

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In recent years, mental health has emerged as a key issue of conversation, particularly in relation to anxiety disorders and depression, and their effects on people's daily lives. In recent years, there has been a marked increase in the incidence of anxiety disorders, especially among younger populations. From 1990 to 2021, the incidence among individuals aged 10-24 years increased by 52%, with a particularly sharp increase observed after 2019, most likely exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, projections of anxiety disorders in Germany estimate that by 2023, approximately 9.56% of women and 5.02% of men are expected to be affected (Ito et al., 2024). According to the World Health Organization (2022), anxiety disorders are among the most frequent mental health conditions, impacting a sizable proportion of the global population.

Anxiety is conceptualized in psychoanalytic studies as a response to both internal psychological problems and external influences. Literature often reflects real-life mental struggles through its characters and narratives. Mayestika et al. (2019) explain in their analysis of the novel *If I Was Your Girl* that the character Amanda experiences three types of anxiety identified by Freud: reality anxiety, neurotic anxiety, and moral anxiety. Reality anxiety comes from the outside world's threat to Amanda's transsexual status, which she must conceal for her own protection. Neurotic anxiety is caused by the unconscious concern that id impulses, such as the need to be liked and accepted, would have unpleasant effects if

expressed. Meanwhile, moral anxiety is caused by guilt resulting from the struggle between the ego and the superego, particularly when Amanda feels dishonest for concealing her identity. This analysis demonstrates that anxiety emerges as a result of an internal conflict between personal inclinations and external social demands, underscoring the human tendency to endeavor for survival within a social environment that does not align with one's personal identity.

In this contemporary era, anxiety is caused by the burden of society's expectations. Freud (1927) explains, the id expresses natural desires, the ego navigates reality, and the superego imposes moral norms, which can cause psychological tension when these aspects are in conflict (Freud, 1927). Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory is still one of the most prominent frameworks for explaining human behavior, notably the interplay between wants, reality, and morality inside the human psyche. The id, ego, and superego are the three separate but related components of the human mind that Freud describes. Primitive urges and impulses are represented by the id, external reality is mediated by the ego, and moral values absorbed from society are embodied by the superego. As people negotiate between pursuing their interests and abiding by social standards, this tripartite structure produces an internal conflict dynamic in them (Freud, 1927).

As stated by Freud's theories, the conflict between a person's desires and outside expectations frequently gives rise to the psychological experience of stress and anxiety (Azmi, 2023). This battle is best illustrated by the character of Alice in the 2022 movie *Don't Worry Darling*, who struggles with the ideal but false world that has been thrust upon her. Alice's psychological journey is representative of a larger social phenomena in which people battle to preserve their mental health in

the face of conflicting pressures for moral responsibilities, social conformity, and personal fulfillment.

While Alice's psychological battle stems from internal conflict, it is also shaped by the external forces of socially constructed gender roles. According to Lindsey (2015), gender is not a biologically fixed trait but a social structure that is continuously reinforced through cultural traditions, institutions, and interpersonal interactions. The society portrayed in *Don't Worry Darling* enforces strict domestic roles for women, positioning them as passive caretakers and discouraging autonomy or critical thought. Such a system contributes to Alice's psychological turmoil, as she is both mentally and socially confined within a patriarchal framework. By integrating Freud's psychoanalytic theory with Lindsey's sociological approach to gender, this study highlights how internal distress can be rooted in external, gendered structures of control.

Unresolved internal conflicts, such as those Alice encountered, have been shown to increase anxiety and cause depressive symptoms (Tarzian et al., 2023). Additionally, theories of cognitive vulnerability highlight how environmental stresses and stressful life events trigger maladaptive thought patterns, which intensify emotional discomfort (Nima et al., 2023). In Alice's instance, the movie shows how gender roles stifles her impulses, resulting in a psychological conflict that is consistent with Freud's theory of the id, ego, and superego. Her mental state worsens when she realizes how dishonest her surroundings are, illustrating how hard it is to strike a balance between wishes and morality and reality.

Internal conflicts are frequently shown in movie storylines through character development, illustrating the profound psychological battles that humans

experience. A holistic view of mental health recognizes that individual behavior cannot be divorced from societal influences (Bateman et al., 2021). A great case study for examining these psychological processes is provided by *Don't Worry, Darling* (2022). Alice, the main heroine, goes on a journey that is both intensely internal and exterior as she struggles with the tension between her sense of reality, her inner wants, and the moral standards that society has imposed.

The tension between desires, reality, and morals in Alice's journey is of special relevance to this research since it offers a clear illustration of Freud's psychoanalytic framework. Freud's theory of the id, ego, and superego may be used to evaluate Alice's psychological journey in the movie. Her wants (id), her attempts to comprehend the reality of her situations (ego), and the external moral and social constraints she experiences (superego) are examples of how her id, ego, and superego appear. Her internal turmoil is a representation of a universal human experience, but the dystopian setting of the movie amplifies it in a way that makes this interpretation relevant and fresh.

The issue in this movie is that Alice finds it difficult to balance all three of these aspects of her personality and also the gender roles expectation in *Victory*. Her superego imposes the constrictive moral and social order of the world she lives in, while her id urges her toward personal freedom and self-fulfillment. Her ego is caught in the between, trying to act as a go-between for her natural impulses and the social norms that surround her. Alice has a crisis in her sense of self and reality as a result of this psychological stress, which is representative of the larger human experience of internal conflict and social pressure. Psychoanalytic analysis ought

to explore this important issue, as the failure to adequately resolve these internal conflicts leads to psychological and emotional turmoil (Freud, 1927, p. 87).

Several studies have explored various narratives through the lens of psychoanalytic theory and gender roles, highlighting the interplay between the id, ego, and superego, as well as the performance of identity in character development. For instance, Widiyastuti and Setyabudi (2022) analyze *The Color Purple* from a psychoanalytical perspective, focusing on the character Celie's personality development and her experiences of trauma and resilience. They argue that Celie's journey reflects the tension between her instinctual desires and the moral expectations imposed on her by society, illustrating how psychoanalysis can reveal deeper layers of character development in literary works.

Building on the relationship between internal conflict and societal expectations, Liu (2023) takes a similar approach in his examination of the movie *Joker*, interpreting the protagonist's descent into madness through Freudian concepts. He emphasizes the struggle between the character's id-driven impulses and the external societal constraints represented by the superego. Liu's study underscores the significance of understanding psychological conflict in cinematic portrayals, aligning closely with the objectives of this current study.

Extending the application of Freud's psychoanalysis into the realm of guilt and redemption, Hussain et al. (2024) investigate Amir's transformation in *The Kite Runner*. Their study delves into how the id, ego, and superego shape Amir's actions and moral dilemmas throughout the narrative. This analysis further demonstrates the relevance of psychoanalytic theory in exploring character development and personal growth, offering valuable insights into the characters' emotional journeys.

Similarly, Rani et al. (2023) explores the psychological struggles of the main characters in *The Shawshank Redemption* through a psychoanalytic lens. They focus on the clash between the id and superego within the characters, leading to significant transformations and moral dilemmas. Their findings underscore the practical utility of Freud's theory in understanding complex character arcs in movies, which is highly relevant to this study's focus on character development.

Kurnia and Santyaputri (2024) provide a more contemporary perspective by analyzing *Everything Everywhere All at Once*. Their study explores the psychological dimensions of the protagonist's journey, emphasizing the conflict between desires and moral imperatives. This struggle parallels Alice's experience in *Don't Worry Darling* (2022), reinforcing how Freud's theory can illuminate the tension between desire, reality, and morality across different narratives.

Another study by Namra Najam, et al. (2022) on the analysis of postmodern feminism in the novel *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn. Through the characters of Amy Dunne and Nick Falls who emphasize changes in gender roles and traditional hierarchies of men or women. The novel narrates how role reversal challenges stereotypes by showcasing women's economic, social, and social independence, Nick's financial struggles are also highlighted due to changing power dynamics in relationships.

Despite the existing literature on psychoanalytic interpretations of various narratives and gender roles, a notable gap exists in the analysis of female protagonists navigating their internal conflicts through Freud's and gender roles lens. Most previous studies focus on male characters or broadly on character transformations without delving deeply into the unique societal pressures and moral

dilemmas faced by female characters. Specifically, while studies like those by Widiyastuti and Setyabudi (2022) and Kurnia and Santyaputri (2024) examine female characters, they do not thoroughly explore the interplay of the id, ego, and superego in the context of modern female identity and autonomy. This gap represents a critical problem in the field of psychoanalysis and gender roles in movie studies, since it limits the ability to fully understand the complexity of female identity formation and internal struggles. The lack of gender conscious analysis limits the application of Freudian theory and gender roles to a more inclusive and representative context.

The novelty of this study lies in its focused examination of Alice's journey in *Don't Worry Darling*, exploring how her internal struggles with desires, reality, and morality reflect broader themes of female identity in contemporary society. By specifically applying Freud's theory to this movie, this research aims to uncover new insights into the psychological complexities of female characters and their unique experiences in a patriarchal society, contributing a fresh perspective to the field of psychoanalytic movie studies.

Psychoanalytic theory is chosen as the foundational framework for this research because it provides a comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics of the human psyche and also the gender roles theory as the supporting theory that linked into the norms of society. Freud's insights into the id, ego, and superego allow for an in-depth analysis of Alice's character and her psychological journey. This framework is particularly effective in unpacking the motivations and conflicts that drive her actions, as it highlights the struggles between primal desires, social morality, and personal reality.

This study also incorporates gender roles theory to further examine how societal norms and expectations shape Alice's identity and decisions. Simone de Beauvoir (1949), in *The Second Sex*, argues that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," emphasizing that gender is a construct shaped by cultural and ideological forces rather than biology. This notion is echoed in Lindsey's (2015) perspective, which outlines how gender roles are learned behaviors reinforced by social institutions such as family, media, and religion. By integrating these frameworks, the research explores how the patriarchal structure within the film's narrative enforces traditional gender expectations on Alice, thereby constraining her autonomy and reinforcing her internal conflict. These gendered expectations often align with the superego's moral demands, further complicating Alice's psychological struggle between conformity and resistance.

The primary source of data for this research is the movie script *Don't Worry Darling* (2022), which presents a compelling narrative that encapsulates themes of desire, morality, and psychological conflict. According to IMDb, *Don't Worry Darling* 2022 and the crew won 10 awards, such as "The Drama Movie of 2022" at the People's Choice Awards, "Best Movie by a Woman" at the Women Film Critics Circle Awards, and etc. This movie also received 22 nominations, including "Best Performance in a Movie" for Florence Pugh, "Best Villain" for Harry Styles at the MTV Movie + TV Awards.

By analyzing Alice's journey within this specific narrative, the research aims to contribute to the existing literature on psychoanalysis and movie studies, offering fresh insights into the representation of female characters and their psychological struggles and gender roles in contemporary movies.

1.2 Research Question

1. How does Alice's internal conflict between desire, reality, and morality reflect the dynamic of id, ego, and superego in *Don't Worry Darling* (2022)?
2. How do gender roles shape Alice's performance of identity and influence her decisions in *Don't Worry Darling* (2022)?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

1. To elaborate how Alice's internal conflict between desire, reality, and morality reflects the dynamic of the id, ego, and superego in *Don't Worry Darling* (2022).
2. To explore how societal gender roles impact Alice's decisions, actions, and how this struggle informs her performance of identity revealing the complexities of female agency within the constraints of contemporary societal expectations.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study focuses on the character of Alice in the film *Don't Worry Darling* (2022), examining her internal conflict between desire, reality, and morality through the lens of psychological theories, particularly the constructs of the id, ego, and superego, as well as an exploration of how societal gender roles influence her choices and shape her identity and agency within the narrative. This study specifically analyze the movie's narrative and dialogue without employing a semiotic approach. Additionally, the study will situate Alice's experiences within the broader themes of the film, reflecting contemporary societal expectations

regarding gender and identity. The analysis will be limited to Alice's character, intentionally excluding a broader examination of other characters or plotlines, to maintain a focused exploration of the interplay between desire, reality, morality, and gender roles in her journey.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The writer hopes that this study will provide valuable insights into the psychological dynamics of desire, reality, and morality as portrayed through Alice's character in *Don't Worry Darling* (2022). By exploring the interplay of Freud's concepts of the id, ego, and superego and also the gender roles, this research aims to enhance understanding of the unique internal conflicts faced by women in contemporary society, thereby fostering greater empathy and awareness of their mental health challenges. Furthermore, the writer aspires to inspire female audiences to confront societal expectations and assert their autonomy, contributing to a cultural shift towards gender equality. Additionally, this study seeks to serve as a reference for future research in psychoanalytic movie studies, highlighting the importance of psychological analysis in understanding character development and narrative complexity in movies.