

**TED ANKARA COLLAGE FOUNDATION HIGH SCHOOL**

**THESIS OF PSYCHOLOGY**

**“DEFENCE MECHANISMS”**

**Instructor:** Pembegül BALTA

**Name:** Cemal Mert

**Surname:** Nallar

**Student ID:** D1129047

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**Thesis Subject:** The identification of four defence mechanisms as projection, compensation, displacement and pollyanna behaviours and their detailed observation of effects on the 12<sup>th</sup> grade students and how these mechanisms used by these students.

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis of psychology aims to identify the defence mechanisms in relation with the effects on the 12<sup>th</sup> grade students.

In the first phase, the observed facts will be given in the line of displacement mechanism which is related to build a hegemony to an another person or an object, when a person comes across with some obstruction. Secondly, Pollyanna mechanism will be analyzed in terms of its usage by the 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. After that, projection mechanism will be handled by the observations on the 12<sup>th</sup> grade students and the effects of the mechanism on them. Lastly, compensation mechanism will be stated whenever students apply to compensate their failures with another things.

All these defence mechanisms will be identified with the examples of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students through my observations.

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**Context**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

When the needs are left to be unsatisfied by either detention or conflict, the individual applies for various ways to prevent him/herself from the occurred extreme anxiety and tries at least to satisfy them. Sometimes, digresses to behaviours which can be seen as weird or ridiculous. These are defined as adaptation or defence mechanisms. The main functioning of the defence mechanisms is continuing the integrity of mental structure and its balance. Without exception, every single individual uses defence mechanisms to prevent their integrity of mental structure and to feel themselves in balance. Usually, defence mechanisms have easen to accommodate ourselves. Besides, these mechanisms can sometimes become unappropriate and a structural destruction due to changing conditions. Even if, it is normal that a person's leukocytes fights against the microbes, it is as equal as normal and natural to use defence mechanisms.

It has been initially touched upon to defence mechanisms and their mechanism types in the psychological apparatus by Sigmund Freud in the period of building psychoanalytic theory. However, Sigmund Freud has not been handling the defence mechanisms in terms of systematic ways. This – handling the defence mechanisms in a systematic and extensive way- has been achieved by his daughter Anna Freud's book which is named as “ The Ego and the Defence Mechanisms” in 1946.

Together with the usage of defence mechanisms in our daily lives in everywhere, these mechanisms also show themselves in the business life, outside, school, and whenever an individual feels like stucked by playing a considerable role in the satisfaction of the

individual. We can see the most obvious, basic and simple examples of defence mechanisms if we exemplify usage of **Pollyanna mechanism** when a mother says ' we are fortunate that he is not whooping cough ' in regards to her son's chicken pox; usage of **projection mechanism** when a football player reasoning his team every-time defeat to pitch floor; usage of **compensation mechanism** when a person have become an olimpic swimming champion by harworking even if having a childhood paralysis; usage of **displacement mechanism** when a businessman throws away his cellphone after taking bad news; so and so forth.

## **2. EFFECTS & USAGE OF DEFENCE MECHANISMS BY THE 12<sup>th</sup> GRADE STUDENTS**

### **2.1. Displacement Mechanism :**

First and foremost, one of the defence mechanisms as abovementioned is called **displacement** has been collecting attention with regards to most commonly used by the 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. Displacement mechanism can be defined as when a situation occurs that an individual come across with some obstruction which originated by someone, and he/she can not wrinkle up to the one who originated the obstruction and the individual tries to take his/her revenge from another individual below him – in other words the ones that he/she can build up a hegemony on- . With this, it's examples have been come across apparently in line with my observation. If it has been looked at the first place as my own classroom, where the usage of mechanism occurs, the relationship between instructor and student shows itself. As far as the event happened in my class, the contrary or negative response given by a

student – in here Ekmel S.- to another person, after getting angry to his/her instructor can be given as an example. He has displaced his anger to me from our SBS teacher, after getting an unexpected result from the SBS exam, by giving a inverse answer as “ *How shoul I know? Am I writing down the lessons to a notebook?*” to my question “ *What is the next lesson?*”. Here, Ekmel is using the displacement mechanism within one of the defence mechanisms.

The other day, another example of the usage of displacement mechanism has ran up against me in a bus station. It was nearly at the same that I have found myself in the bus and getting out of the class in an exhausted feeling. While I was waiting my bus, an old friend of mine named Selin S. comes near me. I remember that, she was seeming very nervous and tense. When I asked her as to what happened, she said that she had a fight with her best friend. After talking about the subject for a while, the bus that we both were waiting for had came. Selin has found herself a single-seater. Although we were talking in the crowded bus about the subject that upseted Selin, a sudden incident had happened. An old man got into the bus and asked to Selin for her seat to sit. Surprisingly, Selin has given an answer like that : “ *Don’t we have a right to sit in a bus?* “ in a loud and clear voice. As far as I know her in our daily lives, she is a calm and respected person to elderly, however the reaction that she gave to an old man has shocked me. Due to my observations, I can say that she had used the displacement mechanism in that event. She has displaced her anger to the old man, where it actually belongs to her best friend that she had a fought. Therefore, she has used the displacement mechanism in here.

Another example that I can give about the displacement mechanism appears again in my class. When I got to the classrom, I have seen that one of friends Hande V. was crying. After

asking herself what was happened, she told me it was related with the stress caused by ÖSS and I have decided not to pressurize her about the issue. As ten minutes pass, another friend - who was not aware of Hande's stress and crying - came to Hande and told about an event he/she had gone through. But, our friend had a clear breakdown, when Hande said if the event was exciting in a way that she does not care. Here, she had used the displacement mechanism by trying to get rid of her stress with giving a harsh answer to her friend.

Doubtless to say, it is not a mechanism that can only be observed on others. The displacement mechanism takes a considerable place in my own life. I have used the displacement mechanism when I yelled at my father when he has said to tidy up my room, after getting a lower grade form my Math exam and congratulating my friend Eser T. who had got a higher grade than me – which was a situtation that I can not accept it later on. Likely, an event happened after the presidential elections in my school. One of the candidates Ahmet B. has came out as loser from the elections. As far as, I have witnessed he has congratulated his opponent with a kind smile and got down from the stage. At the same time, when he was stepping down from the ladders; one of his friends comforted him by saying *"Never mind"*. Consequently, Ahmet reacted him with the words : *"If it is so easy, you never mind! "*. This action of Ahmet's is the usage of displacement mechanism.

Besides the given examples, there are others where displacement mechanism is not only used one to another. In these examples, it is usually the object; not the individual that wants to establish a hegemony. For instance, a student that I saw when I was coming back from my lunch to the class, was arguing with an instructor and after that took his/her revenge from the beverage machine by punching it strongly. Here, individual displaceses the anger to the

identified object. Again, an event from that angle comes across me in the schoolyard. One of my friends Utku G. is telling me the argument that he had with my another friend Berkay Y. in a nervous feeling. At that time, a ball comes closer slowly from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students play. Utku has kicked the ball strongly by giving an opposite direction from the place where 9<sup>th</sup> grade student play. Therefore, here, Utku is using the displacement mechanism and takes his revenge from the ball which was actually belongs to Berkay.

Within these, it is possible to give another example about the defined mechanism, from my course life. This time, a friend of mine Anil C. was having an argue on the phone with his mother in front of my eyes. For the first sight it was seeming that everthing was allright; but after getting into the classroom within the start of lesson, he became upset and continued to have his feeling in that way all the lesson. He was quite calm until our history instructor asked him a question and he could not give the answer. Moreover, our instructor has told him kindly to study more, in contrary he gave his answer aggressively by saying *"Thanks instructor! You was the only one who did not say anything to me! "* and left the classroom. His action shows that he had used the displacement mechanism with regards to change his angers' direction from his mother to our instructor.

Lastly, a close friend of mine Doğu Ç. was complaining about his low grade in the chemisty class. According to him, the responsibility belongs to our chemistry instructor who has an inappropriate attitude towards himself. Actually, it was clear that Doğu was having a negative attitude towards our instructor. After five minutes pass, it has easen the process of using displacement mechanism when a younger person has pushed him slowly and



unconditionally. Doğu has jumped to his neck to beat him. He has displaced his anger to another person from our chemistry instructor.

All of the abovementioned examples, the displacement mechanism is a convergence of a impulsion or emotion to another object or unreasoned object or another individual. Conflict or anxiety can be prevented or decreased at least a level, by converting the impulsion that can be a reason for conflict or depressment and unacceptable by the ego to some object.

## **2.2. Pollyanna Mechanism :**

Pollyanna mechanism is one of the defence mechanisms used by the 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. With its other name "sweet lemon", the Pollyanna mechanism is a different way to infesting logic. Individual creates a tuning mechanism to see the positive sides of a dissaponting event by using Pollyanna mechanism.

The first example can be given from my school life. While I was waiting the exam results of maths, we were discussing about it with one of my friends. At that time, our instructor called my name and told me that I had got 45 from the exam. Suddenly, I had a bad feeling inside me because I was upset. My friends asked as to what my grade was and I said I got 45 which is equal to 2 in the 5 grade system. And I have added "*It is better not getting 1.*" In here, I have used the Pollyanna mechanism without knowing, because I thought that getting 2 instead of 1 was better, although 2 is not good enough as 1. Besides this, a friend of mine

Pinar T. also got a lower grade like me and told me that she got her lesson and will study more for the next time. So, she has used the Pollyanna mechanism unconditionally here.

Another usage of the mechanism comes across when my father scanned his eyes and brain, because he was having an excess headache. The result was not bad and was only related to a vibration in the veins. So, I have told my parents that we were lucky, because the reason of the headache was not caused by a tumour or something bad. This is when the Pollyanna mechanism appears. In this event, I have tried to see a good side, because Pollyanna mechanism aims to find a positive sign in every bad situation.

As far as I have observed, Pollyanna mechanism is used by 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in most of the events. For instance, Nejan D. has taken 55 from German language exam and saw that his mistakes were most commonly belonging to the grammar part. He realized his mistakes and told that he will be more careful for the next time. This statement shows us that, he was trying to find a beneficial part in his failure and used Pollyanna mechanism.

The mechanism can appear itself in our daily lives. In the way from school to home, I saw my friend Mert T. who had broken his left arm. While we were talking, he said that he was lucky not to break his right arm, because he is right-handed. Therefore, he had used the Pollyanna mechanism.

All these examples assert that, Pollyanna behaviour is related to get some positive sides from the negative situations. This inflection of logic or rationalisation tuning mechanism

targets to accept faith or consolation. However, the excess application to this mechanism can make people passive or to have a willingness to accept everything. Besides, it is a defense mechanism used by the 12<sup>th</sup> grade students frequently.

### **2.3. Projection Mechanism :**

This mechanism is a perception of perceiving some emotions, impulses, demands and events of live projections to outside or perceiving them as if coming from the outside.

The first example comes across me in my daily life, when my friend Arda Ş. took low grades for three times and repeatedly. When we were talking, he said that this situation is a cause of his illness. In that sense, Arda is using projection mechanism by attaching his failure to his illness. Another friend of mine Ezgi Ş. used the projection mechanism by bounding the result of her low graded trial exam to marking her answer in a wrong range to the answer sheet and her carelessness. On the other hand, Simge Ş. used the mechanism when she got a low grade from the maths exam and told me that our instructor could not teach her well. Here, she is attaching her reason to failure to our instructor by using projection. At another time, one of my classmates Begüm B. linked her low grade taken from sociology class to late delivery of sociology class notes to the students and she used the projection mechanism. Begüm has converted her failure to outside. Likely, other examples took place in my course life. While we were discussing our trial exam results, one of my course friends Bahadır S. expressed that he got a low grade. Followingly, he turned me and said that he was having an headache during the exam and attached this reason to his low grade. Therefore, he used the projection mechanism in here. Similarly, Halil C. who is a bit

lazy, has used the projection mechanism by reasoning his deserved failure to an object – his pencil. He was complaining about his pen's tip which was making to write and solve questions roughly. Unconditionally, Büşra U. has used the mechanism after the trial exam. She was the lowest ranked student according to the class average in that exam and attached this fact to the instructors demoralized sayings to the students with regards to unperformed homeworks. Another friend of mine Gökselin used the projection mechanism by linking her low graded literature class to the late distribution of literature modules. Here, she is using one of the defence mechanisms as projection. Additionally, I can give an example of myself when I took a very low grade from my first trial exam. And I have answered my mother whenever she asked as to why I got this low grade, as there were some subjects we yet did not know. This is a projection of my low grade to the unknown subjects by using the defence mechanism.

Besides this, an example comes with my friend Brigit due to projection usage. Although, she has graduated from the high school, she could not get in the department that she wanted. Therefore, she is preparing for the second time to get in the department that she wanted. However, her trial exam results show a declining trend as far as she told me and I knew. Upon this, she told me that she mismarked the answer sheet because the places of the boxes have changed. In other words, she is projecting her low result to the changed design of optical form.

## **2.4. Compensation Mechanism :**

The last defence mechanism to be touched upon is compensation mechanism. This mechanism appears itself whenever there is an obstruction for the desire of being superior to others or favorable among others. In this case, the individual tries to compensate these desires by focusing on other fields to protect his/her honor. There are two types of compensation mechanism : positive and negative. If the activities applied by the individuals to compensate the main activity is approved by society, this is called positive compensation or sublimation.

Through my observations among the 12<sup>th</sup> grade students, I saw that compensation mechanism has a great place in the school and course that will be exemplified in this part. First of all, a 12<sup>th</sup> grade student in the course was yelling and acting weirdly in the corridors. When I talked to others about this event, they told me that this person was not good at his lessons. So, I realized that he was doing these behaviours due to take attention from the others that he desired. He was using these inappropriate behaviours to compensate his failure, by using compensation mechanism.

One of my oldest friends Ekin B. is a good student but she can not achieve the success that she desired. I think, the reason of this is her constant participation to social activities which are named as CAS in our school. If her low grades are considered, it is obvious that she is using the compensation mechanism. She is using this mechanism through compensating her low grades with being active in social activities. Likely, most of the students who are failing in their classes using the compensation mechanism, but in a different way. Through my observations, they are using the mechanism by trying to take attention with their

mischievous activities. With this, a different sample about the mechanism shows itself in my course life by one of friends Hazal G. Although she is trying so hard and taking additional lessons of maths, she could not take high grades. On the other hand, she is in the first rank of the literature class. So, she is filling her low maths grade with her first rank in the literature class. In other words, she is using compensation mechanism here. As a result of the obstruction of her desire to become successful in maths, she is efforting to become successful in the literature area. Other friend Büşra E. is also having troubles with her lessons, but she is compensating this with her cute and close attitudes to our instructors, by using the compensation mechanism unconditionally.

As all these examples considered, the compensative responses are improved against the insufficient emotions which are rooted from the real or fictitious deficiencies of the individuals. This is mechanism a due to removing the anxiety derived from the blocked or unsatisfied willings and behaviours, to replace them with other demands and actions. Shortly, it is an effort of an individual for compensating the failures whenever he/she could not reach an achievement.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

Apart from these examples, I have observed one varied example which composes all these defence mechanisms except compensation mechanism. This example emerges from a behaviour of my friend Cansın P. It was a time when Cansın was yelling at a break, after we have learned our trial exam results. She was complaining about our low grades by saying these sentences: *“ Enough! What should we do to reach a success? We are working day and night. If we were in another course, we would become winners. However, in here this can not*

*happen no matter what we do. If I would prepare such a difficult exam, of course nobody could take high grades. At least we are passing the threshold level of the exam (saying ironically). I do not know what would happen, if we could not pass it!* “ And she left the classroom after kicking the desk. At that point, I have taken some notes about the defence mechanisms that Cansin have used. Firstly, she has used the projection mechanism by attaching our failures to the difficulty of the trial exam. Secondly, she has used the pollyanna mechanism by ironically saying that we were passing the threshold of the exam at least. Here, she was trying to catch a positive side of her failure by using sweet-lemon behaviour. Lastly, she has used displacement mechanism in relation with transferring her anger to an object – desk. Here, the desk is an object that Cansin wanted to built up a hegemony on it, in the place of success she could not achieve.

To sum up, the defence mechanisms have a great role in our lives. They are essential in order to improve ourselves and accommodate for the changing conditions. Every individual wants to get rid of the blockades. Undoubtedly, 12<sup>th</sup> grade students wants to get rid of the blockades that they face by benefiting from the defence mechanisms. The mechanisms that I have mentioned above – pollyanna, projection, compensation and displacement- are used almost every day. The utilization of the displacement mechanism by the 12<sup>th</sup> grade students appeals itself through their anger roots from puberty period and displaces itself to another individual or an object. On the other hand, the examples of projection mechanism most commonly show itself after the trial exams. In the pollyanna mechanism, students are trying to see the positive sides of their failures. In the compensation mechanism, students attempt to take attention that they could not achieve by physical or psychological blockades, with different actions. This attempt reveals itself through the maturity period of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade

students. These students use the defence mechanisms whenever they face several events like : difficulties in their lessons or exams, arguments with their friends and families, facing sad impetuses originated from the outside world and resulted in frustration and trial to protect their honours when someone attempt to injure. Students apply to these mechanism in order to get rid of these difficult situtations and to remove the air of depression originated from rough exam psychology and stress. The students that I have named through my observations showed me they are using all these defence mechanisms to purify themselves from blockades. Consequently, defence mechanisms are used by the 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in a way of escaping from blockades, comforting themselves and eliminating the stress.



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