

PSYCHOANALYSIS OF BILLY HOPE'S ID, EGO, SUPEREGO, AND DEFENSE MECHANISMS IN SOUTHPAW MOVIE

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze the id, ego, superego in the character of Billy Hope and defense mechanisms to help him deal with his trauma and influence his decision in the Southpaw Movie. The method used was descriptive qualitative. The subject of this study was Billy Hope as the main character. The data collection technique was carried out watching the movie, taking notes, and classifying the theories based on Sigmund Freud and Anna Freud. The data analysis techniques used were organizing the data, reading the data, coding, identifying themes, and representing descriptions and themes. The results showed that Billy's id was more dominant than the ego and superego. The defense mechanisms used more were displacement/Sublimation, followed by undoing, turning against self, isolation, reaction formation, repression, and projection. The conclusion of this study were that the dominance of the id caused many of Billy Hope's actions to arise from emotional impulses, while defense mechanisms helped him channel those emotions into action that allowed him to survive, recover from trauma, and develop into a stronger person.

Keywords: Defense Mechanisms, Movie, Psychoanalysis, Structure of the Mind.

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a field that studies human life and imagination through written or spoken works. It is not only an art, but also a way to share feelings, ideas, and values. According to Izati (2022), literature shows human life in a sincere and natural way, and it can also give new knowledge. Hasanah (2019) explains that literature expresses the emotions, intelligence, and thoughts of a person. This means that a literary work is not just a simple story, but also a reflection of life and character through the imagination of the author. As We and Liru (2025) state, literature comes in many forms, such as poetry, prose, drama, and film, each with its own way of delivering messages.

Drama is one type of literature that may be written or performed orally. Movies are also considered part of drama because they present stories visually (Ramdani et al., 2023). Bosavi et al. (2023) explain that movies are very popular because they not only

entertain people but can also give education and moral values. Audiences often watch movies for fun, but they may also connect the story to their own lives and learn lessons from it. This shows that movies are both a source of entertainment and a medium to teach values.

One movie that contains strong moral values and emotional struggles is *Southpaw*. The movie was released in 2015 in the United States and directed by Antoine Fuqua. Brody (2015) praised the film for its powerful performances, especially Jake Gyllenhaal as Billy Hope and Forest Whitaker as Titus Wills, who made the story feel real and emotional. The story tells about Billy Hope, a professional boxer who has a perfect life with his wife and daughter. After his wife dies in a tragic accident, Billy loses control of his life. He loses his career, his home, and even custody of his daughter. To rebuild himself, Billy must fight again, not only in the boxing ring but also in his own heart and mind. He learns how to manage his anger, cope with grief, and become a better father. Because of its strong emotional story, *Southpaw* is chosen as the object of this research.

To analyze Billy's inner conflict, this study uses psychoanalysis theory. Psychoanalysis is a field of psychology that studies the conscious and unconscious parts of the mind. Abdulloh (2023) states that psychoanalysis focuses on personal experience and the way the mind works. Kenny (2017) explains that psychoanalysis studies hidden conflicts, defenses, and meanings, while Khafidhoh (2023) says that human actions are influenced by the relation between the conscious and unconscious mind. From these ideas, it can be said that psychoanalysis helps people to understand conflict, personality, and adaptation in life.

Psychoanalysis is very famous in psychology because of Sigmund Freud. Sigmund Freud is known as the father of psychoanalysis because he was the first to develop a systematic theory of the unconscious, personality structure (Id, Ego, Superego), and therapeutic methods such as free association and dream interpretation, and so on. Although his ideas are often criticized, his contributions are formed the basis of modern psychology and his theories are still studied today (Cherry, 2024).

In this study, the researcher uses theory of Sigmund Freud and Anna Freud. Sigmund Freud developed the concept of the personality structure namely; id, ego, and superego. The id is the instinct that seeks pleasure and satisfaction. The superego is the moral side that holds social values and norms. The ego works as the balance between the two. When the ego cannot manage the demands of the id and the rules of the superego, a

person may feel stress, anxiety, or sadness (Freud, 1961). Anna Freud continued the work of her father by focusing on defense mechanisms. In her book *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense* in 1936, she explained that defense mechanisms are strategies used by the ego to protect itself from inner conflict and outside pressure. Some of these mechanisms include repression, regression, projection, reaction formation, sublimation, and displacement (Freud, 1993). These show how people unconsciously try to defend themselves from pain, fear, or emotional conflict.

Previous studies also used psychoanalysis in analyzing characters. Wijaya (2021) found that the main character showed id, ego, and superego, with the id dominating most behaviors and supported by defense mechanisms to deal with stress. Utami (2018) found that character behavior and choices were shaped by the interaction of id, ego, and superego, using different techniques of characterization. These studies show that psychoanalysis can give deeper insight into character psychology in stories.

Based on these explanations, this study focuses on Billy Hope's character in *Southpaw* movie. The first aim is to analyze the id, ego, and superego of Billy Hope based on Sigmund Freud's theory. The second aim is to analyze the defense mechanisms of Billy Hope based on Anna Freud's theory. Therefore, this study is entitled: "Psychoanalysis of Billy Hope's Id, Ego, Superego, and Defense Mechanisms in *Southpaw* Movie."

RESEARCH METHOD

➤ Research Method and Procedures

This study used a descriptive qualitative method. A method is a plan or step to answer the problems of the research. According to Sidiq and Choiri (2019), qualitative research focuses on meaning, characteristics, and natural situations by using various ways, and the results are presented in a narrative form. Creswell and Creswell (2018) also explain that qualitative research uses developing questions and collects data from interviews, documents, observations, audiovisuals, texts, or images, and then interprets them into themes and patterns. In this study, the researcher applied descriptive qualitative research to describe how id, ego, superego, and defense mechanisms appeared in the *Southpaw* Movie. The researcher watched the movie, noted the important scenes, and observed the characters' actions. After that, the data were analyzed and explained using the theories of Sigmund Freud and Anna Freud.

➤ Data and Data Sources

This study used two kinds of data sources namely primary data and secondary data. There were:

a. Primary Data

Primary data come directly from the main object of the research without a middle source. Kothari (2004) explains that primary data can be collected through observation, interviews, questionnaires, or content analysis. In this study, the primary data were collected through content analysis of the Southpaw movie. The researcher watched the movie through Netflix or YouTube, and then observed the main character, Billy Hope, especially his dialogues and actions.

b. Secondary Data Source

Secondary data are data that have already been published or written before. According to Kothari (2004), secondary data can be found in journals, books, articles, newspapers, or other written sources. In this study, the secondary data were taken from books, journal articles, and previous studies related to psychoanalysis and literature.

➤ **Data Collection Techniques**

Kothari (2004) mentions two ways of data collection in qualitative research: historical record analysis and document analysis. In this study, the researcher used historical record analysis. The main source was the Southpaw movie (2015), directed by Antoine Fuqua. The movie was watched several times to observe the dialogues, emotions, and psychological development of the main character. The steps of collecting the data were:

1. Watching the Southpaw movie on Netflix or YouTube.
2. Taking notes and writing transcripts of the dialogues.
3. Checking the transcripts by comparing them with the actual dialogues.
4. Classifying the transcripts into categories of id, ego, superego, and defense mechanisms.

➤ **Procedures for Analyzing the Data**

The researcher followed the steps of qualitative data analysis suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018). The procedures included:

1. Organizing the data: The researcher arranged the transcripts and sorted them into different sections.

2. Reading the data : The researcher read and understood the data carefully to find meaning and main ideas.
3. Coding the data : The researcher grouped the data into categories such as id, ego, superego, and defense mechanisms. Codes were written with number, time, and category to make the data easier to analyze.
4. Describing and finding themes: The data were explained in narrative form, supported by tables and pictures.
5. Interpreting the meaning: The researcher explained the findings and drew conclusions to answer the research questions.

➤ **Validity of the Research**

To make sure the findings were valid; the researcher used four aspects of validity based on Sugiyono (2013), namely:

1. Credibility: The researcher checked the trustworthiness of the findings by reading the data many times, comparing them with previous studies, and discussing the results with the advisor.
2. Transferability: The results were written in detail and systematically, so other researchers could understand and use them in different situations.
3. Dependability: The process of the research was reviewed by the advisor as an independent auditor to make sure every step was consistent and reliable.
4. Confirmability: The researcher compared the analysis with the original data from the movie and checked the results again to ensure they were objective and not influenced by personal opinions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study examined the Southpaw Movie used Sigmund Freud's theory of the mind (1961) and Anna Freud's theory of defense mechanisms (1993). The analysis focused on the character of Billy Hope.

1. Structure of Billy's Minds

Based on Freud (1961), structure of Minds divided into three, namely:

a. Id

The id was the part of the human being that was filled with basic drives, such as anger, lust, and the desire for instant gratification. In Billy, the id emerged strongly early

in the movie, especially after the death of his wife, Maureen. The explanation below about Billy Hope's used, namely:

“00:11:46 Billy: I want you to line it up!
00:11:46 Jordan: Line it up?
00:11:49 Jordan: Miguel's just showboating, Billy.
00:11:50 Billy: I'm gonna shut him the fuck up.”

Explanation above showed that Billy refused to be underestimated by Miguel during a press conference. He asked his manager, Jonjon, to arrange a match against Miguel. In this dialogue, Billy stated that he repeatedly followed his own desires without considering logic or consequences.

b). Ego

The ego was the part of the personality that began to think logically. It mediated between the desires of the id and the reality around him. Billy begins to demonstrate the functions of the ego as his life worsens and he realized that acting impulsively only makes things worse. Here was the dialogue of Billy hope's that shows ego:

“00:11:23 Miguel: What are you drinking in that cup, man? Hey, you know what? You ain't no champ. You're all show and you know that. Why you so scared to fight me, Billy?
00:11:31 Billy: We all came and gave a good show tonight, didn't we, Jordan? Yeah? And I'm pretty sure we did business, didn't we? Yeah, all right. You all have a good night, okay? (*He didn't answer Miguel's words. He tried to hold back his anger.*)
00:11:39 Miguel: Sign the contract, baby!”

From the dialogue above, Billy restrained himself from being provoked by Miguel's emotions. He chose to speak calmly, demonstrating his logical thinking. Freud said the ego is the bridge between the id and the superego.

c). Superego

The superego was the part of the personality that judged what is right and wrong. This can be guilt, shame, or a desire to improve morally. Billy's superego grew as he strove to be a better father.

“00:58:40 Billy: I also need a job. Yeah, I need to... I need to prove to the court that I can hold a job.”

00:58:53 Tick: I got a... a night man who just had a stroke, and he was cleaning this whole place up. You could do that, you can get your fees, and you can make yourself a little check.

00:59:04 Billy: Wow, you want me to clean your fuckin' toilets?"

Billy realized he must prove himself as a responsible father. His superego here was that he acted according to social values. His attitude was a good way as a father.

2. Defense Mechanisms

Freud (1993) divided defense mechanisms into 10 types. However in this study the researcher found 7 types defense mechanisms of Billy Hope's in Southpaw Movie, namely:

a) Undoing

Undoing occurred when a person feels guilty for having done or thought something bad, and then he tried to make it up by doing good deeds. In this analysis, the researcher found undoing in this movie, namely:

“01:09:15 Tick : Yeah, yeah, yeah.

01:09:23 Billy : Yo, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. (*enter the bar again*).

01:09:25 Bartender: Hey, don't bring that shit back in here.”

In the dialogue above, Billy repeatedly said "I'm sorry" as a form of self-defense. He realized that his previous actions had hurt or harmed others, and to alleviate the guilt, he immediately apologized. Function of undoing in this part as a defense mechanism to restore the relationship with the person there, Tick.

b). Repression

Repression meant hiding pain or bad memories deep inside so they were not felt anything. But they were still there, just stored in the mind's vault. Here was the repression of Billy Hope's:

“00:22:36 Billy: It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter, babe. "I got dumped into foster care the..."

00:22:41 Billy: I don't want to do this. I can't do this.

00:22:44 Maureen: Hey, hey, come on. It's okay, come here.”

In the dialogue above, Billy said: “I don't want to do this,” it meant there were painful memories or feelings that must be hidden from reality. He did not want to speech in front of public. That was awkward for Billy.

c). Turning Against Self

Turning against self occurred when anger and disappointment that should have been directed at others were instead directed at oneself because he/she felt worthless. Let see in the dialogue below:

“00:46:22 Maureen: Baby, let's go home. Let's go home Let it go. Baby, baby, stop it... stop... (*Billy remembers his last memories with Maureen in the car*).

00:47:20 Billy: I'm sorry. I'm sorry..

00:47:22 Leila: Dad?

Billy felt he deserved to be punished because he felt he caused Maureen's death. He blamed himself and talked to himself. He remembered the last memory with Maureen, and he felt angry with his self. He drove his car to the tree. He hurts himself.

d). Reaction Formation

Reaction formation occurred when a person hid their negative things and then displayed an extreme opposite attitude. In the Southpaw Movie, the researcher analyzed there was one reaction formation, namely:

“01:26:53 Jordan: Can I talk to you? (*make Billy stop to go to leave*).

01:26:58 Billy: What do you want to talk about?

01:27:00 Jordan: I came to see you, man.

01:27:02 Billy: Well, you should be looking at Brady.”

Billy met Jordan after the match was over. Billy pretended to be calm, even though he did not like Jordan's personality. However, he still talked to Jordan. He displayed the opposite emotion from what he actually feels.

e). Projection

Projection occurred when someone had bad or guilty feelings, but he/she doesn't want to admit it, so they blame those feelings on other people. In the below was the projection that the researcher analyzed in the Southpaw Movie:

“00:34:20 Jonjon: I'm sorry!

00:34:25 Billy: You were the one who's supposed to fucking look after her. You were the one... you were the one that was supposed to look after her, huh?

00:34:36 Jonjon: I'm sorry for Mo. I'm sorry... and for your little”

Projection occurred when Billy rejected his feelings and blamed them on someone else. He was angry with Jonjon for not taking care of his wife at the time.

f). Isolation

Isolation was separating emotions from an event. So, someone might talk about something painful without any expression or feeling. Below was the isolation from Southpaw Movie:

“01:22:54 Leila: When?!”

01:23:01 Leila: **You... I hate you. I hate you!** (*slap*)

01:23:06 Leila: Why can't you just get me out of this place?!”

In the dialogue above, Billy's emotions and thoughts were separated. When his daughter slapped him, he did not fight back or get angry. He did not cry either. His face was normal and he tried to speak calmly to his daughter.

g). Sublimation/Displacement

Sublimation was a defense mechanism where someone changes strong or negative feelings into actions that were positive, useful, and accepted by society. The following was the example of sublimation in the Southpaw Movie:

“01:28:11 Billy: Yeah.

01:28:15 Tick: He's gonna sell it like it's a..a revenge match around the murder of your wife.

01:28:16 **Billy: Yeah, it'll all be about Mo.**

01:28:19 Tick: You're not considering it?”

From the conversation above, Billy Hope accepted Jordan's offer to fight Miguel because he felt deep pain and anger about his wife's death. In his heart, Billy wanted to get justice and to show his strength again. He could not bring his wife back, but he could face Miguel that connected to the night she died. It was called as sublimation theory because sublimation was when a person changed strong and painful feelings into actions that were more accepted and even respected. In addition, displacement was when a person moves their strong feelings from the real person or thing to another person or thing. In this Southpaw Movie, the researcher found four displacements. One of them was:

“00:12:06 Billy: You want me to say it again?

00:12:07 Jordan: You want to fight me?

00:12:08 Billy: Do you want to say it again? What do you want me to do?

00:12:11 Jordan: Why do you do this in front of all...”

From the dialogue above, it can be called as displacement because Billy takes out his anger on the objects around him. He was too emotional with Jordan who did not want to make a boxing match with Miguel. This scene took place after the press conference when Miguel provoked Billy's anger.

Based on the results, Billy's personality was found to include three structures of minds: the id, ego, and superego. In total, there were 21 findings: 9 for the id, 8 for the ego, and 4 for the superego. The id appeared most frequently and showed Billy's tendency to follow impulses, anger, and uncontrolled emotions, such as when he shouted or attacked without thinking. The ego appeared when Billy tried to deal with reality, for example when he sought a trainer or focused on training to get his daughter back. The superego appeared less often, but it showed his moral sense and guilt, such as when he expressed responsibility as a father or admitted his struggles. These findings showed that Billy's id was the most dominant part, but as the story continued, his ego and superego began to take stronger roles in shaping his behavior.

The study also found 16 defense mechanisms used by Billy to cope with his problems. Seven types appeared: repression, projection, turning against self, displacement/sublimation, reaction formation, undoing, and isolation. In the beginning, Billy often showed unhealthy defenses, such as blaming others (projection), repressing his feelings, or attacking himself with guilt. These actions only made his life more difficult and pushed him into reckless decisions. Later, however, Billy began to change. He often apologized (undoing), tried to hide pain by acting differently (reaction formation), or stayed calm even when rejected (isolation). The most positive change was sublimation, when he directed his pain and anger into boxing and training, which gave him the strength to recover.

In conclusion, it showed that Billy Hope's journey was shaped by the conflict between id, ego, and superego, along with the defense mechanisms he used to survive his trauma. At first, his defenses made his life worse, but over time, they guided him toward growth. Through sublimation and responsibility, Billy managed to rebuild his career, restore his relationship with his daughter, and develop into a stronger and more responsible person.

CONCLUSION

This study showed that Billy Hope's character in *Southpaw* reflected Sigmund Freud's theory of personality and Anna Freud's concept of defense mechanisms. The findings revealed that Billy's id appeared most often (9 items), followed by ego (8 items) and superego (4 items). This proved that Billy was more controlled by his impulses and emotions, especially anger, than by logic or moral values.

The defense mechanisms also played an important role in shaping Billy's behavior. Among the seven types found, sublimation/displacement appeared most frequently. This happened because Billy had strong emotional pain and anger that he could not express directly. At first, displacement made him release emotions in the wrong place, but later sublimation helped him turn those feelings into boxing and training. This process became a healthier way to manage his emotions. In short, the study concluded that Billy's journey moved from being dominated by the id toward greater balance with ego and superego. At the same time, his use of defense mechanisms, especially sublimation, showed his growth in facing trauma and rebuilding his life as a father and boxer.

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