

ID, EGO AND SUPEREGO OF ZUKO IN THE LEGEND OF AANG: THE LAST AIRBENDER MOVIE (2005)

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the psychoanalysis theory of personality of Zuko in *The Legend of Aang: The Last Airbender* (2005) by using the psychoanalysis theory of Sigmund Freud (1923). Zuko is introduced as the antagonist in the series. The psychoanalysis theory of personality is composed to three elements: (1) id, (2) ego, and (3) superego. The method used in this research is qualitative. Qualitative methodology is as a research procedure that produces qualitative data in the form of written or spoken words from people and behavior that can be observed. The results obtained from this research are three data showing the id; two data showing the ego; and four data showing the superego from Zuko's personality. The results shows that Zuko's superego is prominent in the movie which indicates the character development of the character.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Id, Ego, Superego, Zuko.

INTRODUCTION

Live-action adaptations of animated series, such as *'The Legend of Aang: The Last Airbender'*, often stir excitement and debate among fans. While these adaptations aim to stay true to the original, they also introduce new elements, maintaining the original conflicts and character backgrounds. One key aspect of these narratives is the conflict, which drives character development and audience engagement. For instance, in *'The Legend of Aang'*, the character Zuko, initially introduced as an antagonist, faces personal conflicts that shape the plot. This study aims to analyze Zuko's id, ego, and superego using Freud's psychoanalysis theory, highlighting his journey from being a banished prince seeking redemption by capturing the Avatar, to joining forces with the Avatar to defeat Fire Lord Ozai.

Personality theory by Sigmund Freud has been used in many research which is used to analyze the conflict in the characters. (1) Songyang Zhang in their research entitled "Psychoanalysis: The Influence of Freud's Theory in Personality Psychology" (2020), This paper examined the influence of Freud's psychoanalysis theory on other personality psychologists. It highlighted the relationship of different psychologists with Freud and analyzed the influence by comparing the similarities and differences between traditional psychoanalysis theory and new theories proposed by various psychologists. The discussion in the research by Songyang has a different scope from this current research because the author highlights the development of the character on Zuko by using the Sigmund Freud psychoanalysis theory. (2) Izzah Afkarina's research entitled "Psychoanalysis of Main Character's in *The Movie Moana*" (2019) focused on the main character's personality development in the movie *Moana* using

psychoanalytic theory. It explores how factors like heredity, and physical, social, family, and cultural environments influence Moana's personality. It can be highlighted where the previous research by Izzah has different causality of development character to this current research. (3) Jihans Siska Arnetta's research entitled "The Representation of Suicidal Behavior in A Star Is Born Movie: A Freudian Psychoanalysis Reading" (2022). The research delves into the portrayal of suicidal behavior in the character of Jackson Maine in the movie "A Star is Born" through the lens of Freudian Psychoanalysis, exploring how Jack's struggles with substance abuse, depression, and suicidal thoughts align with symptoms of suicidal behavior driven by his Id seeking freedom and happiness. The analysis also considers Jack's coping mechanisms and loneliness as a seasoned musician, leading to alcohol and drug abuse. Additionally, the research discusses Jack's recent suicide attempt, highlighting the complexity of his psychological state which highlights the difference in how Freud's personality theory affects the character. (4) Muhammad Afra Masyur's research entitled "A Psychoanalysis on Internal Conflict of Bruce Wayne, as Seen in Matt Reeves' The Batman (2022) Movie" (2023), focused analyzing on Bruce Wayne's internal conflicts in "The Batman" (2022) stands out for its unique blend of Freudian psychoanalytic theory and representation theory by Stuart Hall. The previous research used a different method of theory from this current research, which in this research the author only focuses on the Freudian psychoanalysis theory. (5) Dean Rahmat Fuady's 2019 research, titled "AN ANALYSIS OF DAVID AND EMILY CALLAWAY'S PSYCHOPATH PROBLEMS IN HIDE AND SEEK MOVIE VIEWED FROM SIGMUND FREUD'S PSYCHOANALYSIS THEORY", provided a detailed analysis of the main characters in the movie "Hide and Seek", focusing on their psychopathic traits and using Freudian psychoanalysis theory. This research was significant as it offered a unique perspective on the characters' psychopath problems and dissociative identity disorder. Furthermore, the researcher used a broader range of psychoanalytic theories, incorporating perspectives from Jung and Adler, in addition to Freud. This allows us to present a more nuanced and multi-dimensional analysis of the characters' psychopath problems. The previous research combined two different theories of psychoanalysis focusing on the deeper scale of personality and discussing psychotic behavior which is not discussed in this research but only discusses about development character of Zuko.

The objective of this research is to probe and grapple with the intricate nature of Zuko from the film 'The Legend of Aang: The Last Airbender (2005)' in terms of Freudian psychoanalysis. Specifically, we seek to split up Zuko's character into three constituents: id, ego, and super-ego according to Freudian psychology. In order to do this, we adopt a qualitative research design that allows the investigation of Zuko's actions, dialogues, and motivations in the movie. This process entails analyzing and grouping all of Zuko's traits or conduct as either id, ego or superego based on Freudian theory. Every single feature about Zuko's personality is gone through step by step leading up to an understanding of his mind as shown in Freudian psychoanalysis.

In this study, we performed a qualitative research design to examine the character of Zuko in the film 'The Legend of Aang: The Last Airbender (2005)'. Here is an overview of our approach:

1. Data Collection: We start by collecting data from the movie. These consist of his dialogues, actions, reactions, and choices throughout the movie. We are particularly interested in his interactions with other characters, his responses to different situations, and how he develops as a character over time.
2. Data Analysis: The data collected is then analyzed using Freudian psychoanalysis. We break down Zuko's personality into three parts: id, ego, and superego; The Id represents his basic instincts and drives, the ego represents his realistic and rational part and the superego represents moral standards and ideals.
3. Classification: Each aspect of Zuko's character is carefully examined under id, ego, or superego. For instance, if Zuko does something based on instinct it falls under the id classification when decisions are made rationally, they fall under the ego classification but if a behavior reflects good morals it falls under the super-ego category.
4. Interpretation: Finally, we derive meaning from the findings and make inferences about Zuko's personality. It gives a complete picture of his mind according to Freudian psychoanalysis.

It allows us to go into specifics about Zuko's personality and analyze his motives, behaviors, and choices based on psychoanalytical methodology. This reveals his overall character and provides invaluable thoughts on his mind. Remember that this is a general explanation; thus there can be slight differences depending on the actual research process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychoanalysis focuses on the structure of the human mind and the role of unconscious processes in shaping behavior and mental health. Initially, the theory was introduced in the early 20th century by Freudians to cure a patient who is believed to have a psychological problem (Amelia & Daud, 2020). As Freud (1923) stated the mind is composed of three parts: id, ego, and superego which can be declared as (1) the id is the primitive and instinctual part of the mind or can be said in other words that it represents as our most animalistic urges, such as pleasure and food. It controls our mind to seek instant gratification for our wants and needs which causes anxiety, tension, or anger if the needs or wants are not being granted immediately. In the series, Zuko's id showed himself as self-centered and obsessed, driven by his desire to capture the Avatar. This desire is a manifestation of his unconscious desires and impulses, which are not yet subject to the control of his ego and superego; (2) the ego is the organized, realistic agent that mediates between the instinctual desires of the id and the critical superego. It recognizes that other people have needs and wants, and being selfish is not good for the long run. The ego deals with reality, trying to meet the desires of the id in a way that is socially acceptable in the world. In the series, Zuko's ego shows his desire to restore his family's honor and reclaim his place in the Fire Nation. This is seen in his internal conflict between his loyalty to his family and his growing sense of empathy and understanding for the Avatar and his friends; (3) the superego is our conscience and is established via identification with parental figures or social groups at large. It holds the internalized moral standards and ideals that we aspire to and try to perfect and civilize our behavior. It suppresses the unacceptable urges of the id and struggles to make the ego act upon idealistic standards rather than on the pleasure principle. In the series, Zuko's superego showed his growing sense of morality and the desire to do what is right, even if it goes against his initial goals. This is seen in his decision to release the Avatar's bison and his eventual decision to join the Avatar in his quest to defeat the Fire Lord Ozai.

Throughout the series, Zuko's journey can be seen as a process of working through his unconscious conflicts and internalizing the values of peace and kindness, which conflict with his id's primal desires. Along with Uncle Iroh, who serves as Zuko's analyst, in his journey, Zuko is being encouraged to reflect on his impulses and his behavior, and also Uncle Iroh helps him tolerate his feelings and understand them, rather than allowing them to control his actions. Uncle Iroh's handling of Zuko is linear to Freud's psychoanalytic approach to therapy which involves the use of techniques such as free association and transference to help individuals become aware of their unconscious thoughts and feelings, which can lead to insight and personal growth.

METHODOLOGY

The author used qualitative methodology is as a research procedure that produces qualitative data in the form of written or spoken words from people and behavior that can be observed (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975, p. 5 as cited in Moleong, 2011, p. 4). The data used for this research is based on the animated movie "The Legend of Aang: The Last Airbender" (2005) and the object for the research is the character named Zuko. The author collected the data source from analyzing the conversation between Zuko and other characters, analyzing Zuko's behavior throughout the movie and his way of facing his internal conflicts.

The data were gathered by author by divided it to some stages:

1. Observing the animation by watching the whole series;
2. Noting down the conflict which showing the inner conflicts;

3. Distributing the inner conflicts to the types of theory of personality of Freud;
4. Analyzing the types of personality of the characters along with its factors;
5. Writing down the conclusion from the observation.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to analyze the theory of personality of Zuko based on the psychoanalysis theory of Sigmund Freud (1923), one of the main characters in “The Legend of Aang: The Last Airbender” had to face and how he overcame his inner conflict which will show his id, ego, and superego. This study aims to achieve the result of analysis of each part by analyzing the inner conflict of Zuko's character. The following scenes are the results found in the movie, which show Zuko's id, ego, and superego.

INSTINCTUAL DESIRE (ID)

1. **The id (instinctual desire):** Zuko's impulsive behavior while capturing the Avatar



Figure 1: (The Legend of Aang: The Last Airbender, Book 1, Water: The Storm)
Scene 03:24 seconds

Iroh: The storm is coming—a big one.

Zuko: You're out of your mind, Uncle! The weather is perfect. There's not a cloud in sight.

Iroh: A storm is approaching from the north. I suggest we alter our course and head southwest.

Zuko: We know the Avatar is travelling northward, so we will do the same.

Iroh: Prince Zuko, consider the safety of the crew.

Zuko: The safety of the crew doesn't matter.

Zuko: Finding the Avatar is far more important than any individual's safety.

The first element of human psychology in Freudian Psychoanalysis theory is the Id. Generally, Id refers to the secret desire, need, and want of humans (Lapsley & Stey, 2011). The element of Id allows humans to drive energies and unconscious motivation to do something that is believed can achieve the secret desire, need, and want of an individual (Lapsley & Stey, 2011). Zuko's impulsive behavior is shown in the scene at 03:24 seconds when he and his uncle, Iroh, are having conversations about the weather. The uncle, who has the instinct for bad weather, told Zuko to reroute the ship to the safest route, but Zuko did not listen. He followed his impulsive decision and insisted on capturing the Avatar even though his uncle warned him about the storm. In this scene, Zuko is controlled by his instinctual desire to capture the Avatar without considering the crew's safety.

2. **The id (instinctual desire):** Zuko's desire to be acknowledged by his father



Figure 2: (The Legend of Aang: The Last Airbender, Book 2, Earth: The Avatar State)
Scene 03:26 seconds.

Iroh: I see. This is the anniversary, isn't it?
Zuko: Three years ago today, I was banished. I lost it all. I want it back.
Zuko: I want the Avatar. I want my honor, my throne.
Zuko: I want my father not to think I'm worthless.
Iroh: I'm sure he doesn't. Why would he banish you if he didn't care?

In this scene, at 03:26 seconds, Zuko's instinctual desire can be seen through his dialogue when he expresses his desperation for his father's acknowledgment and his obsession with capturing the Avatar so that he will assume to himself that he can bring his honor back. Iroh, Zuko's uncle and also his companion, takes a role as a supporter of Zuko's feelings and understands them rather than judging them.

3. **The id (instinctual desire):** Zuko's impulsive behavior while capturing the Avatar



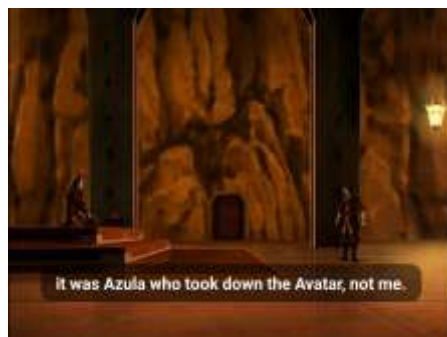
Figure 3: (The Legend of Aang: The Last Airbender, Book 1, Water: The Siege of The North Part 2)
Scene 04:35 seconds

Zuko: You're like my sister. Everything always came easy to her.
Zuko: She's a fire-bending prodigy, and everyone adores her.
Zuko: My father says she was born lucky. He says I was lucky to be born.
Zuko: I don't need luck, though. I don't want it.
Zuko: I've always had to struggle and fight, and that's made me strong.
Zuko: It's made me who I am.

Zuko's instinctual desire (id) is shown in scene 04:35, where he abducts Aang, the Avatar when he is still unconscious and takes him away from his family. There, Zuko has a conversation with himself directed to the unconscious Avatar; he says he doesn't need luck to be alive; he fights for his life, which makes him strong. The id indicator from Zuko in this scene is that he is driven by his basic needs, which is his thirst for his father's validation, and that is the reason he abducted Aang and also his need to seek immediate gratification, which came from capturing the Avatar without considering the consequences.

EGO

1. **The ego (immediate between id and superego):** Zuko's confession of killing the Avatar



**Figure 1: (The Legend of Aang: The Last Airbender, Book 3,
Fire: The Day of The Black Sun, Part 2: The Eclipse)**
Scene 10:01 seconds

Zuko: First of all, in Ba Sing Se, it was Azula who took down the Avatar, not me.

Ozai: Why would she lie to me about that?

Zuko: Because the Avatar is not dead. He survived.

Ozai: What?!

Zuko: In fact, he's probably leading this invasion. He could be on his way here right now.

Moreover, the Ego also consists of reasoning, tolerance, memory, understanding, judgment, as well as planning (Made Yulianti & Setiawan, 2022). In this scene, Zuko tells her father, Fire Lord Ozai, the truth that he was not the one who killed the Avatar, as his sister, Azula, told her father about Zuko, who finally accomplished his mission. Zuko's ego, which is immediate between his id and his superego, balances his decision in this scene, which is his id who wants to turn Azula down before his father so his father no longer thinks Azula is a fire bender prodigy. He becomes the messenger about the arrival of the Avatar, who wants to invade the Fire Lord Ozai's kingdom so his father would at least believe in him and his superego, who wants to admit his flaws, which is not yet capturing the Avatar.

2. The ego (immediate between id and superego): Zuko's desire to challenge Azula



Figure 2: (The Legend of Aang: The Last Airbender, Book 2, Earth: The Crossroads of Destiny)

Scene 03:15 seconds

Iroh: Come on! You'll be fine!

Zuko: No. I'm tired of running. It's time I face Azula.

Azula: You're so dramatic.

Azula: What? Are you gonna challenge me to an Agni Kai?

Zuko: Yes, I challenge you!

Zuko's id in this scene is to finally face his fear, which is to face Azula and challenge her to a battle. His superego is to appropriately offer Azula to a battle and fight in a fair game rather than attacking from behind. In this scene, Zuko's ego can be seen immediate his id and his superego.

SUPEREGO

1. The superego (moral conscience): Zuko's offering to help the Avatar to save the world.



Figure 1: (The Legend of Aang: The Last Airbender, Book 3, Fire: The Western Air Temple)

Scene 20:09 seconds

Aang: I can't believe I'm saying this, but thanks, Zuko.

Zuko: Listen. I know I didn't explain myself very well yesterday.

Zuko: I've been through a lot for the past few years, and it's been hard.

Zuko: But I'm realizing that I have to go through all those things to learn the truth.

Zuko: I thought I had lost my honor and that somehow my father could return it to me.

Zuko: But I know now that no one can give you your honor. It's something you earn for yourself by choosing to do what's right.

Zuko: All I want now is to do my part and end this war. And I know my destiny is to help you restore balance to this world.

Zuko finally realizes that what he's been doing, which is capturing the Avatar, is not the right thing to do, and he comes to the Avatar himself to admit his mistake. He finally realizes his destiny that he was born not to be the fire bender prodigy but to help Avatar restore the balance of the world and end the war between the four nations. This scene shows Zuko's superego and his moral conscience by how he realizes what's wrong and what's right by helping the Avatar.

- The superego (moral conscience):** Zuko's admitting to Aang and his friends how his power can be dangerous to other people



Figure 2: (The Legend of Aang: The Last Airbender, Book 3, Fire: The Crossroads of Destiny)

Scene 20:29 seconds

Zuko: I'm sorry for what I did to you. It was an accident.

Zuko: Fire can be dangerous and wild. So, as a firebender, I need to be more careful and control my bending so I won't hurt people unintentionally.

Aang: I think you should be my fire-bending teacher.

Aang: When I first tried to learn fire bending, I burned Katara. After that, I never wanted to firebend again.

Aang: But now I know you understand how easy it is to hurt people you love.

Aang: I'd like you to teach me.

Aang, the Avatar, has realized that Zuko is no longer his enemy. After admitting his mistakes and realizing that his power can easily hurt people around him, Aang realizes that Zuko is no longer the old Zuko obsessed with capturing the Avatar. Aang, the Avatar, then expresses his willingness to be taught by Zuko how to learn fire bending. The superego in Zuko shows significant character development in how his superego overcomes his id, makes him realize his action has been wrong, and he tries to make up for that.

3. The superego (moral conscience): Zuko's willing to help his friends against his own family



Figure 3: (The Legend of Aang: The Last Airbender, Book 3, Fire: The Southern Raiders)
Scene 02:36 seconds

Aang: What are you doing?

Zuko: Go ahead! I'll hold them off. I think this is a family visit.

Aang: Zuko. No!

Sokka: Come on! We gotta get out of here!

The explanation of the Superego believed that the existence of the Superego gives an individual had inner voice that constantly reminds the individual to be good and follow morality (Lapsley & Stey, 2011). In this scene in book 3, at 02:36 seconds, as the Fire Nation starts to attack the Ba Sing Se, the capital city of Earth Kingdom, Zuko tells Aang to go without him and save himself first while Zuko will hold the Fire Nation army and confronts his sister. In this scene, Zuko's superego has finally overcome his id and ego and turned him into someone heroic and empathetic rather than himself, who is ruthless, selfish, and only focusing on himself and his goals without concerning about others.

4. The superego (moral conscience): Zuko's prudence towards Aang

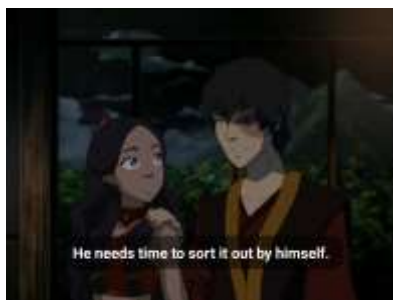


Figure 4: (The Legend of Aang: The Last Airbender, Book 3: Sozin's Comet, Part 1: The Phoenix King)
Scene 14:38 seconds

Aang: This goes against everything I learned from the monks.

Aang: I can't just go around wiping out people I don't like.

Sokka: Sure you can! You're the Avatar.

Sokka: If it's for the name to keep balance, I'm pretty sure the universe will forgive you.

Aang: This isn't a joke, Sokka!

Aang: None of you understand what position I'm in!

Katara: Aang, we do understand. It's just...

Aang: Just what, Katara?

Aang: What?

Katara: We're trying to help!

Aang: Then, why don't you figure out a way for me to beat the Fire Lord without taking his life? I'd love to hear it!

Katara: Aang! Don't walk away from this!

Zuko: Let him go. He needs time to sort it out by himself.

Aang, the Avatar, had to face his inner conflict when he was about to confront the Fire Lord before Sozin's Comet came. His inner conflict seems nothing to his friends because he is the Avatar; he can do whatever he wants, even killing people around him. Aang seems disappointed in his friends and walks out from the conversations. When Katara tries to approach him, Zuko stops her and tells her to give Aang time to sort out his conflicts by himself. In this scene, at 14:38, Zuko slowly shows his understanding and affection towards Aang, which he uses to chase and capture him down. This proves that Zuko's superego has made a significant change in his personality after going through a lot of inner and external conflicts, which made his personality change slowly for the better.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Sigmund Freud's pioneering work in psychoanalysis has significantly improved our knowledge of human psychology. It offers concepts such as the id, ego, and superego to explain the internal conflicts that people frequently experience. Characters such as Zuko from "Avatar: The Last Airbender" represent these conflicts and the search for balance. It can be concluded from this research that several data have been taken from scenes and dialogue Zuko speaks that show his id, ego, and superego. The id or instinctual desires of Zuko has been found in as much as three data; this indicator shows how Zuko's id controls his impulsiveness while making decisions and his desire to chase what he's been aiming for without considering other people's conditions. The ego that this personality is immediate between his id and his superego has been found as much as two data. The indicator of this personality is when Zuko still follows his desire yet starts using his moral conscience and doing it appropriately. Lastly is his superego, his moral conscience, where he begins thinking about his surroundings, realizing his mistake, and trying to make up for it. The data found for Zuko's superego is as much as four, showing that his superego becomes more prominent as the series goes on, and this shows the character development in Zuko's personality.

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