

PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN FREDRICK BACKMAN'S NOVEL A MAN CALLED OVE

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the psychological development of the main character in Fredrick Backman's novel A Man Called Ove used Sigmund Freud's theory of personality, which consists of the id, ego, and superego. Employing a qualitative research method, the analysis focuses on Ove's behavior, thoughts, narration and dialogue throughout the novel. The findings reveal that Ove's character demonstrates the dynamic interplay between the three kinds of Freud's theory. In the early part of the story, Ove is dominated by the id, reflected in his impulsive, antisocial, and emotionally driven actions such as anger, rudeness, and suicidal tendencies. As the narrative progresses, the ego begins to emerge, helping Ove respond to reality more rationally, especially as he starts to interact and form relationships with those around him. Eventually, the superego becomes more prominent, guiding Ove to act based on moral values and social responsibility. This development is influenced by characters and events that evoke empathy and human connection, particularly the presence of Parvaneh's family and the memory of his late wife, Sonja. The study concludes that Ove's journey illustrates a psychological development shaped by internal conflict and emotional growth, offering insight into how human behavior is regulated by the mind's structural components.

Keywords: Psychological, Main Character, Personality, the Id, Ego and Superego.

INTRODUCTION

Literature was a work created from the ideas, experiences, observations, and imagination of the writer. After that, the writer processed the ideas by using beautiful and meaningful language to create an attraction for readers. Literature is the expressions of artistic and imaginative facts as an embodiment of human life and society in general, through language as a medium and has a positive effect on human life (Girsang et al., 2023: 71; Ilham & Nurjadin 2023: 26, Fannie 2001: 6).

According to Nurgiantoro (2002: 7) literature is a blend of elements of mimetics and creation, imitation and creativity, imagination and reality. The above statement implies that literature and humans are closely related, because basically the existence of a literary work starts from human reality (Riyaningrum et al., 2023: 7). literature embodies a complex blend of mimetics and creation, where imitation meets innovation. Literature was divided into three genres: poetry, play, and prose. The writer used prose as the focus of the study, which was divided into two categories: fiction and nonfiction. These genres had many fans because literature provided space for both writers and readers to express their emotions. Therefore, literature also played an important role in human psychology. It was considered a form of psychological therapy, especially in childhood, and even as a cure for psychosomatic disorders (Pulimeno et al., 2020: 17).

The writer was interesting in conducted a study entitled Psychological Perspective of the Main character in the novel *A Man Called Ove*. The writer took the title because reading a novel is one of the writer's hobbies, there is a lot of interest and questions when see the many personalities of the characters in a story. The writer chose *A Man Called Ove* as the data source because the novel was so popular and sold more than 500,000 copies in its native country and will be published in more than twenty-five languages all over the world. The purpose of this study to find out what kinds and how the development of the psychology of the main character, and in this study the writer used the theory of Sigmund Freud, an expert in literary psychology (Id and Ego) which discusses personality.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Literature is a work created from an idea, experience, observation and imagination of the writer. Thus, the author processes the idea by using beautiful and meaningful language so as to create attraction for the readers. According to (Girsang et al., 2023: 71), argues that literature is the expressions of artistic and imaginative facts as an embodiment of human life and society in general, through language as a medium and has a positive effect on human life.

Furthermore, as stated by Ilham & Nurjadin (2023: 26, Fannie 2001: 6), that literature is a work of fiction is the result of creation based on overflow spontaneous emotions that can reveal aspect capabilities of based aspects language and aspects of meaning. Literature as a form of fiction, is fundamentally connected to the spontaneous emotions of the writers. It reflects human experiences through imaginative storytelling and employees with language and aesthetic beauty. Related with fiction allows readers to explore new worlds while gaining insights into their own lives and emotions. The interaction between creativity, language, and meaning is fundamental to understanding literature's enduring power. Creativity language use expressions that convey profound meanings. Language itself serves as both a medium and a message within literary works, shaped by contextual factors that influence interpretation. Ultimately, literature remains an artistic expression that reflects human experiences across time and space, demonstrating the transformative power of creative language.

METHODS

A data collection technique must be planned and implemented, and in collecting these data. The writer used a descriptive approach in analyzing data, identifying, analyzing and drawing.

The writer used descriptive qualitative methods in analyzing this study. According to (Subakti et al., 2023: 2) qualitative research is a study that intends to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by the subject of research such as behavior, perception, motivation, action and others holistically and by way of description in the form of words and language.

Source of data is the novel *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman. The writer focuses on data explaining the psychology of the main characters in narration and dialogue include kinds of personality by Freud theory in main character. The other data sources are, journals on the internet and theses used as a reference by the writer to support the subject of the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the writer provides a detail discussion of the findings from the current study. The data for this study were obtained directly from the novel *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman.

The analysis of the data is based on Sigmund Freud's personality theory, specifically focusing on the concepts of Id, Ego, and Superego.

1. Kinds of personality

A. Id

The Id is the first aspect of the personality that serves as the primary source of basic human instincts and drives. This part works entirely in the unconscious and is not affected by logic or moral considerations.

Data 1:

This happened in around Ove's house and saw his neighbour with her dog which has been pissing on Ove's paving stones. The neighbour wanted to drive away the cat that was fighting with the dog, and the woman wanted to throw the cat with a stone that was curled up behind Ove's shed.

"[Ove] If you throw that stone into my property, I'll throw you into your garden!" (p.64)

The quotation above shows Ove giving threats to his neighbours who disturb the comfort around his home. Ove thought that what he said was appropriate showed spontaneous emotional reactions and aggression without careful consideration because Ove did not think about the consequences of his actions but immediately responded with threats. It reflects how the Id works seeking instant gratification of the urge, in this case the urge to defend property or retaliate for an action perceived as threatening or harmful.

Data 2:

Ove feels that his life has lost color after the departure of his wife whom he loved so much. The loss left a deep void in his heart, leaving him feeling empty and no longer having a purpose in life.

"He's fairly sure that you don't lose much blood when you hang yourself" (p.68)

The quotation above shows Ove's despair describes how his subconscious played a role in eliciting the Id, which pushes him to end the suffering instantly.

Data 3:

From the beginning Ove was not very fond of cats, it was his wife who liked it. Ove is someone who is very rigid and not very interested in things that he considers useless, including cats. Whether it comes from where, the wild cat is often around the yard of Love's house which makes it uncomfortable to be in the presence of the cat.

"When the cat still fails to give him any sort of acknowledgment, Ove loses his patience and, in a sweeping movement, kicks one of his clogs towards it. Looking back, he couldn't swear that it wasn't intentional." (p.114)

The quotation above shows Ove was upset that the cat did not show him respect or attention. His impatience leads him to act spontaneously by kicking the clog at the cat, which is an expression of aggressive encouragement from Id.

Data 4:

Ove is constantly thinking of different ways to end his life. Although his first attempt failed, he remained determined to try again.

"He's been awake for most of the night, thinking of ways to die" (p.116)

The quotation above shows Ove's thoughts about death reflect the unconscious impulses of the Id, which are oriented only to the desire to be free from suffering without considering its effects. For the Id, death is an escape from emotional pain, since its main focus is to eliminate suffering without regard to moral or social consequences.

Data 5:

This happens when Ove's new neighbour (Parvaneh) asks for help to take her to the hospital to chase after her husband who had just fallen down the stairs who had already been taken to the hospital first by an ambulance. Ove dislikes being commanded, whereas Parvaneh asks by commanding.

"[Ove] There are no have-tos around here, i'm not some bloody mobility service!" He manages to say at last. (p.125)

The quotation above shows Ove's stubborn personality and rejection of social demands that are not to his liking. It does not like orders or pressure from others, which reflects the unconscious impulses of the Id that focus on fulfilling personal desires without taking into account social norms or responsibilities. His unwillingness to conform to the expectations of others indicates the impulsive and selfish nature of the Id, which favors personal comfort over compliance with social rules.

B.Ove's Ego

The Ego serves as a counterweight between the impulsive impulses of the Id and the demands of reality, taking into account the consequences of each action. In carrying out its role, the Ego must be able to adapt to various situations, control consciousness, and make decisions that not only fulfill instinctive desires but also comply with social and moral norms.

Data 1:

Anita is the wife of Ove's former best friend (Rune), who until now they have not greeted each other for 30 years ago after there was a little conflict that made them keep each other quiet and even Ove did not know that Rude had been paralyzed for years even though they were neighbours. Not only Rune with Ove who do not greet each other, Anita and Ove also but recently they again have communication starting from the move of Ove's new neighbour named Parvadeh.

"[Ove] He doesn't have ANY bloody—" Ove begins, then stops himself and clamps his jaws around the words. (p.118)

The quotation above shows Ove almost utters a rude or inappropriate word, but then he restrains himself and stops his speech. This illustrates how the Ego functions within itself. Although Ove felt angry and compelled to reveal the harsh words stemming from Id's encouragement, he chose to hold back. It shows the role of the Ego that regulates its speech to stay in line with social norms and avoid unnecessary conflicts.

Data 2:

Ove always thought about how to die, even after his first failed attempt he kept trying. In the morning after doing all his activities Ove wants to go back to trying to end his life by committing suicide in the garage in a car with a plastic tube that he attaches tightly to the exhaust pipe and is about to explode. But before that he still thought about the situation of stray cats that he did not like that that would not bother him anymore.

"He glances over his shoulder into the parking area. Not because he's bothered about that damned cat, obviously. He just hopes nothing's happened to it, because then there'll be hell to pay

from Ove's wife, he's quite sure about that. He just doesn't want a ticking-off because of the damned cat. That's all. (p. 120)

The quotation above Ove shows the characteristics of the Ego by thinking realistically. Despite not caring about the cat himself, he worries about the consequences in case of problems with the cat, such as his wife's anger. Ove does not want to receive reprimands or punishments, which indicates the role of the Ego in maintaining peace and avoiding negative social consequences. Ove's decision to avoid problems with cats has more to do with wanting to avoid conflict, rather than caring about the cat itself.

Data 3:

For the second suicide attempt, Ove was already preparing in the garage, tightly attaching a plastic tube to the exhaust pipe of his car, hoping that it would explode and end his life. However, again, his plans are thwarted by his new neighbour, Parvaneh, who knocks on Ove's garage in a panic. At first, Ove tries to ignore him, but the beat keeps repeating with more and more haste. Ove opened the door of his garage violently in anger and it hit the woman's face causing her to have a nosebleed.

"I... you have to bloo-you have to watch out when the door's being opened..." Ove manages to say. (p.122)

The quotation above Ove shows an internal conflict between the direct impulse of the Id who wants to speak in a more spontaneous or violent way, with the control of the Ego that demands him to convey the message in a more careful way because seeing Parvaneh who has a nosebleed makes him feel a little guilty but still tries to maintain his character.

Data 4:

Although Ove's plan to end her life again fails due to her new neighbour accidentally thwarting her intentions, Ove still decides to help Parvaneh deliver her to the hospital to visit her husband who fell from the stairs. Even after returning from the hospital, the woman still turned to Ove for help in repairing the damaged radiator of her house.

Ove gives her a dour glance. Silently, to himself, as if negotiating, he concedes that he can hardly let the children perish just because their no-good father can't open a window without falling off a ladder. (p.147)

The quotation above at first Ove feels hesitant or unwilling to get involved in a situation he doesn't like. This feeling reflects a drive from the Id, which may be a desire to avoid involvement or even indifference towards others. However, Ove's Ego then came up with more rational considerations. This Ego negotiates in him, realizing that although he is reluctant to help, morally he cannot allow such children to be in danger only for his personal reasons, especially when it comes to safety. The Ego seeks to balance Ove's personal desires with the social or moral responsibilities he must face, although he does so with a sense of reluctance.

Data 5:

This happened after Parvarneh and Ove saw a stray cat that annoyed Ove frozen in a snowdrift. Parvaneh thinks the cat is dead and tells Ove to check on the cat but he doesn't care, the woman is upset and immediately picks up the cat and tells Ove to open the door of his house.

Ove hauls out the keys from his pocket. As if someone else has taken tontrol of his arm. He's having a hard time accepting what he's actually doing. One part of him in his head is yelling "NO" while the rest of his body is busy with some sort of teenage rebellion. (p.182)

As we know Ove does not like to be governed and often fights or curses anyone who tries to control him. The quotation above it shows that Ove's Ego manages to defeat the violent impulses of Id. Although his violent nature does not completely disappear, Ove's Ego is able to control his actions and realize that there are more logical and moral reasons that must be considered.

C. Oves's Superego

Data 1:

This happened after Parvadeh and Ove saw a stray cat that annoyed Ove frozen in a snowdrift. Parvaneh thinks the cat is dead and tells Ove to check on the cat but he doesn't care, the woman is upset and immediately picks up the cat and tells Ove to open the door of his house. Ove is upset but still does it, attempt to warm the cat up and Ove retrieves a blanket for the stray cat. When Ove returned and wanted to give the blanket, he saw that another neighbour was already there and offered to warm the cat by hugging him bare-chested.

Ove nods. He was about to say something sarcastic to her. Now he finds uneasily, that he's relieved at the news. He distracts himself from this emotion by assiduously inspecting the TV remote control. (p.185)

The quotation above it shows that Ove feels relieved after hearing the news about the cat, which begins to show the influence of the Superego in him. Although he does not immediately show joy or happiness, because he is used to suppressing emotions that are considered incompatible with his firm and tough personality, this quote shows how Ove's Superego begins to develop and is slowly able to control himself.

Data 2:

This happened on the way home from the hospital after picking up Parvadeh's husband (Patrick) who was previously hospitalized after falling down the stairs, there was a development in Ove's character. Initially, he showed a stubborn nature and was reluctant to be controlled by others. His attitude of not caring about his surroundings showed his habit of living life his own way without considering other people's opinions.

"There'll be no stopping here," says Ove firmly.

Ten minutes later he's sitting in the Saab, waiting for them all outside McDonald's. (p.238)

The quotation above it shows there was a change in Ove. If previously he insisted on maintaining his position, over time the moral aspect in him began to have an influence. Ove's Superego finally took over, from how he began to show concern for others. He who initially did not care and refused his neighbour's request, eventually gave in and followed his neighbour's wishes to stop and wait for them

Data 3:

After Ove drove Parvadeh's family and returned to the garage, he felt that this was one of the perfect moments to realize his long-held desire. this is the opportunity that Ove has always been waiting for after so many failures everything seems perfect, a quiet atmosphere, no interference from anyone. The quotation above it shows Ove's superego appears to block his impulsive actions, prompting him to reconsider his actions taking into his moral aspects and his responsibility towards the stray cat that now depends on him.

“Ove backs the Saab into the garage. Closes the door. Puts it into neutral without turning off the engine. Feels the exhaust fumes slowly filling the garage and gazes at the plastic tube hanging on the wall. For a few minutes all that can be heard is the cat's breathing and the engine's rhythmic stuttering. It would be easy, just sitting there and waiting for the inevitable. It's the only logical thing, Ove knows. He's been longing for it for a long time now. The end. He misses her so much that sometimes he can't bear existing in his own body. It would be the only rational thing, just sitting here until the fumes lull both him and the cat to sleep and bring this to an end.” (p.242)

Him to reconsider his actions taking into his moral aspects and his responsibility towards the stray cat that now depends on him.

Data 4:

Previously, there was a small incident between Ove and his neighbour who had a dog. The dog tried to attack the stray cat that was now Ove's friend, and the woman who owned the dog was very unhappy, even kicking the cat in the head. Ove who was silent, but with a look full of anger, approached the woman. The woman immediately left with her dog, looking scared. Because of the incident, Ove felt moved to take revenge. He planned to set a trap in the form of an electric shock in his yard, so that every time the dog tried to pee there, he would be stung.

“No ... no, I suppose not.” He sighs glumly. And then he packs up the battery and clamps and corrugated iron and puts everything in the garage. Not because he doesn't think those morons deserve a proper electric shock. Because they do. But because he knows it's been a while since someone reminded him of the difference between being wicked because one has to be or because one can. (p.253)

The quotation above it shows Ove's Superego appears when he decides not to continue with his intentions, realizing that although he has a great dislike for dogs and their owners, they do not deserve the electric strung. Although he felt they deserved it, the decision to hold back showed that Ove's moral values and self-control were stronger than simply following his impulses or venting his anger.

Data 5:

That day was the first day Ove taught Parvadeh how to drive. Many incidents occurred during the lesson, including when Parvadeh was confused about how to start the car, which suddenly died in the middle of the highway. The situation became even more chaotic when another car kept honking at them, adding to the tension in the driving lesson that was already challenging for Ove.

“Now, you listen to me,” says Ove calmly while he carefully closes the door.

“You've given birth to two children and quite soon you'll be squeezing out a third. You've come here from a land far away and most likely you fled war and persecution and all sorts of other nonsense. You've learned a new language and got yourself an education and you're holding together family rd of obvious incompetents. And I'll be damned if I've seen you afraid of a single bloody thing in this world before now.” (p.267)

The quotation above it shows Ove's Superego of giving moral encouragement and motivation to women who are pregnant. She recalled that the woman had gone through many difficulties of bearing a child, moving to a foreign land, learning a new language, and maintaining her family. Ove builds courage and confidence in the woman, emphasizing that she has faced great challenges and should not be afraid of small things to drive a car like this.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to examine the main character in the Novel *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrick Backman from perspective of Sigmund Freud's personality theory. The conclusion drawn is that Ove's personality is represented by the three components of Freud's theory: the id, ego, and superego. Ove is depicted as an emotional, rigid, and solitary person, leading a monotonous life. His behaviour and attitude, portrayed through his actions and dialogue in the novel, can be understood through a psychological framework, as psychology delves into the workings of the human mind.

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