

# INTEGRATING THE MEANING OF LIFE AND MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION THROUGH THE NOVEL A PORTION OF CHICKEN MIE BEFORE DIE BY BRIAN KHRISNA

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## Abstract

This study aims to analyze the psychological aspects of the main character in the novel *Seporsi Mie Ayam Before Death* by Brian Khrisna using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory as the main foundation. The method used is a qualitative approach with content analysis techniques. The focus of the research is on the interaction of Freud's three personality structures, namely id, ego, and superego in describing the inner conflicts experienced by the character. The results of the analysis show that the conflict between the instinctive impulse (id) to avoid suffering, the mechanism of self-control (ego), and moral demands or social norms (superego) form a realistic and complex psychological picture of the character. This dynamic also reveals how the characters struggle to find meaning in life in conditions of depression and existential crisis. This study shows that Freud's psychoanalytic approach is effective for the study of literary psychology in exploring mental health problems and the search for meaning in contemporary Indonesian literary works.

**Keywords:** Freud's Psychoanalysis, Literary Psychology, The Meaning of Life

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis aspek psikologis tokoh utama dalam novel *Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati* karya Brian Khrisna dengan menggunakan teori psikoanalisis Sigmund Freud sebagai landasan utama. Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik analisis isi. Fokus penelitian adalah pada interaksi tiga struktur kepribadian Freud yaitu id, ego, dan superego dalam menggambarkan konflik batin yang dialami tokoh. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa konflik antara dorongan naluriah (id) untuk menghindari penderitaan, mekanisme pengendalian diri (ego), dan tuntutan moral atau norma sosial (superego) membentuk gambaran psikologis tokoh yang realistis dan kompleks. Dinamika ini juga mengungkapkan bagaimana tokoh berjuang menemukan makna hidup dalam kondisi depresi dan krisis eksistensial. Penelitian ini memperlihatkan bahwa pendekatan psikoanalisis Freud efektif untuk kajian psikologi sastra dalam mengupas masalah kesehatan mental dan pencarian makna dalam karya sastra Indonesia kontemporer.

**Kata Kunci:** Psikoanalisis freud, Psikologi sastra, Makna hidup

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## INTRODUCTION

According to psychology, the meaning of life refers to an individual's reflection and observation regarding their own significant, subjective, and personal life goals and aspirations. The definition of meaning in life, according to (Arhamar & Ismail, 2025), is a situation in which a person actively and subjectively recognizes the importance of every aspect of their life, within the conceptual framework of freedom of will. The desires of existence are actualized, and the perspective of responsibility that accepts or rejects them (Rostanawa, 2018). Quality of life itself is a fundamental aspect of human development, distinct from other aspects that are based on an individual's level of activity. Life can also be characterized by the interpretation of events and motivations that contribute to one's quality of life (Suryadi et al., 2021).

Mental health is a state in which an individual is able to recognize their own abilities, manage daily tasks, work productively, and contribute to their community (Pioh et al., 2022). Serious disorders, such as depression, require social and professional relationships. In the context of literary studies, it is emphasized that literary psychology strengthens critical thinking skills in analyzing other aspects of human psychology in literary texts. Literary psychology analyzes not only aesthetics but also other aspects. Literary psychology also analyzes the conflicts, emotional reactions, and artistic journeys in the lives of fictional characters, which are continually described by authors who address real ideologies, beliefs, and perceptions of life. Furthermore, the topic of mental health and well-being is often discussed in relation to human well-being. Psychological literature reveals the light. Literature helps mental health function well. Readers and those who enjoy literature themselves. Self-expression through reading generates emotions that are difficult to express without words or reading. Literary psychology provides a way for readers to explore their emotions, including being upset, inspired, and empathizing with the characters in the reading.

Brian Khrisna's novel "Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati" offers a story that enhances knowledge about quality of life and mental health from a literary psychological perspective. Based on the life story of Ale, a 37-year-old man who has suffered from depression since childhood, readers can see how mental illness is not only about self-harm and self-destructive behavior but also about social bullying, lack of support from friends, and other issues. Therefore, Ale can be considered a special beneficiary of someone experiencing mental health problems and a decline in their quality of life. This novel illustrates how literary works create space for psychological research and the study of meaning to engage with social discourse on mental health issues.

Based on the principles of literary psychology, the analysis of Brian Khrisna's novel "A Portion of Chicken Noodles Before Dying" can also be supported by Sigmund Freud's psychiatric theory, which divides human nature into three main aspects: the id, the ego, and the superego. In the analysis of Ale's character, there are numerous textual examples that highlight the internal conflict between these three aspects. The id, as instinctive and emotional drives, is expressed in Ale's desire to be realized in all aspects of life. The ego, on the other hand, as the source of empathy and decision-making, strives to balance these drives with social reality and a sense of responsibility, as evidenced by Ale's actions in planning his death and preparing a detailed plan. Consequently, the superego, as the judge of social and moral norms, is seen internally as the inner voice that drives Ale to continue seeking danger, even if it only consists of a few bagged meals to be consumed before taking antidepressants. Therefore, this research is successful not only because it is based on specific sources but also because it can create a complex psychological picture before the onset of depression.

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Ale's story provides insights into the symptoms of depression, as Siloam Hospital recognizes that mental illness is chronic and serious and requires special attention from those close to the individual as well as from professionals who can help. For this reason, it was discovered that Ale's craving for noodles before taking medication was a classic escape from the freedom of choice permitted by life's absurd laws.

Furthermore, this novel explains the importance of balancing the little things in life. For every individual, "a portion of chicken noodles" is a daily reminder. Through this novel, Brian Khrisna aims to remind readers that existence is not always associated with great achievements, but also with certain negative aspects that can be psychological triggers. This novel also serves as a tool for Educational and social reflections can help dispel negative stereotypes related to mental health issues in Indonesian society, as well as influence Indonesian society through a humanistic and realist psychological approach.

Psychological literature, in this novel analysis, specifically emerges as an important perspective for discussing the state of human psychology in literary works. Psychological literature not only explores aesthetic and narrative features but also examines fictional characters in terms of internal conflict, emotional experiences, and trajectories of life's meaning, reflecting reality in psychological terms. In this sense, mental health and the meaning of life are common topics for this research, revealing the depths of the human soul and struggles (Ahsan & Rizal, 2014).

In line with the view of Aditya Ansor Alsunah (2026), psychological literature is understood as an approach that positions literary works as representations of the dynamics of the human psyche. Psychological literature examines characters, plots, and inner conflicts as manifestations of mental processes, emotions, and the subjective experiences of the author and characters, thus enabling literary works to function as a medium for reflective, empirical, and contextual psychological understanding.

Novels like Brian Khrisna's "Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati" (Chicken Noodles Before Dying) are examples of works that use literary-mental psychology to depict depression and aesthetic crises, particularly in the characters, allowing readers to understand psychological phenomena and relate to the characters' lives. Therefore, a literary-psychiatric perspective paves the way for understanding the relationship between mental health and quality of life as fundamental aspects of human life and also highlights the role of literature in promoting mental health in a comprehensive and accessible manner.

Furthermore, research shows that people with a higher quality of life consistently have better mental health and a lower risk of stress (Azizah et al., 2022). Literature is also considered a powerful medium that can help students understand, overcome, and express complex psychological issues, perhaps through creating or enjoying literary works (Ahsan & Rizal, 2014) and (Pioh et al., 2022). Literary psychology uses literary knowledge to address mental health and quality of life issues from a personal perspective, enabling students to gain a deeper understanding of psychology from a humanistic perspective (Wulan, 2025) and (Agustiningsih & Nurhadi, 2024).

Based on the above, the research to be examined in this study is Exploring the Meaning of Life and Mental Health in Brian Khrisna's Novel "Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati" (Chicken Noodles Before Dying): Literary Psychology.

## **METHOD**

This research methodology uses qualitative research aligned with literary psychology. It is exploratory and interpretive in nature, aiming to understand the psychological aspects of characters and create symbols in scripture. Literary psychology allows researchers to examine the psychological effects, mental conflicts, and the relationship between everyday life and mental health that are present in the narrative and characters. The primary data source for this study is the novel "Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati," written by Brian Khrisna. The secondary data source includes literature related to literary psychology, lifestyle, mental health, and literary criticism related to improving the analysis. References from books, scientific journals, articles, and digital sources are used as interpretive tools. Data collection techniques are carried out through document observation, such as reading, identifying, and noting new things related to the main themes of quality of life and mental health. This process includes understanding the narrative, dialogue, characters, and psychological descriptions contained in the text. The data analysis technique uses content analysis, focusing on the psychological interpretation of literature.

The analysis includes the following stages: Information describing textual aspects related to the characters' psychological problems and lifestyles. Presentation Information Analyze data according to themes, such as illustrations of depression, inner conflict, and the process of reflecting on one's life. Conclusion Drawing: Interpretation is carried out using structural psychology theory, especially Sigmund Freud's theory. This is to understand the relationship between psychological and textual elements in a novel. Data Validity Data analysis is carried out using triangulation source techniques, which compare new findings with previous theories and research in the fields of literary psychology and mental health. In addition, the researcher critically examines the data and interpretation results to ensure consistency and understanding. The main instrument of the research is the researcher himself as an observer and text analyst who applies the framework of literary psychology in reading and interpreting the novel. Other supporting materials include notes, literature documents, and software tools if needed for organizing data.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

According to Brian Khrisna's novel "A Portion of Chicken Noodles Before Death," the book depicts Ale's psychological state, characterized by acute depression and a searching lifestyle. According to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, Ale's personality stems from three key psychological concepts: the id, ego, and superego. It also explores Ale's instincts and his desire to end his suffering. The ego gives Ale the ability to control the id's impulses by influencing structured reality and planning for death. The superego is a component that helps people understand themselves, create existential conflict, and resolve internal conflicts within their own lives.

The novel realistically depicts the journey of a character with strong mental health but also a subtle sense of danger, exemplified by his desire to stop eating before dying. For those experiencing psychological problems, this represents a universal conflict, a search for meaning,

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and a reflection of the painful reality of life. Beyond its literary value, the story also offers important moral and social lessons about the need to maintain one's lifestyle and understand mental health conditions, particularly how stress and anxiety can arise, even in difficult times.

This novel allows readers to reflect on their inner lives and observe that everyone has a "silent battle" that requires patience and forbearance. Through its psychological literary approach, *A Portion of Chicken Noodles Before Dying* succeeds in being a work that is not only entertaining but also provides psychological insights that improve and support mental health literacy and reduce stigma against individuals with depression through an emotional and empathetic narrative.

## Discussion

Psychological theory is the primary focus of this research, particularly Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Freud's theory of the id, ego, and superego helps explain Ale's complex personality structure and the forces of conflict that influence his emotional journey. According to Freud, the id fosters instincts and desires to quickly overcome suffering, while the ego serves as a rational controller that alters these actions by altering reality. The superego, on the other hand, embodies guilt and anxiety, leading to a persistent search for meaning in life.

Using this theory as a guide, the psychological literary analysis of "Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati" (*A Portion of Chicken Noodles Before Dying*) provides comprehensive insight into the psychological aspects of the book and provides relevant and humanistic insights into quality of life and mental health. This analysis also provides a means of reflection for readers to understand human mental health and the importance of empathy and mental health literacy in everyday life.

The following table explains the psychological analysis of Ale in the novel "Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati" based on Freud's theory.

Table 1. Results of the psychological analysis of the characters based on Freud's theory.

Psychic Aspect	Deskription	Example Quotes from the Novel	Explanation in Role Analysis	Understanding the Character of Ale
Id	The subconscious aspect containing instinctive and instinctual drives, seeking satisfaction and escape from suffering without considering reality or morals.	Now my resolve is firm. I will commit suicide 24 hours from now." (p. 18) "I want to die, but I also want chicken noodles." (p. 34)	The id drives Ale to escape the sadness and suffering of life with destructive desires (suicide) while simultaneously seeking instant gratification (eating chicken noodles). This is a spontaneous	Showing Ale's dark side and inner conflict, strong instinctive drives lead to despair and extreme actions. The desire for chicken noodles demonstrates a hedonistic desire that conflicts

			impulse without rational control	with the death instinct.
Ego	he aspect that processes based on reality, regulating and mediating between id drives and social norms; acting rationally and orderly.	"I started cleaning my room. At least if I die tomorrow, I will be found in a clean room." "I took the plastic bag on the nightstand and poured the entire contents of the medicine bottle onto the mattress..." (pp. 22-23)	The ego facilitates Ale's orderly and realistic behavior despite his suicide plan, managing his id desires in a structured and realistic manner.	This demonstrates Ale's rational function, his ability to regulate himself amidst internal conflict. The ego acts as a mediator, making Ale's decisions and actions appear controlled and non-impulsive.
Superego	The moral and conscientious aspect that assesses, controls, and regulates behavior based on social norms and ethical values.	I don't want to leave this world with the embers of anger still burning in my heart." (p. 20) "I immediately got up, grabbed the medicine, and flushed it down the toilet..."	The superego encourages Ale to consider the moral and social implications, uphold moral values, seek redemption, and even reject suicide and seek inner peace.	This demonstrates Ale's moral awareness, his inner drive to adhere to social and religious values, and his hope for recovery and a return to meaning in life.

This table illustrates the psychological structure of Ale in the novel "A Portion of Chicken Noodles Before Dying," based on Freud's theory, which divides personality into three main aspects: the Id, the Ego, and the Superego.

The Id represents Ale's strong instinctive drives and instincts, namely the desire to hide as a result of suffering and the desire to sleep like a chicken, which emphasizes uncontrolled biological and emotional desires. These desires are a form of the broad-minded reality Ale perceives. However, the Id also creates desires for gentleness and kindness, such as the desire to eat chicken, a biological symbol that contrasts with the desire to be like death. This indicates that emotional and kind human needs persist in the face of adversity. This illustrates that Ale is not only affected by destruction but also by the need for pleasure and comfort, regardless of the time.

The Ego functions as a controller, working to align Ale's desires with reality. Although Ale plans, he acts in an orderly manner, considering social consequences such as cleaning his room and writing a letter, and planning his actions logically. This demonstrates Ale's ego's ability to adapt his actions based on social reality and the need to strengthen his image, perhaps even when faced with severe psychological problems. Thus, the ego functions as a balance, ensuring

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that the ideas conveyed Ale is not impulsive and is well-positioned to control his actions. Ale's moral and ethical nature is characterized by unwavering adherence to social and religious values, self-control in the face of adversity, and, finally, signs of hope and inner peace in diligently observing his own death.

The superego represents Ale's moral and conscience aspects, which internalize social values and ethical norms. Ale's superego presents a strong moral conflict regarding his decision to commit suicide. Although driven by despair, his conscience and moral voice prevent him from carrying out his intention immediately, as reflected in the quote: "I don't want to leave this world with the embers of anger still burning in my heart." This superego reflects Ale's moral awareness, reminding him of his social responsibility and hope for redemption, thus inhibiting his destructive impulses and opening up the possibility of inner peace and a search for new meaning.

The conflict between these three aspects illustrates Ale's complex and realistic psychology by highlighting the fundamental differences between morality, realism, and despair. Ale's superego drives him to search for signs of his life and his soulmate, leading to reflection and perhaps a search for forgiveness or reconciliation. This is a warning sign that suggests there's a way to remain calm even in extremely difficult situations. The conflict and interaction between the id, ego, and superego create a highly complex and realistic psychological portrait of Ale. This turmoil implies an inner struggle that not only satisfies destructive and escapist desires but also encourages business to be more grounded in reality and moral standards. Ale, a nuanced character, is not a symbol of despair; rather, he reflects the human suffering typically experienced in cases of trauma or severe psychological disorders.

Furthermore, research supported by literature on the psychology of literature confirms that literature can be an effective medium for understanding psychological complications and human existential reflection. Literary psychology demonstrates how inner conflicts like Ale's can be visualized in literary narratives, providing readers with greater insight into mental health conditions and the search for meaning in life (Suryadi et al., 2021), (Rahmawati, 2018), and (Wilyah et al., 2021).

Furthermore, through an understanding of Freudian psychology, it can be understood that Ale's suffering is not simply a negative psychological phenomenon but also an invitation to see inner conflict and the potential for growth within human limitations. Freud emphasized that the conflict between impulse (id), reality (ego), and morality (superego) is an integral part of the human experience, and can lead to more mature mental development if addressed appropriately (Ristiana & Adeani, 2017) (Bahasa et al., 2020). In the context of mental health, this understanding is relevant for alleviating stigma and opening up empathy for individuals experiencing depression and existential crises. This novel can serve as a non-formal educational medium that bridges psychological and social awareness through Freud's humanistic perspective in understanding human psychology (Azizah et al., 2022).

This helps readers understand the depth of Ale's character as someone facing severe mental stress, while also opening up reflections on mental health and the meaning of life. Furthermore, this analysis provides a different and profound lens through which to view Ale, not merely as a character with psychological problems, but as a human being with spiritual and existential dimensions filled with hope and universal conflict. This view adds value and depth to the novel

"A Portion of Chicken Noodles Before Dying" in the context of understanding human psychology during difficult times.

## **CONCLUSION**

A novel has intrinsic elements such as theme, characterization, setting, plot, point of view, style, and moral. These elements are essential in a novel to create a complete story. Equally important are characters and characterization. A character is someone involved in a story, while characterization is the imbuing of both physical and spiritual characteristics to an actor or character. Generally, characterization in a literary work consists of a protagonist and an antagonist. The protagonist is a character admired by readers for their admirable qualities, honesty, courage, and the moral message and positive values conveyed in the story. Meanwhile, the antagonist is a character who creates conflict and hinders the protagonist from achieving their goals, often embodying values that conflict with the protagonist.

The analysis of the 1998 novel "Hi Berlin" found 11 characters, divided into two types: protagonist and antagonist. The protagonists include Sakeza Labiru, Jan Adam, Abarak, Hazel, Bryan, Julie, Erica, and Sakeza's parents. Antagonist characters include Araka Bentara and Vodka. Each character has different traits, physical descriptions and characters with their own characteristics. First, Sakeza Labiru as the main character has physical characteristics of white skin, brown eyes, long hair and round cheeks. He is also friendly and kind. Second, Jan Adam is a male character who does not talk much, is smart, hardworking, obedient, and brave. Adam has a prominent physical characteristic, namely his blue eyes. Third, Araka Bentara, he is Sakeza's ex-boyfriend, he is the antagonist in this novel. Raka has an arrogant, rude, harsh, and divisive nature. Fourth, Erica is Sakeza's female best friend who is the protagonist. Erica is critical and thoughtful, she always thinks about her actions carefully. Erica is the wisest friend in advising. Erica has physical characteristics of short hair. Fifth, Julie is Sakeza's female best friend and Erica who is the protagonist. Julie is a talkative and brave character. Unstable in facing something and has high solidarity. Sixth, Sakeza's mother is a dentist, she has a talkative, affectionate nature and always gives positive things. Seventh, Vodka is Adam's older sister. Vodka prioritizes education, this is what makes Vodka firm with Adam to focus on his education. But behind her firmness, Vodka feels Adam is her responsibility. Eighth, Abarak is Sakeza's male best friend, he was friends with Sakeza before Julie and Erica. Abarak is not told much, only two scenes, but his arrival saves Sakeza. Ninth, Hazel and Bryan are Adam's best friends. They have the same character, mischievous, talkative, often make people around them laugh, supportive, and sometimes wise. This is proven by them always making fun of Adam, advising Adam and defending Adam when Adam is bullied by Raka. Hazel's emotions are more inflamed than Bryan who is able to control them. And finally, Sakeza's father has a friendly personality, this is proven when Adam's arrival is warmly welcomed by Sakeza's father.

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