



## Exploring the psychological values of the main character in Tere Liye's *Burlian* for Indonesian language learning

Aghna Joan Aqila<sup>1</sup>, Adyana Sunanda<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Department of Indonesian Language and Literature Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Surakarta, Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the personality structure of the main character in *Burlian* by Tere Liye based on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, which consists of the id, ego, and superego, and to examine its relevance to Indonesian language learning. This research employed a qualitative descriptive design. Data were collected through library research and note-taking techniques. The data consisted of excerpts from the novel that reflected the personality aspects of the main character. The analysis focused on identifying and interpreting the manifestations of the id, ego, and superego in *Burlian*'s character. The findings reveal that *Burlian* possesses a complex personality structure. The id is reflected in his impulsive behaviors and instinctive desires, the ego is demonstrated through his ability to adapt to reality and make rational decisions, and the superego is shown through his moral awareness and acceptance of the consequences of his actions. These three aspects indicate *Burlian*'s emotional and moral development throughout the story. The study concludes that the psychological portrayal of *Burlian* provides valuable insights into character development and can support Indonesian language learning, particularly in literature classes. The findings may serve as a learning resource to foster students' critical thinking, reflective abilities, and character development.

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### Corresponding Author:

Aghna Joan Aqila,  
Department of Indonesian Language Education,  
Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta,  
Jl. Ahmad Yani, Pabelan, Kartasura, Sukoharjo, Jawa Tengah, 57169, Indonesia  
Email: a310220015@student.ums.ac.id

## INTRODUCTION

Literary works serve not only as artistic expressions but also as reflections of human life, values, and psychological experiences (Rifka, 2024). Among various literary genres, novels provide rich representations of human behavior, conflicts, and character development, making them valuable resources for both literary studies and educational contexts (Hidayat et al., 2024). Through characterization, readers can explore moral, social, and psychological values that contribute to personal growth and critical understanding (Sudianto et al., 2024).

In Indonesian language learning, novels play an important role in developing students' literary appreciation, critical thinking, and character formation (Haryati et al., 2026). Character

analysis enables students to understand the motivations, conflicts, and moral decisions of literary figures while fostering reflective and analytical skills (Salsabila, 2025). Therefore, examining literary characters through psychological approaches can provide meaningful insights for educational purposes (Rahmawati et al., 2025).

One of the most widely used approaches in literary studies is psychoanalytic criticism (Hayati & Alfian, 2026). Freud's psychoanalytic theory explains human personality through three interrelated structures: the id, ego, and superego (Alfiah, 2024). The id represents instinctive desires and impulses, the ego mediates between desires and reality, and the superego functions as the moral regulator of behavior (Sari, 2022). This framework is useful for understanding the psychological dimensions of literary characters and the values conveyed through their actions (Naimah et al., 2026).

Tere Liye's *Burlian* presents a compelling protagonist whose experiences reflect emotional growth, moral development, and psychological complexity (Darnik et al., 2026). Throughout the story, *Burlian* demonstrates curiosity, courage, perseverance, and empathy while facing various life challenges (Syahputra et al., 2024). These characteristics make the novel relevant for exploring psychological values that can support character education in Indonesian language learning (Salsabila et al., 2023).

Several recent studies have examined psychological and character values in literary works. Resti, (2021) analyzed the psychological aspects and character education values in *Hati Suhita*, finding that literary characters can serve as effective media for character development. Rahmadiyah, (2022) investigated character education values in *Sepatu Dahlan* and highlighted the educational significance of the protagonist's life experiences. Maghfiroh, (2025) explored character values in *Si Anak Pelangi* using a literary psychology approach and demonstrated the relevance of psychological analysis in literature learning. Although these studies examined psychological and educational values in novels, limited research has specifically focused on the personality structure of the main character in *Burlian* based on Freud's psychoanalytic theory and its implications for Indonesian language learning (Liku, 2022).

However, previous literary psychology studies on Tere Liye's works generally tend to focus on thematic analysis, moral values, or character education without a deep examination of the structural personality dynamics (id, ego, and superego) of a central character. As a result, the psychoanalytic interpretation of character development in *Burlian* remains underexplored, particularly in terms of how psychological conflicts shape moral growth throughout the narrative.

In addition, most studies have not explicitly connected psychoanalytic literary analysis with current classroom practices in Indonesian language learning, where literature is expected not only to be analyzed structurally but also to support students' character building, reflective thinking, and emotional intelligence development.

Psychoanalytic studies are therefore relevant to current educational needs because they allow students to understand human behavior more deeply through literary characters, helping them connect psychological concepts with real-life moral and social decision-making. This aligns with the demand for literature-based learning in schools that emphasizes both cognitive competence and character education in the Merdeka Curriculum context.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the personality structure of the main character in *Burlian* through the concepts of id, ego, and superego and to analyze the psychological values reflected in the novel. The findings are expected to contribute to literary studies and provide an alternative learning resource for strengthening character-based Indonesian language education.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the psychological characteristics of the main character in *Burlian* by Tere Liye and their relevance to Indonesian language learning. Qualitative research is suitable for examining literary works because it allows researchers to

interpret meanings, values, and psychological aspects embedded in texts in a comprehensive and contextual manner (Yermias et al., 2023). The primary data source was the novel *Burlian*, while the data consisted of words, phrases, dialogues, and narrative passages reflecting the personality structure of the main character. Data were collected through library research and note-taking techniques by reading the novel thoroughly, identifying relevant quotations, and recording textual evidence related to psychological aspects. The collected data were then analyzed using content analysis. The analysis was conducted by classifying the data according to Freud's psychoanalytic concepts of id, ego, and superego, interpreting the psychological meanings of the selected quotations, and identifying psychological values reflected in the character's behavior, thoughts, and actions. To ensure the credibility of the findings, the researcher repeatedly reviewed and cross-checked the textual data and interpretations. The results were subsequently evaluated based on their consistency with Freud's psychoanalytic theory and their relevance to character-based Indonesian language learning, and were presented descriptively to provide a comprehensive understanding of the psychological development of the main character.

The selection of quotations was based on several criteria. First, the quotation must explicitly or implicitly reflect the psychological condition or behavior of the main character, Burlian. Second, the quotation must clearly represent one of Freud's personality structures, namely the id (instinctive and impulsive behavior), ego (rational and reality-based behavior), or superego (moral awareness and ethical judgment). Third, the quotation must contain contextual narrative or dialogue that allows interpretation of psychological meaning. Fourth, the selected data were limited to passages that show behavioral relevance to character development and moral values in the storyline.

The identification of psychological values in each quotation was guided by specific indicators derived from Freud's psychoanalytic framework. Indicators of the id include impulsive actions, pleasure-oriented behavior, lack of consideration of consequences, and instinct-driven decisions. Indicators of the ego include rational thinking, emotional regulation, problem-solving based on reality, and adaptive behavior in social situations. Meanwhile, indicators of the superego include moral awareness, feelings of guilt or responsibility, adherence to social norms, empathy toward others, and ethical judgment in evaluating actions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Exploration of the Main Character's Personality and Psychological Values in *Burlian* by Tere Liye

Table 1 presents the personality traits and psychological values reflected in the main character, Burlian, in Tere Liye's *Burlian*.

**Table 1.** Burlian's personality traits and psychological values

No.	Data (Excerpt)	Page	Character Trait	Psychological Aspect
1	"Although everyone knew that whenever his mischievous side emerged, even a severe cold could not stop him from causing trouble."	p. 1	Impulsive	Id
2	"I know I judged the group too quickly and unfairly, but it was not entirely my fault for being suspicious of them," said Burlian, realizing that he did not know children were prohibited from entering the area.	p. 16	Self-aware (introspective)	Superego
3	"The night before, we carefully planned to skip school and intentionally did not bring our school bags. When the first break bell rang at 9:45 a.m., Pukat and I hid our books under our clothes and slipped away among the children who were busy playing."	p. 19	Mischievous	Id
4	"Are you strong enough to carry all of this, Burlian?"	p. 23	Strong	Ego
5	"We began to understand the rules. This was clearly not the fun we had imagined; it was a punishment for skipping school. As the ones being punished, protesting would only make the punishment worse,"	p. 25	Accepting responsibility	Superego

No.	Data (Excerpt)	Page	Character Trait	Psychological Aspect
6	said Burlian after realizing his mother knew he had skipped school. Instead of becoming angry, he accepted his mistake. "I grimaced, chewing a lump of rice with teary eyes."	p. 26	Resilient and self-controlled	Ego
7	"After taking a bath and having dinner, we immediately fell asleep. We were too exhausted even to start questioning Amelia about whether she had reported us for skipping school two days earlier."	p. 28	Curious	Ego
8	"They insulted Ahmad by calling him an illegitimate child, Sir. They started it first."	p. 48	Protective / Defender of others	Ego

Character refers to the distinctive traits inherent in an individual that influence how a person thinks, behaves, and speaks (Salsta & Hikmat, 2024). Meanwhile, the Ministry of National Education defines character as a person's disposition, morality, and personality formed through the internalization of virtues that guide attitudes and actions (Anzar et al., 2025). In literary works, character is reflected through a character's thoughts, speech, actions, and responses to particular situations. Psychology, particularly personality psychology, is relevant to literary studies because it examines human behavior and personality traits. This study analyzes the personality of the main character in *Burlian* based on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory.

Data 1 "Although everyone knew that whenever his mischievous side emerged, even a severe cold could not stop him from causing trouble."

This quotation illustrates Burlian's impulsive personality. The expression "could not stop him from causing trouble" indicates that he continues to follow his desires despite being physically unwell. His behavior is driven more by the urge to satisfy his wishes than by consideration of his health condition. According to Freud's psychoanalytic theory, this behavior reflects the id, which operates based on the pleasure principle. The id encourages individuals to seek immediate satisfaction without considering reality, consequences, or social expectations. In this case, Burlian's desire to remain active and playful is stronger than his awareness of his physical limitations.

Data 2 "I know I judged the group too quickly and unfairly, but it was not entirely my fault for being suspicious of them."

This quotation demonstrates Burlian's ability to evaluate his own actions. He realizes that he has judged others unfairly and openly acknowledges his mistake. Such self-reflection indicates the presence of moral awareness and a sense of responsibility toward his behavior. In Freud's theory, this aspect is associated with the superego, which functions as the moral component of personality. The superego guides individuals to distinguish between right and wrong and encourages them to act according to ethical standards. Although Burlian still attempts to justify his suspicion, his recognition that he acted unfairly shows that moral considerations play an important role in his decision-making process.

Data 3 "The night before, we carefully planned to skip school and intentionally did not bring our school bags. When the first break bell rang at 9:45 a.m., Pukat and I hid our books under our clothes and slipped away among the children who were busy playing."

This quotation reveals Burlian's mischievous and rule-breaking behavior. The actions of planning to skip school, intentionally leaving his school bag behind, and secretly leaving the school environment indicate a strong desire to pursue personal enjoyment. Although the act involves planning, the primary motivation is not responsibility or rational consideration but rather the fulfillment of personal wishes. From Freud's perspective, this behavior reflects the dominance of the id, which seeks pleasure and immediate gratification. Burlian prioritizes his desire to escape school activities over compliance with school rules, showing that instinctive impulses are more influential than moral or social obligations in this situation.

Data 4 "Are you strong enough to carry all of this, Burlian?"

This quotation highlights Burlian's physical strength and ability to respond appropriately to a real-life situation. The question implies that he possesses the capability to handle a demanding task and meet the expectations of his environment. According to Freud's psychoanalytic theory, this behavior can be associated with the ego, which operates according to the reality principle. The ego enables individuals to act realistically by considering their actual abilities and circumstances. Although the quotation does not explicitly portray an internal psychological conflict, it suggests that Burlian is able to function effectively and adaptively in dealing with practical challenges. Therefore, the quotation reflects the role of the ego in guiding behavior that is consistent with reality.

Data 5 *"We began to understand the rules of the game. This was clearly not the fun we had imagined at first; it was actually a punishment because we had skipped school. As the ones being punished, protesting would only make the punishment worse."*

This quotation demonstrates Burlian's growing moral awareness after violating school rules. He realizes that the punishment he receives is a direct consequence of his decision to skip school and accepts responsibility for his actions. In Freud's theory, this attitude reflects the function of the superego, which is responsible for moral judgment, conscience, and adherence to social norms. Burlian does not react with anger or excessive self-defense; instead, he acknowledges his mistake and accepts the consequences. His understanding that protesting would worsen the situation further indicates respect for rules and an awareness of personal responsibility. This quotation suggests that Burlian has developed a strong moral perspective and is capable of evaluating his behavior according to ethical standards.

Data 6 *"I grimaced, chewing a lump of rice with teary eyes"*

This quotation portrays Burlian's emotional resilience in a difficult situation. The expressions "grimaced" and "teary eyes" indicate that he is experiencing emotional pain or discomfort. However, despite these feelings, he continues eating and does not openly express his distress. From Freud's perspective, this behavior reflects the role of the ego, which mediates between emotional impulses and the demands of reality. Rather than allowing his emotions to overwhelm him, Burlian manages to control his feelings and maintain appropriate behavior. This demonstrates his ability to adapt to challenging circumstances while remaining composed. The quotation reveals that Burlian is emotionally strong, self-controlled, and capable of coping with hardship in a rational manner.

Data 7 *"After taking a bath and having dinner, we immediately fell asleep. We were too exhausted even to start questioning Amelia and find out whether she was the one who had reported us for skipping school two days earlier."*

This quotation reflects Burlian's ability to control his emotions and make rational decisions. Although he is curious and suspicious that Amelia may have reported him, he does not immediately act on these feelings. Instead, he recognizes his physical exhaustion and chooses to rest before addressing the issue. According to Freud's psychoanalytic theory, this behavior represents the function of the ego, which operates based on the reality principle. The ego helps individuals balance emotional impulses with practical considerations. Rather than reacting impulsively, Burlian evaluates the situation realistically and postpones action until he is in a better condition. This demonstrates that he is capable of managing his emotions wisely and making thoughtful decisions. The quotation portrays Burlian as a rational, calm, and emotionally mature character.

Data 8 *"They insulted Ahmad by calling him an illegitimate child, Sir. They started it first."*

This quotation demonstrates Burlian's strong sense of justice and concern for others. His response is not merely an emotional reaction but a defense of someone who has been treated unfairly. Burlian feels compelled to stand up for Ahmad because he recognizes that the verbal insult is morally wrong. In Freud's psychoanalytic theory, this attitude reflects the role of the superego, which represents moral values, conscience, and social norms. The superego encourages

individuals to act according to principles of fairness and ethical responsibility. By explaining the situation and defending his friend, Burlian shows moral courage and empathy. He is willing to speak the truth even when doing so may lead to consequences for himself. This quotation highlights Burlian's development as a character who values justice, honesty, and compassion. Such psychological values are highly relevant to Indonesian language learning because they can help foster students' moral awareness, empathy, and character development through literary works.

### **Relevance of the Main Character's Personality and Psychological Values in Tere Liye's *Burlian* to Indonesian Language Learning**

Based on the analysis of eight excerpts from Tere Liye's *Burlian*, it can be concluded that the main character demonstrates a complex personality structure consisting of the id, ego, and superego. These psychological aspects reflect Burlian's character development and provide valuable insights that can be integrated into Indonesian language learning, particularly in character education through literary appreciation (Derojat et al., 2025).

The id is reflected in Data 1 and Data 3, where Burlian displays impulsive behavior, such as continuing to misbehave despite being ill and deliberately skipping school. These actions illustrate instinctive desires that prioritize pleasure over rules and responsibilities. In the context of Indonesian language learning, these examples can encourage students to reflect on the consequences of impulsive actions and the importance of self-control in everyday life (Usada et al., 2025).

The ego is evident in Data 4, Data 6, and Data 7. Burlian demonstrates the ability to adapt to reality, control his emotions in difficult situations, and make rational decisions by considering actual circumstances before acting. These characteristics indicate realistic thinking and emotional regulation. Such values are relevant to Indonesian language learning because they can help students develop critical thinking skills, logical decision-making, and effective communication (Hidayat et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, the superego appears in Data 2, Data 5, and Data 8. Burlian shows moral awareness by recognizing his mistakes, accepting the consequences of his actions, and defending a friend who is treated unfairly. These behaviors reflect responsibility, empathy, honesty, and a strong sense of justice (Sudianto et al., 2024).

The dominance of moral values in Burlian, especially through superego functioning, has strong implications for character education. Burlian consistently shows responsibility, empathy, and fairness. These values can be used as models for students in understanding ethical behavior. In Indonesian language learning, literary works like *Burlian* help internalize character values such as honesty, respect, and moral responsibility, making literature an effective medium for character formation.

Burlian's impulsive behavior provides a concrete illustration of Freud's id. His actions, such as mischief and skipping school, show dominance of instinctual desires over rational control. This helps students understand that the id operates based on immediate gratification without considering consequences. Thus, the novel makes abstract psychological theory easier to understand through real narrative examples.

Burlian's emotional control contributes significantly to his personality development. His ability to manage discomfort, delay reactions, and act rationally reflects ego development. This shows psychological maturity, where impulsive behavior gradually shifts toward self-regulation. The stronger ego indicates improved balance between desire, reality, and moral considerations, which is essential in personality development according to Freud.

Therefore, Burlian can serve as an effective learning model for developing not only language competence but also character formation. Through reading, analyzing, and discussing literary characters, students can enhance their critical, reflective, and empathetic thinking skills. This is consistent with the objectives of Indonesian language learning, which emphasize literacy development alongside the cultivation of positive character values (Haryati et al., 2026).

Consequently, Burlian is highly relevant as a literary resource because it integrates cognitive, emotional, and moral dimensions, allowing students to better understand themselves and their social environment (Alfiah, 2024).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the main character in Tere Liye's *Burlian*, this study concludes that Burlian's personality structure reflects Freud's concepts of the id, ego, and superego. The id is represented through impulsive behaviors driven by personal desires, the ego is reflected in his ability to adapt to reality, regulate emotions, and make rational decisions, while the superego is demonstrated through his moral awareness, acceptance of responsibility, and adherence to social norms. These findings indicate that Burlian undergoes balanced emotional, social, and moral development throughout the novel. The study contributes to literary psychology by providing a psychoanalytic interpretation of Burlian's character and demonstrates the educational value of literary works in Indonesian language learning. The findings imply that literary texts can be utilized as effective tools for developing students' critical thinking, reflective abilities, empathy, and character formation. In addition, literary psychology contributes significantly to strengthening students' literacy skills, empathy, and character development by enabling them to interpret psychological meanings, understand emotional experiences, and internalize moral values embedded in literary works. However, this study is limited to the analysis of a single main character in one novel using Freud's psychoanalytic framework. Future research is recommended to expand the scope of analysis by examining other characters or literary works, as well as applying different psychological theories such as Erikson's psychosocial theory or Jung's analytical psychology to provide broader insights into character development in Indonesian literature.

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