

An Analysis of Amir's Growth and Redemption in *The Kite Runner* from Freud's Theory of Personality Structure

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Abstract: This article delves into Amir's character in "The Kite Runner", exploring his growth and redemption through Freud's personality structure theory. Amir's evolving traits and interpersonal relationships across different life stages are meticulously analyzed, revealing the intricate interplay between his personality and behavior. This study goes beyond the theoretical framework, offering insights into how Amir's personality traits manifest in his actions and choices. Ultimately, the paper proposes actions that can mitigate the impact of similar personality traits on the development of young people in our society, contributing to a deeper understanding of both Amir's character and the broader influence of personality on individual growth.

Keywords: *The Kite Runner*; Freud's Theory of Personality Structure; Amir; Growth and Redemption

1. Introduction

In this chapter, the author introduces the book and its creator, laying the foundation for a deeper exploration. The core objectives are to clarify the significance and organize the study's framework. Subsequently, a comprehensive review of related literature is conducted. Finally, the chapter concludes with a concise outline of the paper's structure.

1.1 Brief Introduction of *The Kite Runner*

This section divides into two, initially introducing the author of "The Kite Runner," Khaled Hosseini, along with his literary corpus and distinct writing style. The sequel delineates the novel's central theme, highlighting its characters and explaining its widespread popularity.

1.1.1 The Author

Born in Kabul, Afghanistan, on March 4, 1965,

Khaled Hosseini's childhood was a vivid mosaic of relocations and political turmoil. As a child of a diplomatic father and an educator mother, he enjoyed a rich educational background. However, the frequent relocations, first to Tehran in 1973 and then back to Kabul, were symptomatic of the unrest that plagued his native country. This instability reached its apex when a coup and a foreign invasion shattered the tranquility of his young life.

In 1976, the family emigrated to Paris, France, where Hosseini's father found employment. But the ongoing unrest in Afghanistan precluded their return. The Soviet invasion in 1980 prompted the family to seek political asylum in the United States, ultimately settling in California. Despite embarking on a medical education and completing an internship at the Mount Zion School of Medicine in Los Angeles in 1996, Hosseini's writing aspirations were deeply influenced by his personal experiences and observations of the refugee crisis.

Married to an Afghan woman and blessed with two children, Hosseini's unique perspective, coupled with his exceptional writing talent, has established him as a renowned author. His works, which often explore themes of displacement, redemption, and the resilience of the human spirit, are a testament to the profound impact of his life experiences on his literary creations.

1.1.2 The Book

The Kite Runner's genesis lies in the author's personal life, deeply shaping its narrative. The author skillfully wove his own experiences into the story's tapestry, with a profound resonance in Amir's immigrant journey in the US.

The Kite Runner is an autobiographical novel that closely mirrors the author's own life experiences. As a child, the protagonist

exhibited cowardice in contrast to the servant's child's bravery and loyalty. This led to the protagonist framing the servant's child for a crime, ultimately resulting in their exile. Fleeing Afghanistan during the conflict, the protagonist's family found refuge in the United States. However, prompted by a family friend, the protagonist returns to Afghanistan on a quest for redemption, seeking to atone for his past sins. Despite his professional success, he confronts the harsh reality of Taliban rule and experiences true growth. His chance encounter with a former friend reveals a profound secret, marking a pivotal moment in his personal development and a turning point in his quest for redemption.

1.2 Literature Review

A comprehensive literature review on Amir, Freud's personality theory, growth, and redemption is presented here.

Firstly, we delve into the analytical perspective on Amir, the protagonist of *The Kite Runner*. Ma Xiaojun's (2018) insightfully examines Amir's transformative journey through the lens of his traumatic memories, elucidating the intricate intertwining of trauma recovery and personal growth. Additionally, Anna (2020) aptly characterizes *The Kite Runner* as a highly acclaimed American coming-of-age novel authored by Afghan-American writer Khaled Hosseini in the early 21st century. This novel traces Amir's maturation process, with a strong emphasis on his cognitive development, which significantly molds his character progression. Through a multifaceted exploration of emotional cognition, moral cognition, self-cognition, and social cognition, the author presents a layered interpretation of this captivating literary work. Moreover, Kwak Jin (2023) examines Amir's efforts to atone for his youthful mistakes in their narrative of *The Kite Runner*. Utilizing Freud's theory of personality structure as an analytical framework, this approach has proven pivotal in understanding character growth and transformation in literary narratives. Drawing upon this theory, this paper aims to dissect the intricate interplay between Amir's identity, ego, and superego during his formative years. Furthermore, it investigates the factors contributing to his loss of self-identity and elucidates how he cultivates resilience during his developmental journey towards self-

redemption.

The second part explores Freud's personality structure literature from a distinct analytical angle. Ni Hai's (2002) insightful work provides a comprehensive analysis of Freud's personality theory and its seminal contributions to the field. Freud, a pioneer in psychoanalysis, established a framework that serves as the foundation of this school of thought. This theory encompasses three core elements: personality structure, motivation, and development. Freud's theory has not only broadened the horizons of psychological exploration and enhanced individuals' self-awareness but has also yielded profound insights for the fields of psychology and education. Fu Ruijuan (2009) further emphasizes Freud's enduring impact on these disciplines, highlighting the significant influence of his personality theory on nurturing children's healthy personalities. Freud's theory offers valuable perspectives that are pertinent to educational practices. This paper presents a concise overview of Freud's theory, emphasizing its components such as personality structure, dynamics, and development. It also delves into the vital revelations of Freud's personality theory on fostering children's healthy personality traits. Additionally, Yan Zhenhong's (2023) ethical inquiry into Freud's personality theory introduces a fresh perspective, focusing on the moral dimensions of Freud's work. This exploration employs the general paradigm and methodology of moral personality research to conduct an ethical examination of Freud's moral thought, aiming to contribute insights to the advancement of ethics and morality in China.

In the closing section, the psychological aspects of growth and redemption manifesting in *The Kite Runner* have become a subject of keen interest among scholars and experts in recent years. Khaled Hosseini's masterpiece has invited numerous interpretations from various psychological perspectives. Wei Liuyu (2010) delves deeply into the multifaceted growth of Amir, the novel's protagonist, highlighting his internal and external transformation. Amir's redemption process not only nurtures personal development but also atones for his past. Li Caixia (2017) further expands this discussion, tracing Amir's spiritual evolution through his life stages, from

youthful missteps to adult enlightenment and ultimate self-redemption. This journey marks a significant rite of passage, encompassing both spiritual growth and moral redemption. Lu Lu (2020) examines Amir's growth within the analytical psychological framework, affirming the eventual return of human nature to goodness and the triumph of truth, virtue, and beauty over falsehood, evil, and ugliness. Zhao Binzhu (2021) takes a textual approach, analyzing the plot, content, and psychological nuances of the characters to unpack Amir's enlightenment and redemption. An Sufang (2022) offers a comprehensive analysis of Amir's developmental arc, spanning childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, emphasizing his transformation and redemption through atonement. Liu Xinyi (2023) interprets the novel through the lens of literary ethics, focusing on Amir's ethical choices and the ethical lessons he learns from consequences, ultimately illuminating his growth from making mistakes to achieving redemption. Additionally, foreign scholars have also contributed their insights into *The Kite Runner* from diverse psychological perspectives. David (2009), for instance, adopts an ethical perspective to explore Amir's redemption journey, emphasizing the novel's transcendence of racial and ethnic boundaries and its profound exploration of human ethics. The significance of this study lies in its comprehensive exploration of the psychological dimensions of growth and redemption in *The Kite Runner*. By drawing on various psychological frameworks and perspectives, it offers a rich and nuanced understanding of Amir's complex journey, highlighting the themes of personal development, atonement, and ethical growth. This study not only enhances our appreciation of Hosseini's masterpiece but also contributes to the larger discussion on human nature and psychological development in literature.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study delves into the theory of personality structure, examining how it shapes individuals' development over time. Through thorough data analysis, the research uncovers the nuanced impacts of this theory on personality growth. These findings offer fresh insights into psychology's comprehension of personality structure theory, shedding light on its

multifaceted influence on individuals' inner workings.

In addition, this paper investigates how personality structure theory influences the present trajectory of psychology from a practical standpoint, examining the study of human personality development across diverse nations and its personal impact. Through this analysis, valuable insights are gained into the theory's influence on both the field of psychology and individual personal growth.

2 An Introduction of Freud's Theory of Personality Structure

Freud, the originator of psychoanalysis, explored human personality structure in his iconic work *Ego and Id*. He defined three key components: the Id, Ego, and Super-ego. The Id functions on the pleasure principle, while the Ego operates on the reality principle. The Super-ego embodies moral standards and self-ideals, forming the apex of one's personality.

2.1 The Definition of Identity

The Identity, residing in the unconscious, harbors primal desires conflicting with societal norms. Governed by the "Pleasure Principle," it disregards morality for self-gratification. Formed by heredity, it seeks outlets through impulsive actions. Mediating between the Identity and reality is the ego, shaped by upbringing. The Superego, a moral authority, upholds ideal principles.

2.2 The Definition of Ego

The ego, a critical part of consciousness, navigates interactions with reality. It mediates between self and world, adhering to social norms and laws. Shaped by knowledge and environment, it upholds morality while fulfilling self-needs. Freud viewed it as the cohesive mental framework. Consciousness serves the ego, directing mental energy towards impulse regulation and personality execution.

2.3 The Definition of Super-ego

The Super-ego, an evolved moral facet, originates from internalized parental teachings and societal influences. It embodies moral principles and conscience, serving as the personality's moral compass. Setting ethical standards, it promotes virtuous behavior aligned with ideals. Through mechanisms like

conscience and self-ideals, it enforces ethical conduct and induces guilt for breaching moral codes.

2.4 Exploring the Dynamic Interplay between the Identity, Ego, and Super-ego within Personality Structure

The Identity, Ego, and Super-ego interact closely while displaying distinct origins and functions. The Identity stems from genetics, the Ego from personal experiences, and the Super-ego from societal influences. The Ego manages impulses, social norms, and the Super-ego's moral standards to maintain balance and prevent inner conflict.

3 Analyzing Amir's Growth and Redemption through the Lens of Freud's Personality Structure theory Illuminates His Complex Psychological Journey

In *The Kite Runner*, Amir's quest for redemption following past mistakes is scrutinized through Freud's personality structure theory. The analysis delves into the origins of Amir's inner turmoil in his youth, tracing his growth into a more resilient individual. Through self-discovery, Amir finds redemption, shedding light on the transformative power of personal growth and introspection.

3.1 Amir's Identity

Amir's youthful transgressions originate from his Identity, representing primal urges and fundamental instincts for survival. Operating under hedonistic principles, the Identity prioritizes personal satisfaction over societal norms but seeks happiness while avoiding pain. This analysis, applying Freud's personality structure theory, scrutinizes Amir's psychological development linked to his Identity, revealing the conflicts and motivations shaping his actions in "*The Kite Runner*."

In the novel, Amir's father's stringent upbringing, deprived of a mother's love, shaped his psychological development. Amir's longing for his father's acceptance clashed with the inhumane treatment he received, leading to feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. Contrary to his father's expectations, Amir struggled with cowardice, feeling a void in his ego development due to the absence of maternal affection, as per Freud's theory. This

deficiency in ego growth underlines the emotional turmoil and conflicts within Amir's character, echoing the complex interplay between parental influences and personal identity.

In the novel, Hassan's humble background stirs Amir's envy and resentment, fueling derogatory thoughts towards him. Amir's internal conflict arises from societal prejudices against Hassan's Hazara heritage and his own insecurities. Amir's actions, while driven by a quest for paternal approval, lead to a reprehensible betrayal of Hassan, defying moral standards. The traditional kite competition symbolizes bravery and honor, offering Amir a chance to prove himself. However, his desire for validation drives him to sacrifice Hassan, highlighting the clash between Amir's innate desires (Identity) and conscious self (Ego). This pivotal event exposes the complexities of Amir's character, revealing the destructive consequences of his egoistic choices rooted in a struggle for validation and recognition. Through his harmful actions, Amir unwittingly prioritizes self-preservation over loyalty and morality, resulting in irreversible consequences within his personality and relationships.

According to Freud's personality structure, young Amir's development is shaped by his ego, resulting in insecurity and a desire for fulfillment due to a lack of maternal and paternal affection. Operating under the Identity's "pleasure principle," Amir's character exhibits instability and an unfulfilled need for love and validation, impacting his overall psychological well-being.

Subsequently, the analysis will scrutinize Amir's Identity regarding his longing for paternal affection and internal struggles with cowardice.

3.1.1 The Yearning for Paternal Affection

During his youth, Amir grappled with inner conflict as his Ego struggled to balance the demands of the Identity and Superego. Despite this, he ultimately prioritized his Identity's desires, seeking fulfillment. Contrasted with Hassan's simplicity, Amir's complex psyche stemmed from early maternal deprivation, fostering selfishness and longing for paternal approval. His failure to meet his father's expectations fueled self-doubt, driving him to seek personal validation and affection intensely.

In Freudian analysis, the Ego utilizes defense mechanisms like projection to cope with conflicts arising from repressed desires. Amir projected his unmet desires for paternal approval onto Hassan, who received the affection Amir longed for. By attributing his own insecurities and desires for recognition onto Hassan, Amir reveals the complex interplay between his internal struggles and external relationships, demonstrating the intricate dynamics of his psychological development.

The longing for paternal affection significantly shapes Amir's Identity and influences his personality development.

3.1.2 The Cowardly Boy

During the 1975 Afghan Kite Competition, Amir and Hassan collaborate to secure victory, highlighting Amir's cowardice, Hassan's loyalty, and a turning point marred by betrayal and guilt. The complex relationships with father figures manifest Freudian dynamics, with Amir's actions driven by a profound desire for paternal approval, leading to harmful outcomes rooted in Identity-driven needs. The theme of father-son conflict echoes through Amir's struggles, shaping his timid demeanor and underscoring the multifaceted evolution of his personality.

Amir's timidity influences the progression of his Identity personality development stage.

3.2 Amir's Ego

The Ego, distinct from the Identity, operates based on reality, engaging in cognitive, emotional, and evaluative processes. It balances fulfilling Identity needs while navigating Superego moral pressures, temporarily deferring happiness pursuit. Amir grapples with inner conflict as he transitions from Identity to Ego within the Freudian personality framework, experiencing a tumultuous psychological journey.

3.2.1 Exploring temporary relief from internal condemnation amid the backdrop of war

Amid the war's chaos, Amir and his father sought refuge in America for a fresh start. Despite the physical distance, Amir's guilt lingered, leading to gestures of repentance towards Hassan. Holding onto feelings of remorse, Amir resorted to symbolic gestures as atonement. Reflecting on past actions, Amir grappled with morality, attributing personal hardships to past wrongdoings. Immersing

himself in writing, Amir finds solace in crafting tales of betrayal and redemption as a means of internal catharsis. Through his creative expression, Amir transforms his inner turmoil into a structured narrative, ultimately seeking redemption and closure. Gradually, Amir redirects his Identity yearnings into more socially acceptable outlets.

3.2.2 Exploring how American culture shapes Amir's growth and persona development during exile

Fleeing to the United States to escape past trauma in Afghanistan, Amir grapples with a longing for his homeland while adapting to American life. Interactions with Afghan immigrants, including relatives, and marrying an Afghan woman highlight the pull of his roots despite his attempts to create a new life. Through cultural comparisons, Amir navigates internal conflict and a persistent sense of judgment irrespective of his surroundings.

3.3 Amir's Super-ego

The Superego, influenced by societal norms, enforces moral standards and guides behavior. In *The Kite Runner*, it plays a crucial role alongside the Ego and Identity, reflecting a comprehensive personality framework. Positioned at the pinnacle of Freud's model, the Superego internalizes moral principles and shapes individual conduct based on early childhood conditioning. Operating through conscience, it ensures adherence to social norms, striving to cultivate a harmonious and upright personality.

Amir's journey to redemption culminates in profound personal growth and a shift towards moral rectitude. Transitioning from Ego to Superego, he embraces a moral code aligned with Freud's principles, demonstrating empathy and forgiveness towards his father, wife, and Sohrab, Hassan's son. Through acts of understanding, compassion, and sacrifice, Amir sheds past transgressions and fosters a nurturing environment for Sohrab, overcoming societal prejudices and embracing a positive identity. This transformation signifies not only Amir's redemption but also the elevation of his character towards moral transcendence.

In the subsequent analysis, Amir's journey from Ego to Superego and his redemption through love and kindness will be explored meticulously.

3.3.1 The Redemption of Love and Kindness

Amir's journey towards redemption is intertwined with love and kindness, notably facilitated by his wife, Soraya, and trusted friend Rahim Khan. Soraya's honesty and benevolence inspire Amir to confront his past flaws, notably through a comparison with how she treats others, particularly the household servants. Her compassion highlights Amir's shortcomings and prompts his introspection towards self-improvement. Additionally, Rahim Khan's deep understanding of Amir serves as a guide towards moral redemption, offering a pathway to rectify past wrongs. The process of self-improvement and atonement that Amir embarks on through their influence is challenging, entailing significant sacrifices in his pursuit of becoming a better individual. Soraya and Rahim Khan play pivotal roles in Amir's transformative journey, instilling in him the virtues of empathy, self-reflection, and ultimately guiding him towards the path of redemption with their unwavering support and guidance. Through their impact, Amir not only finds the courage to face his past but also discovers the means to rectify his mistakes and forge a path towards a more virtuous existence. In a pivotal moment, Amir faces a challenging decision. Upon discovering Hassan is his half-brother, he confronts his past misdeeds and decides to redeem himself by rescuing Hassan's son, Sohrab. This act symbolizes Amir's commitment to absolve his guilt and break free from his father's legacy.

Soraya and Rahim Khan are instrumental in guiding Amir towards redemption, demonstrating the transformative power of love and kindness in his journey. Through their support, Amir sheds his guilt and evolves into a morally conscious individual, symbolizing the pinnacle of his character growth within the framework of Freud's Superego principle.

3.3.2 Exploring Amir's successful Redemption through the Triumph of His Mature Superego

Amid the turmoil in Afghanistan, Amir and his father seek refuge in the U.S., hoping to bury their past. However, this escape proves temporary as buried transgressions resurface. Summoned by Rahim Khan back to Afghanistan, Amir confronts a shocking truth about his relationship with Hassan, unraveling the facade of tranquility built on evasion and denial.

Faced with saving Hassan's son, Amir grapples with conflicting desires and moral obligations.

Balancing his identity's pursuit of peace with his Superego's call for redemption, Amir ultimately chooses to confront his past sins and seeks atonement by rescuing Sohrab. Embracing the consequences of his actions, Amir transcends his previous misunderstandings and achieves moral redemption, embracing his true identity and embodying the moral transformation he sought, ultimately realizing his aspirations for personal growth and integrity.

Amir's journey culminates in triumphant self-redemption, transcending the id and ego stages and embodying moral excellence as a mature adult, reaching the apex of moral development.

4 Conclusion

Khaled Hosseini, an esteemed Afghan American author, explores themes of redemption in his acclaimed work, *The Kite Runner*. This literary gem, published in 2003, delves into Amir's journey towards self-redemption, drawing from Hosseini's personal experiences. This analysis focuses on Li Jihong's Chinese translation, utilizing Freud's personality structure theory to dissect Amir's character evolution and redemption process. Through kite-flying symbolism, Amir's growth culminates in seeking redemption through atonement and reconciliation with Sohrab, symbolizing his transformation and ultimate path to redemption.

4.1 The Limitations of Current Research

While writing this thesis, the researcher realized the need to deepen understanding of Freud's personality theory and analyze *The Kite Runner* comprehensively. The researcher recognizes the necessity to gather additional literature for a more profound analysis and meticulously study the novel to enhance the thesis further.

4.2 Suggestions of Future Research

The central theme of this paper delves into Freud's theory to analyze Amir's character growth. Individuals are akin to young Amir, grappling with primal instincts and buried mistakes, akin to a lost kite haunting their essence. To emulate Amir's transformative journey, one must confront pasts sincerely, summon courage, and liberate oneself from internal shackles imposed by Identity and Ego, achieving ultimate empowerment.

In future research on personality development within psychology, there is a call to integrate existing theories with real-world issues to propose diverse solutions for individuals facing psychological challenges. Emphasizing the importance of guiding young people through the Identity and Ego stages, the focus should be on fostering a healthy personality and aiding in overcoming psychological obstacles effectively.

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