not ready to marry him. She captured in her own insecurities about being a wife. Her situation gets worse when she rejected the proposal and her family found out. The story will revolve around the emotional journey of the problem and slowly reveals the changing behavior and her ways of thinking. Hopefully this work will remind people to look the idea of how important it is to see that marriage is not about age. To understand how psychological emotional maturity works, six levels of maturity are used as the main theory in this work.

Keywords:

Psychological Emotional Maturity, Romance, Ideal Age for Marriage, Chick Lit, Women.

1. INTRODUCTION

Novel has always become my favorite book because it does not only bring most issues that close to the heart of the readers but also in each of the stories it tingles the reader's heart to find out the background story of the characters. As a writer, novel is the best way for me to elaborate on my imagination, and a relatable issue for society is through a form of a novel. The definition of novel according to English novelist, Anthony Burgess in Encyclopedia Britannica, is an invented prose narrative of considerable length and a certain complexity that deals imaginatively with human experience, usually through a connected sequence of events involving a group of persons in a specific setting. In that case, choosing novel can help me to bring the issue that I choose for my readers.

In further discussion, women's fiction according to Romance Writer of America, a business interests of career-focused romance writers through networking and advocacy and by increasing public awareness of the romance genre, defines women's fiction as a commercial novel about a woman on the brink of life change and personal growth (RWA, n.d). Women's fiction also involves her journey details of emotional reflection and action that transforms her and her relationships with others and includes a hopeful/upbeat ending with regard to her romantic relationship (Wenger, 2014). Underneath this genre, there is Chick Lit a subgenre of Women's fiction. According to Journal of Popular Romance Studies, Chick lit usually depicts what life is like for young women in big cities, or occasionally—for the sake of variety—on fashionable country estates. They pursue their careers; go to parties, gossip with their girlfriends, and shop, while dating a series of men in their hunt for the right one (Ehriander, 2015). The plot, however, does not have to involve a romantic relationship as a happy ending (Kate Warren, n.d). In this case, I, as the writer, am able to go deep into the complexion of the issues and dilemmas to develop the plot of the story.

Many young women in Indonesia around the age of 20 to 25 feel the urgency to get married. They are afraid of being called *perawan tua* or old maid in their age. In fact there are 59.9 percent teenage girl said that the ideal age for them to get married is not over 25 and 0.7 percent said 30 and over is their ideal age of marriage according to the data from *Survei Demografi Kesehatan Indonesia* (Gerintya, 2017). It makes the society believe that it will be such a shame to get married late. The next following discussions are several examples that I choose to strengthen

my point. These two women feel the urgency to get married not because they wanted to but because the pressure from family and society.

One woman, who prefers to use the name Anisa, is 27 years old and yet still not married. She shares her story in *mojom.co* with the title of *Kita Memang Nggak Kebelet Nikah, Tapi Sedihnya Orang Tua yang jadi Skakmat*. She said that when she was 23, her mother told her that the best age for women to get married is 25, over than that our feminine aura will slowly fade away. Anisa's mother even said that get married over 25 is harder for women, since we cannot freely choose our partner (Anisa, 2017). The urgency creates a condition of rushing towards the individual. It makes the individual feel like they have to immediately get married, especially during the ideal age. Another story also coming from a user of *Vemale.com*, which I quoted to see the other point of view from women who is not married. This unknown woman shared about her problem for being not yet married. The title of her story is *Usia 27 Tahun Belum Menikah, Meski Tampak Tegar Aku Menyimpan Kesedihan*. She was 24 when she finally graduated from college and lots of question keeps on coming from her relatives and family. They asked to her about when will she get married, when actually her cousin who just graduated last month get married the following month (Usia 27 Tahun, 2017). Those questions trigger an individual to achieve something that they have not get; it even creates a condition of self-loathing since the individual keeps on reflecting other condition to their own situation.

By looking at the fact that age is a serious problem for the individual since they feel pressure if they do not get married at the certain age, it shapes people mind that women have to get married before 30 or else, people will call them as an old maid. However, it is true if they feel the urgency because, at the age of 20 to 25 for women, they are at the peak during most of this time (The Marriage Zone Analysis, n.d). Meaning that, between that age, they are in the condition of biologically ready to carry a child. It is in line with the data published by The Central Bureau of Statistic Surabaya, that there are 74.71% women around age 25 had already married (BPS, 2010).

On the other hand, when women feel overwhelmed with the idea of not yet getting married at the certain age, psychologists look at it differently. In this age range, which is 20 to 25, the problem that the couple needs to faces is different. It will be merely about parenting and relationship between husband and wife since their individual level of emotional maturity places them in a condition where they are not ready to face this kind of sudden condition. According to Knot Yet, a national marriage project in America, they said that women who marry in their early twenties are significantly more likely to end up divorced than those who marry in their mid-twenties or later, based on the Fatherhood Initiative Marriage Survey (Hymowitz, Carroll, Wilcox, Kaye, 2013). It shows that the range age of marriage is not the foundation to have a happy and ideal marriage life. Instead, it may lead to divorce because they are not mature enough to be a parent and have the husband and wife relationship.

Quoted from Psychology Today, marriage is the process by which two people make their relationship public, official, and permanent (Marriage, n.d). Therefore, if an individual gets married at that ideal age, it might create some problem like failing the marriage and ended up divorced at the young age. Surprisingly it also happens in Indonesia. The divorce rate is around 50% for those who married around the age of 20, based on the research that conducted by Nicholas Wolfinger from Utah University. Besides divorce, it might also lead to domestic violence. Psychologist Kristi Poerwandari said in *Magdelene.com* that divorce might happen because they do not recognize themselves since this age range is their time to explore their identity (Adisya, 2017). It might naturally happen in the society especially to couple who decided to get married young. The problem that they face actually has a correlation with their psychological issues, which is the unstable emotion. De Genova and Rice an author of *Intimate Relationship, Marriages, and Families* said that in marriage the needs of emotional maturity from the couple are the top priority. It might be difficult for them to get along as a husband and wife at the first place in marriage life, especially those who get married at the young age which is 20 to 25 (Degenova, Rice, 2005).

It is, however, a problem to the society nowadays since they cannot see the problem with getting married at the ideal age. Those kinds of problem, urgency, rush, pressure, and demand that are not only coming from the parents but also from relatives, create a bigger scary picture of an individual life. Marriage is not about how old the individual is. It is about the psychological emotional maturity, to be able to live the married life in a mature way and notice that they are ready

to face the condition to be parents and have a real life situation of husband and wife. That is why, further in my creative work, I would discuss the topic of women that get married after the ideal age for marriage.

Within the case that I have discussed above, the big question is about: when somebody has reached his/her psychological emotional maturity, what are the stages that a person needs to undergo to understand that there are an attitude alteration that happen to him/her and what is the importance of psychological readiness in the relationship?

1. What are the stages that Levi needs to undergo to gain her psychological emotional maturity
2. What kind of attitude difference that happens to Levi when she has acquired her psychological emotional maturity?
3. How crucial is Levi's psychological readiness in her relationship development with Daniel, until she decides to get married?

In discussing my creative work, as an individual, in order to get married, their attitude alteration is needed because it is about being more open-minded and has the ability of solving the problem wisely in order to have good relationship with themselves or with their spouse, which can be seen through their six stages of psychological emotional maturity.

1. Levi will go through the last six stages of psychological emotional maturity such as emotional responsibility, honesty, openness, assertiveness, understanding, and emotional detachment
2. Levi is having attitude change such as having more understanding about the problem that she is facing between her mom and Daniel. Her open-mindedness makes herself psychologically emotionally mature.
3. With her maturity, Levi will be able to understand herself and others by looking at her insecurities as something that makes her emotionally ready, that way it can result a positive relationship.

With more complex issue for the main character in terms of marriage, I hope my work helps my readers understand about the importance of psychological emotional maturity in marriage. This work could also create awareness among my readers whose feeling as if they are rushing their marriage and not considering another aspect of being husband and wife. In that case, when my readers are able to get the idea of my creative work and fathom the development of my main character emotional maturity level, they can reflect the condition to their own problem and maybe rethink about the decision that they made. At last, I hope my reader who has already married at their young age can also absorb the idea of being mature in their marriage life.

When we discuss about ideal age and the level of their psychological emotional maturity, the main subject of the problem is the individuals. Maturity is achieved when individual growth is completed and the organism is ripe for propagation (Alexander, 1948). As a grown-up who are living their glorious live of 20s they have the tendency to want something more in their life, especially after they get married during this age, which create dissatisfaction towards their partner and marriage. According to De Genova and Rice (2005). Marriage is about the process of understanding, adaptation, and change the behavior of an individual or partner to gain the maximum satisfaction in the relationship. It means that, when both of individuals feel like they do not get the maximum satisfaction, it will trigger a problem in their family. In his book titled *Indahnya Pernikahan Dini*, Adhim said that in marriage when couple needs to make a right decision, they behavior also needs to be support by emotional matureness and it is one of the important aspects to make a marriage work (Adhim, 2002). In an addition, Walgito (2004) in his book titled *Bimbingan dan konseling perkawinan* said adaptation towards oneself and their marriage life can work in balance if both of husband and wife are psychologically mature. According to Naik and Saimons (2014) who is a professor and assistant professor of Raman University says, the meaning of emotional maturity is a person who is able to keep his emotions under control and have the capacity to withstand delay in satisfaction of needs (Naik, Saimons, 2014). A person who has claim an emotional maturity have the ability to tolerate a reasonable amount of frustration, belief in long term planning and are capable of delaying or revising his expectation in terms of demands of situations (ibid). Hurlock (2002) stated in her book *Psikologi perkembangan suatu pendekatan sepanjang rentang kehidupan*, individual who is mature is an

individual that has a good control of their emotions and bodies are capable to express their emotion at the right condition according to the problem they are facing.

In that case, to see how mature an individual and their readiness to get married cannot be seen from their age, but from their emotional level of maturity. In fact, in marriage, an individual is expected to have a great emotional maturity in order to have a happy marriage. Researchers even call a person psychologically mature after they have reached a certain level of intelligence and emotional outlook. That is why to gain the emotional maturity level. According to Kevin Fitz Maurice (2017), a counselor of Addictions Counseling, Family Therapy, advanced Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), Transactional Analysis (TA), there are 6 levels of individual level of maturity.

1. Emotional Responsibility

In this level he or she can no longer view his or her emotional states as the responsibility of external forces such as people, places, things, forces, fate, and spirits. As an example, the use of common expressions is changed from, "You make me so mad when you do that," to, "I feel mad when you do that because...."

2. Emotional Honesty

The issue of resistance to self-discovery is dealt with at this level. Resistance issues stem from the person's conscious and unconscious fears of dealing directly with the critical voices he or she hears inside his or her mind. People at this level of emotional honesty know how to choose to feel so that they can keep from being hurt. They also know how to choose to not interact with their inner accusers by using ignoring, distracting, or redirecting techniques.

3. Emotional Openness

Persons at this level experience and learn the value of ventilating feelings to let feelings go, and also the dangers involved in hiding feelings from self and others. They will be doing things like 'express to let pass' and 'Share to let go'.

4. Emotional Assertiveness

A person at this level of work enters a new era of positive self-expression. The primary goal here is to be able to ask for and to receive the nurturing that he or she needs and wants—first from self, and then from others. He or she asserts his or her emotional needs in all of his or her relationships, if it is safe to do so. There are some actions that can be characterized as emotional assertiveness:

- Asking for alone time to contemplate, meditate, and pray.
- Asking for encouragement to complete a task or to achieve a goal.
- Asking for time and space alone to process feelings.
- Asking for understanding and compassion for some unpleasant feelings
- Asking to be heard out without advice or judgment.
- Expressing what you are feeling while giving the other person permission to feel differently.
- Informing others that you are feeling vulnerable and may react poorly under stress or to confrontation for a while.
- Letting someone know you love and care about them in a non-sexual and safe way.
- Offering congratulations to others for their achievements.
- Rewarding positive social behaviors with approval and support.

5. Emotional Understanding

Understand the actual cause-and-effect processes of emotional responsibility and emotional irresponsibility. Self-concepts are understood to be "the" problem interfering with emotional responsibility. People at this level of emotional responsibility remember to work on seeing their own self-concepts and finding release from them.

6. Emotional Detachment.

Such a person is only aware of self as process, as a sensing being, as an experiencing being, as a living vessel, as unknowable and untrappable—because self is alive and not static or fixed.

At this point, the use of 6 levels of emotional maturity is going to apply in my main character.

SYNOPSIS

Levi's world starts turning upside down since her sister, Kirana is giving birth to her first son at the age of 32. Being independent women at the age of 27 is such an accomplishment for her, and getting married to Daniel is not yet on the lists. However when her mother said another way around, she becomes defensive. Then, when her best friend also gets married, it makes her in a position to think more about whether she is ready or not. Within that time, she meets her high school crush, Gian. As they grow friendship, Levi feels something is not right, she knows where her heart wants to be, but is it true that marriage is all about age?

CONCLUSIONS

Purpose of my creative work is to make readers understand that it is more important to have a psychological emotional maturity than reaching the ideal age when it comes to getting marriage. Therefore, I will make my readers see the journey of my main character through the problem she had in her life. At the end of the story they will see how she actually changes the way she thinks and behaves towards other people. The first purpose is to show how six levels of emotional maturities play a crucial part in my main character, Levi. In every chapter, I show the changes in her behavior and attitude from the very first time until the last part. In the beginning, she is a defensive woman and only thinks for herself. In my second purpose, Levi finally gains the emotional understanding of responsibility and irresponsibility. She starts to acknowledge herself as the problem and try to find a way out. The last purpose is to reveal how exactly psychological readiness which creates a positive impact in her relationship with her partner can turn down the insecurities on Levi's life. Along with her problems that makes her keep on thinking about her decision, the problem that Levi face, makes her sees Daniel as the definition of being mature. It helps her look at their problem as something that encourages her to be a better version of herself.

Regarding the topic that I choose, the data that I collect plays a big part in showing the fact that is happening in Indonesia. Through this project, I also learn that gather a valid data and resource to support my statement and topic are crucial things that can actually help me to connect with the theory I will use. The theory itself turns out to make me realize and dig even deeper in the way of understanding myself and my character better. With the help of finding the right theory, even though I need to changes it for two times before finally ended up using the third one, it is the journey of exploration to something new for me. I learn so much as I read more about the psychological emotional maturity and directly reflect myself into the theory. That is why, I really enjoy being the writer of this story, since I can put a little piece of me inside of my characters. Another important thing that I get through this work is time management and after a while, I managed to create a daily schedule. Luckily, after I created the deadlines for each day, I am able to finish up to two chapters a day. I finally keep everything organized.

I learned that sometimes I have show and not tell, because the important thing is always how I can lead the story as if like I am the main character. There were times when I really stuck on several chapters because I have no idea what to write inside it and I had to think really hard to connected from chapter to chapter. I had to take a break for a day and refresh my mind, come back to it, and read it once again as a reader and revise it.

In my future plans, since it has always been a dream for me to create a book on my own, I will reconstruct the story, makes it more complex, and publish it in a real form of a novel. It seems like I still have to do a lot of research and reading about the topic that I choose so that it can be more relatable to my readers and reveal the issues behind it.

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