

Analysis of Maurya's Personality Structure Using Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis Theory

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ABSTRACT

The drama script *Riders to the Sea* by J.M. Synge is a literary work that presents the suffering of a mother due to the repeated loss of her family members. The main character in this drama script is Maurya, she experiences a complex inner conflict. This analysis aims to examine Maurya's personality structure based on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, which divides personality structure into 3 elements: id, ego, and superego. This analysis uses a descriptive qualitative research method with primary sources in the form of the drama script *Riders to the Sea*, secondary sources in the form of Freud's book *The Ego and The Id* and other relevant references. The results of the analysis show that Maurya's inner conflict is driven by the interaction of the id with reality, the ego that tries to adapt to reality, and the superego plays a major role in forming an attitude of resignation and sincerity through the moral and religious values she holds. These three personality structures are interconnected in shaping Maurya's psychological reaction to the suffering she experiences. Thus, psychoanalytic theory can be used to understand the psychological condition of characters in literary works more deeply, especially in describing emotional reactions to trauma and loss

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, Id, Ego, Superego.

INTRODUCTION

Literary works are a form of expressing human personal feelings that can be in the form of writing to describe feelings and ideas that are relevant in life (Mahroof et al., 2017, p.41). Through written form, the author tries to convey issues and moral messages that are usually reflected in the social and psychological conditions of the characters in the story. This shows that literary works are not only entertainment, but also as a medium to convey the meaning

of human life. One form of popular literary works is drama, novels, and prose. Drama is a form of literary work that has the aim of depicting life, which is usually exhibited in the form of performances (Anwar & Tryana, 2017, p.1-2). This makes drama a form of literary work that can be used to convey conflict and emotions through dialogue spoken by the actors.

Dialogue plays an important role in the structure of drama, because before the drama is staged, it is first presented in the form of a written script. A drama script is a literary work that prioritizes the conversations of the characters (Berisha & Buzhala, 2025, p.1062). One example of a drama script is *Riders to the Sea* by John Millington Synge, which was first staged in 1904 and published in book form in 1911. This drama script is set in a simple cottage on a remote island in western Ireland. This drama script was inspired by Synge's personal experience. *Riders to the Sea* tells the story of a fishing family who lost almost all of their family members. The main character in this drama script is Maurya, a mother who has lost her husband and her five sons.

Maurya's character shows a pessimistic personality but is still full of affection. She is a strict mother figure but has a lot of anxiety, especially when it comes to her children. Maurya's character cannot be separated from the personality that can be explained through psychology. Personality is a part of psychology that discusses how a person behaves, thinks, and acts rationally (Roberts & Yoon, 2022, p.6). This is in line with Sigmund Freud's question in his book *The Ego and The Id*, that human behavior is formed from the drive of biological instincts, namely the power of the conscious and irrational forces (*id*, *ego*, *superego*). All three not only influence a person's character, but also influence the way of thinking and acting. Freud emphasized that most human activities are not based on because they are located in the subconscious (Freud, 1923, p.2). This makes the emergence of human decisions or urges to behave well or badly.

The drama script *Riders to the Sea* is relevant if analyzed using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, because there is an inner conflict in the main character, Maurya. In this drama, the author explains the feelings of anxiety, fear, and denial of death that constantly occur in Maurya's life. Freud's psychoanalytic theory discusses the human psyche which consists of the *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. Through this approach, it can be explained how Maurya's inner conflict arises and develops in response to severe emotional stress. This analysis aims to determine how Maurya's psychological state is viewed using psychoanalytic theory, as well as explain how tragedy and suffering shape the personality and psyche of the character in this script. Based on this description, this study will discuss several problem formulations as follows: (1) How does the *id* influence Maurya's inner conflict? (2) How does the *ego* influence Maurya's inner conflict? (3) How does the *superego* influence Maurya's inner conflict?

METHOD

Qualitative research is research that provides insight into problems that occur in the surrounding environment. This research is used to examine scientific objects, where this method contains data and utilizes existing theories to strengthen arguments. This research usually answers the questions "How" or "What" from a person's experience, perception, or behavior. Qualitative research is conducted to reveal phenomena by collecting data from a work. Qualitative research is analytical and descriptive, so there are different meanings based on the perspective in this type of research (Lim, 2025, p.199-200).

This research uses two sources, namely primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources are basic analysis that refers to data collected by the author himself through many sources, such as surveys and observations (Mazhar, 2021, p. 6-7). While secondary data is data that has been collected and documented by previous researchers which is then used to analyze new research. The primary source used by the author is a drama script entitled *Riders to The Sea* by J. M. Synge, which focuses on the inner conflict of the main character, Maurya. To support the primary source, the researcher uses secondary sources through articles, journals, and the book *The Ego and The ID* by Sigmund Freud, which focuses on the structure of human personality.

Data was collected in several stages, namely (1) reading the drama script in its entirety; (2) selecting quotes or data sources to support the research; (3) analyzing the quote data. Data can be analyzed in several stages: (1) understanding the meaning contained in the quote; (2) connecting the context of the quote data with the theory being analyzed; (3) seeking the meaning of the quote from the perspective of psychoanalytic theory.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Sigmund Freud was a psychiatrist who developed the theory of psychoanalysis to understand psychiatric patients based on observation rather than general research. He developed this theory to discuss the influence of mental states on understanding a person's behavior and psychological state. In psychoanalytic theory, he emphasized that human behavior is often influenced by unconscious factors. In other words, a person is not fully aware of the influence of changes in personality structure on everyday life.

In his book, *The Ego and The ID* (1923), Freud divided the personality structure into three main elements: the id, ego, and superego. These three elements are interconnected, yet often contradictory. The id represents basic human instincts, such as thirst, sexual desire, and emotions. The ego balances the id's impulses with the reality we face, while the superego

embodies moral values and conscience. Conflicts between these three elements often lead to inner conflict and psychological disorders. The ego and id are likened to an iceberg, with the ego representing the visible portion of the iceberg and the id the submerged portion. Freud emphasized that the mental processes involving these three elements occur unconsciously, so humans are often not fully aware of the true reasons behind their thoughts, feelings, or actions.

Psychoanalytic theory can be used to analyze a literary work. Elements of psychoanalytic theory are highly relevant to discussing the inner conflict experienced by the main character in a literary work, for example, a drama script. This makes J.M. Synge's "Riders to the Sea" an example of a drama script suitable for analysis using a psychoanalytic approach. This drama tells the story of a mother's grief over the loss of her family members due to a tragedy at sea. The events experienced by the main character give rise to various emotions that can be analyzed through the elements of the id, ego, and superego, thus helping to reveal the main character's psychological state.

Id/Das Es

Id is the most basic element in the structure of human personality. *Id* creates a drive that suppresses humans to fulfill basic needs, such as eating, drinking, and biological needs (Mutyarani et al., 2024, p.311). *Id* is located in the subconscious which has a role to seek pleasure. *Id* is an unconscious part, but still has a big influence on how to think and act. *Id* does not recognize moral considerations, reality, or logic, because *id* only follows basic urges that arise from suppressed emotions. If someone feels psychological pressure, the *id* element drives him to seek pleasure even in an irrational way. *Id* is difficult to recognize directly because it is hidden in the subconscious, but its influence can be seen through unconscious impulsive behavior (Freud, 1923, p. 10-11) .

The *id* is a part of the personality structure that is not fully conscious, and is the root of all instinctive drives. The *id* follows the pleasure principle, which means it always drives a person to immediately satisfy his desires without considering the reality and consequences (Zhang, 2020, p.1). Freud stated that the *id* is divided into two main instinctive drives, namely; the life drive (Eros) and the death drive (Thanatos). The Eros drive makes a person want to love, develop, and maintain life, while Thanatos drives destructive or aggressive actions (Freud, 1923, p. 20). These two drives interact with each other in the id and can cause inner conflict that appears as anxiety, anger or unconscious behavior.

In the play "Riders to the Sea," Maurya's repeated losses make it increasingly difficult for her to deny reality. This demonstrates how the id can influence how a person responds to suffering emotionally and

instinctively. In the play, Maurya demonstrates the strong influence of the *id*, particularly in her statement:

“He won’t go this day, for the young priest will stop him surely,”
(Synge, 1911: 21).

This statement was uttered by Maurya when she learned that Bartley was about to leave for the sea. The sentence reflects a form of denial to avoid a painful possibility. Maurya wanted Bartley to stay, but he denied it by saying that the priest would forbid Bartley from leaving. As a mother who had lost many sons, Maurya had her own emotional wounds due to the suffering she had experienced. Maurya's inner conflict became so prominent when she realized the possibility of losing Bartley. Therefore, she subconsciously rejected the loss that had occurred repeatedly. In this context, traumatic memories of the deaths of previous children formed a very strong emotional response. This condition explains that psychological defense mechanisms operate unconsciously. This is done by individuals to deal with trauma, anxiety, and fear when faced with stressful situations (Hardian, 2025, p.1).

The *id*'s drive makes Maurya maintain her belief even though it is illogical. Freud explained that the *id* will encourage the fulfillment of instinctive needs to avoid pain (Freud, 1923, p. 10). Maurya's sentence shows that unconsciously, she is maintaining the hope that her child is still safe. This is the *id*'s way of avoiding painful pain. Maurya's attitude reflects the dominance of the *id* that drives her to maintain what remains, and the uncontrollable reality (Hussain et al., 2024, p.3).

In the face of the stress of repeated pain, Maurya demonstrates the dominance of the *id* when she becomes angry at Bartley's decision to go to sea. Maurya's emotions stem from emotional distress. This is evident in her statement below:

“He’s gone now, and when the black night is falling I’ll have no son left
me in the world,” (Synge, 1911: 26).

In this quote, it can be seen that traumatic memories are still deeply imprinted in Maurya's subconscious. She appears angry and disappointed. She does not speak as a rational person, but as an emotional person. This sentence is a form of grief over repeated losses. The *id*'s urge is seen when Maurya wants to keep her only remaining child. However, when that desire is not fulfilled, the *id* will dominate Maurya and make her angry with Bartley. Freud explained that the *id* will dominate if the *ego* cannot balance the subconscious desires (Freud, 1923, p. 10). This reflects an imbalance in Maurya's personality structure, because her anger stems from the psychological pressure she feels.

Ego/Das Ich

The *ego* is a psychological element that functions as a mediator between the instinctive drives of the *id* and the demands of reality. The *ego* doesn't immediately make decisions to fulfill emerging desires, but also considers the conditions and consequences of each action (Tianjiao, 2025, p.3). The *ego* simply follows impulses influenced by the external environment and external experiences (Freud, 1923, p. 10-11). Therefore, the *ego* is not a psychological element completely separate from the *id*, but rather a result of adjustments to reality. The *ego* functions as a mediator between the *id*'s impulses and environmental conditions, allowing each individual's behavior to be adapted to the situation at hand (Aldinia Azahra et al., 2022, p.1).

Apart from being a mediator, the *ego* also helps individuals to control consciousness, regulate thought processes, and maintain a balance between the subconscious (*id*) and moral (*superego*) (Kaur, 2023, p.1241). Although the *ego* appears rational, many of its processes are unconscious. The *ego* strives to find the most appropriate course of action for the situation at hand, enabling the individual to adapt to the environment without neglecting the *id* and *superego*. Through this function, the *ego* enables a person to act more realistically and purposefully in the face of emerging situational demands (Oktaviana & Kusumaningtyas, 2026, p.2).

In the script for the drama *Riders to the Sea*, Maurya is depicted as being under intense emotional pressure. However, his response to this tragic reality demonstrates how the *ego* works to mediate the urges of the *id* and confront reality. This is evident in her statement:

"In the big world the old people do be leaving things after them for their sons and children, but in this place it is the young men do be leaving things behind for them that do be old," (Synge, 1911: 26-27).

In this quote, Maurya states that in this world, death should not come to someone who is still young. This sentence expresses grief and acceptance of the tragedy that befell Maurya. The quote above demonstrates Maurya's *ego* as a rational and realistic force. She does not allow herself to be overcome by emotions that deny reality (*id*), but rather she strives to regulate her emotions to remain rational. Maurya's acceptance of the death of her children demonstrates the strong dominance of the *ego*. The *ego* will force every individual to survive despite facing painful facts (Freud, 1923). In accepting reality, Maurya demonstrates how the *ego* works to balance instinctive (*id*) and moral (*superego*) drives with objective reality, specifically when she sends Bartley off with a loaf of bread as a form of indirect support. This is evident in her statement below:

"Let you go down now to the spring well and give him this and he passing... you can say 'God speed you,' the way he'll be easy in his mind," (Synge, 1911: 11).

In the above quote, Maurya speaks to one of her daughters to send Bartley off with her blessing. By allowing Bartley to go and providing him with bread, Maurya demonstrates sincerity. She doesn't completely give in to her fear, but she doesn't deny it either. Maurya's *ego* works by minimizing inner conflict and avoiding emotional outbursts toward her daughter. Facing reality, Maurya understands that she cannot forbid Bartley from crossing the sea, and she realizes that by forbidding him, she will only worsen the situation. She does not want to act to avoid pain, but rather acts by adapting to circumstances she cannot change. The *ego* functions as a channel for emotions that will then become rational actions (Freud, 1923).

Superego/Das Über-Ich

The *superego* is an element based on social and ethical elements. It is formed through the absorption of social values. Freud emphasized that the *superego* represents the child's relationship with their parents (Freud, 1923, p. 17-18). The *superego* functions as a moral value and conscience that guides a person's behavior in accordance with social norms. Furthermore, the *superego* also functions to control the *id*'s impulses to act ethically and morally (Ramadhani et al., 2022, p.2).

Freud explained that the *superego* develops when a child absorbs the moral values taught by their parents. Children learn, imitate, and use their parents as moral role models, which are instilled in them from childhood. The *superego* has two main functions: *conscience* and *ego-ideal*. *Conscience* functions to generate feelings of guilt, while the *ego-ideal* contains an ideal image of a person according to social standards (Freud, 1923 p. 18). The *superego* functions as a moral guide that helps individuals control negative emotions and impulses, allowing individuals to make wise decisions and maintain social relationships (Nabila, 2025, p.2). Apart from limiting actions that are contrary to norms, the *superego* can also be a force that encourages individuals to remain strong in the face of suffering.

In the script for the drama *Riders to the Sea*, Maurya is clearly dominated by her *superego*. This dominance is evident when Maurya speaks after suppressing her *id* and *ego*. The dominance of the *superego* causes her to accept all the tragedies that befall her. Maurya prays to God and tries to accept that her life's destiny is indeed destined to be this way. This is reflected in the following quote:

"Michael has a clean burial in the far north, by the grace of the Almighty God. Bartley will have a fine coffin out of the white boards, and a deep grave surely. What more can we want than that? No man

at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied," (Synge, 1911, IX).

Through the quote above, Maurya's statement is not merely a form of resignation but also a reflection of the *superego* element that dominates Maurya's personality. This *superego* is what gives individuals a view of what constitutes good and correct behavior, and how to respond to reality meaningfully (Freud, 1923, p. 17). Maurya's *superego* is evident when she views her child's death not as suffering, but as part of God's will. Maurya's belief that her children are in God's care shows that she processes her grief through deeply rooted religious values. The *superego* not only acts as a moral controller but also helps individuals accept reality and find inner peace through the moral values and beliefs they hold (Kamble, 2025, p.2). Maurya's *superego* becomes the primary driving force in dealing with the trauma of loss. She not only survives but is also able to reconstruct the meaning of her life based on her religious values. In this drama, Maurya's *superego* structure is evident when she says:

"And may He have mercy on my soul, Nora, and on the soul of everyone is left living in the world," (Synge, 1911, 45).

Maurya uttered this quote because she realized that she had accepted all the suffering in her life. This sentence shows that the *superego* can provide peace in the face of suffering. Maurya not only asked for forgiveness for herself, but also for all living people. According to Freud, the *superego* can induce guilt so that individuals perform moral actions such as praying or doing good (Freud, 1923, p. 36). In the above quote, Maurya is seeking peace through prayer, and the *superego* encourages her to act with religious values. This quote explains that the *superego* functions as an inner and logical balance. Maurya prefers to ask for God's mercy rather than rebel against her fate. Maurya's actions represent a form of acceptance driven by moral values.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the character of Maurya in the drama script *Riders to the Sea*, this shows that the dynamics of Maurya's personality structure are significantly influenced by the *id*, *ego*, and *superego* as explained by Sigmund Freud. *Id* impulses emerge through rejection and spontaneous emotions as a form of response to the trauma of repeated losses experienced by Maurya. The *ego* works to mediate *id* impulses with existing reality, this is seen from Maurya's efforts to accept the bitter reality that befell her more rationally. Meanwhile, the *superego* dominates at the end, when Maurya shows an attitude of resignation and sincerity towards God's will that befell her children. These three elements form a dynamic and

complex personality in Maurya, and show that the death that befell her children not only has an emotional impact, but also an impact on the way of thinking and how to behave in viewing life. The psychoanalytic approach in the analysis of the drama script *Riders to the Sea* can reveal in depth the psychological condition of the main character and the meaning of humanity contained in the work.

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