

Animated Films as Media for Character Education in Primary Education: A Psychoanalytic Analysis of Coco

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Abstract: *This study investigates the psychological dimensions and educational implications of the animated film Coco through a psychoanalytic literary perspective. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the research analyzes the main characters—Miguel Rivera, Héctor, Mamá Coco, and Ernesto de la Cruz—using Sigmund Freud's theory of personality, specifically the concepts of id, ego, superego, and defense mechanisms. Data were collected through repeated film observation and documented textual analysis of scenes, dialogues, and character interactions. The findings reveal that each character represents distinct psychological configurations: Miguel demonstrates developmental conflict between personal desire and moral responsibility; Héctor reflects emotional attachment and resilience; Mamá Coco symbolizes memory-based emotional continuity; and Ernesto de la Cruz represents maladaptive personality dominated by narcissistic ambition. Furthermore, the analysis shows that defense mechanisms such as rationalization, sublimation, repression, and denial play significant roles in shaping character behavior. The study also highlights the pedagogical relevance of these psychological representations for character education in Indonesian elementary schools, particularly in fostering values such as honesty, empathy, responsibility, and family respect. The results suggest that animated films can function as effective reflective*

learning media to support socio-emotional and moral development in primary education contexts.

Keywords: *Psychoanalytic criticism; character education; animated film; Coco; elementary education*

Introduction

Character education has become an essential component of elementary education in Indonesia due to increasing concerns regarding students' moral behavior, emotional regulation, and social interaction in the digital era (Irmayati et al., 2025; Nurdianawati et al., 2025; Wahyuni & Karim, 2025). Indonesian schools are expected not only to develop cognitive achievement but also to strengthen students' ethical values, empathy, responsibility, and respect for others (Afidah et al., 2019; Budiman et al., 2019; Fitriyana et al., 2023; Listyarini & Budiman, 2022; Saidah et al., 2021). The Ministry of Education through the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes holistic learning that integrates moral and socio-emotional development into classroom practices (N. A. Amalia et al., 2021; Arumsari et al., 2023; Budiman, 2012b; Citra Ningrum et al., 2019; Khotimah et al., 2019; Nizam et al., 2021; Ula et al., 2025). In this context, animated films have increasingly attracted attention as engaging instructional media capable of presenting moral values through visual narratives and emotional storytelling. Recent studies have shown that animated media can effectively

foster empathy, analytical thinking, and socio-emotional learning among children (Izuagie, 2025; Kwangmuang et al., 2024; Talu, 2026). Therefore, the use of animated films in elementary classrooms may provide meaningful opportunities to strengthen character education through reflective learning experiences.

The educational use of animated films is closely connected to psychoanalytic and developmental theories that explain how children interpret emotional experiences and moral behavior. Freud's psychoanalytic theory emphasizes the interaction between id, ego, and superego in shaping personality and behavior (Budiman, 2012a; Freud, 1987; Sulloway, 1992). Through narrative conflicts and emotional struggles, film characters can represent psychological dimensions that children may observe and internalize. In addition, social learning theory suggests that children learn values and behaviors by observing role models in media and social environments (Bandura, 1986). Animated films are particularly influential because they combine emotional engagement, visual representation, and moral storytelling that facilitate children's understanding of ethical situations (Sigit & Hidayat, 2024). Contemporary educational studies further indicate that visual narratives support emotional literacy and reflective thinking among young learners (Alehpour & Abdollahyan, 2022). Consequently, psychoanalytic analysis of animated characters may provide important insights into how films contribute to children's moral and emotional development (Bergstrom, 1999; Kaplan, 1990; Lebeau, 2006).

Previous literature has extensively discussed the pedagogical potential of animated films in educational settings (Adinda Larasati et al., 2023; Muna et al., 2022; Pratama, 2018). Research published in journals indexed by major international publishers demonstrates that animated media can improve empathy, communication skills, and analytical thinking in elementary education (Dewi et al., 2025; Dharmik Chauhan, 2025; M. E. Sari et al., 2024). A recent study by researchers in *Acta Psychologica* (Talu, 2026) found that film-based interventions significantly enhanced emotional and cognitive empathy among primary school students through reflective classroom activities. Similarly, research in *Computers in Human Behavior Reports* (Kwangmuang et al., 2024) reported that animated cartoons positively support analytical thinking development among elementary students because visual storytelling helps learners understand abstract concepts more effectively. In Indonesian contexts, animated films have also been associated with the development of character values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, and cooperation in primary schools (Lestari & Dahnia, 2024). These findings indicate that animated films possess both emotional and educational significance within contemporary learning environments.

However, despite the growing body of literature supporting the educational benefits of animated films, several previous studies remain limited in terms of critical pedagogical analysis and contextual classroom evidence. Many studies (Ramadhani et al., 2025; Sidi Artajaya et al., 2025; Susanti et al., 2024) tend to emphasize positive outcomes without sufficiently examining how teachers facilitate reflective discussions, manage students' emotional interpretations, or integrate animated media into curriculum objectives. In practice, empirical educational phenomena in elementary schools reveal that students often experience difficulties in expressing empathy, resolving peer conflicts, and demonstrating collaborative behavior during classroom interactions, particularly in digitally mediated learning environments. Teachers also face challenges in selecting age-appropriate media

that simultaneously supports cognitive and character development. These conditions indicate that the effectiveness of animated films is not solely determined by the media itself, but also by instructional strategies, classroom contexts, and students' social experiences. Therefore, further studies are needed to critically explore how animated films function as pedagogical tools within authentic educational settings, especially in relation to empathy formation and analytical thinking development among elementary school learners.

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded primarily in Freud's psychoanalytic theory, particularly the concepts of id, ego, superego, and defense mechanisms. Freud (Freud, 1987) argued that human behavior is shaped by internal psychological conflicts between instinctive desires, rational considerations, and moral consciousness. The id represents instinctive drives seeking immediate satisfaction, the ego mediates between desires and reality, while the superego reflects internalized moral standards. In addition, Freud proposed that individuals unconsciously employ defense mechanisms such as denial, repression, and rationalization to reduce psychological anxiety. These concepts provide an appropriate analytical framework for interpreting the psychological dimensions of characters in animated films. Within educational contexts, psychoanalytic literary criticism helps reveal how fictional narratives portray emotional conflict, moral development, and social values relevant to children's learning experiences. Thus, Freud's theory enables deeper interpretation of character representation and its educational implications.

Several previous studies have explored animated films and character education from different perspectives. Research on *Toy Story 2* (Sigit & Hidayat, 2024) demonstrated that animated films contain moral values relevant to elementary character education, including creativity, discipline, and social care. Other studies have analyzed how children interpret emotional and ethical concepts presented in animated movies, concluding that visual narratives influence children's moral reasoning and meaning-making processes (Alehpour & Abdollahyan, 2022). Furthermore, recent research has shown that media-based learning supports socio-emotional learning among young children by encouraging empathy and interpersonal understanding (Izuagie, 2025). Although these studies highlight the educational value of animated media, most focus on pedagogical effectiveness, semiotics, or communication theory rather than psychoanalytic dimensions of character representation.

Despite growing scholarly attention toward animated films in education, limited studies have specifically examined psychoanalytic aspects of animated film characters in relation to Indonesian elementary character education. Existing studies primarily emphasize moral messages, media literacy, or cognitive learning outcomes without deeply analyzing the psychological structures underlying character behavior. Furthermore, few studies connect Freud's psychoanalytic concepts with the implementation of character education within Indonesian primary school contexts. Research exploring the relationships between psychological conflict, emotional development, and moral learning in animated films remains relatively scarce, especially within Southeast Asian educational discourse (Arjuna et al., 2025; Ulu & Kapusuzoğlu, 2026; Unsworth, 2026). Therefore, there is a need for more comprehensive analysis that integrates psychoanalytic literary criticism with educational perspectives on character formation in elementary schools.

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of psychoanalytic literary analysis and Indonesian elementary character education through the examination of *Coco* (Unkrich & Molina, 2017). Unlike previous studies that mainly focused on moral values or visual storytelling, this research investigates the psychological dimensions of the film's main characters using Freud's concepts of id, ego, superego, and defense mechanisms. In addition, the study contextualizes these psychological findings within Indonesian elementary educational practices, particularly the implementation of character education under the Merdeka Curriculum. By combining psychoanalytic criticism with educational analysis, this research contributes a multidimensional perspective on how animated films may support emotional literacy, ethical reflection, and moral development among elementary school students.

Another significant contribution of this study is its focus on character psychology as a pedagogical resource for reflective learning. Recent educational scholarship increasingly recognizes the importance of socio-emotional competencies in primary education, including empathy, self-awareness, emotional regulation, and interpersonal responsibility (Hughson, 2024; Souza, 2024; Zembylas, 2023). Animated films such as *Coco* provide emotionally engaging narratives that allow students to observe complex psychological conflicts in accessible ways. Through psychoanalytic interpretation, students may better understand the motivations, anxieties, and moral choices experienced by fictional characters. Such reflective engagement may strengthen students' critical thinking and emotional understanding while supporting values-based learning in elementary classrooms.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the psychological dimensions of the main characters in *Coco* using Freud's psychoanalytic theory and to examine their relevance to character education in Indonesian elementary schools. Specifically, the study investigates the representations of id, ego, superego, and defense mechanisms demonstrated by Miguel Rivera, Héctor, Mamá Coco, and Ernesto de la Cruz. Furthermore, the study seeks to identify how these psychological representations may contribute to the development of moral values, emotional literacy, and reflective learning practices within Indonesian primary education. Through this analysis, the study expects to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the fields of literary criticism, film studies, and elementary character education.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach (Creswell, 2003) using psychoanalytic literary criticism to analyze the characters in *Coco* (Unkrich & Molina, 2017). Qualitative research was selected because the study aimed to explore psychological meanings, character representations, and moral values embedded within the narrative of the film. According to Creswell and Creswell (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), qualitative research is appropriate for interpreting social and cultural phenomena through detailed textual analysis. The study specifically adopted Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory (Freud, 1987), focusing on the concepts of id, ego, superego, and defense mechanisms to examine the psychological dimensions of the main characters.

The primary data source of this study was the animated film *Coco* (Unkrich & Molina, 2017) produced by Pixar Animation Studios and released in 2017. The data consisted of

dialogues, character actions, emotional expressions, narrative conflicts, and visual scenes related to the psychological behavior of the main characters, namely Miguel Rivera, Héctor, Mamá Coco, and Ernesto de la Cruz. Supporting data were obtained from books, journal articles, and previous studies related to psychoanalytic criticism, film analysis, and character education in elementary education contexts.

Data collection was conducted through observation and documentation techniques. The researcher repeatedly watched the film to identify scenes and dialogues reflecting psychoanalytic aspects. Important conversations, emotional interactions, and narrative events were transcribed and categorized based on Freud's theoretical framework. Documentation techniques were also applied by collecting supporting literature from academic journals, books, and educational studies relevant to character education and psychoanalysis.

The data analysis process followed several stages. First, the researcher identified psychological behaviors demonstrated by each character. Second, the identified data were classified into categories of id, ego, superego, and defense mechanisms. Third, the researcher interpreted the psychological meanings of the characters based on Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Finally, the findings were connected to character education values relevant to Indonesian elementary school learning contexts, including honesty, responsibility, empathy, respect for family, and emotional regulation. Data validity was strengthened through theoretical triangulation by comparing findings with previous psychoanalytic and educational studies.

This study focused on the educational implications of animated films as media for character education in primary schools. Therefore, the analysis emphasized how psychological conflicts and moral development represented in the film may contribute to reflective learning experiences for elementary school students. Through this approach, the study sought to provide theoretical and practical insights into the integration of literary film analysis and character education within Indonesian elementary education.

Results and Discussion

This study analyzed the main characters in *Coco* using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, particularly the concepts of id, ego, superego, and defense mechanisms. The analysis focused on four central characters, namely Miguel Rivera, Héctor, Mamá Coco, and Ernesto de la Cruz. The findings reveal that each character demonstrates distinct psychological dynamics that reflect personal desires, moral considerations, emotional conflicts, and self-defense strategies. These psychological dimensions also contribute to the representation of character values that may support character education in elementary school learning contexts.

Table 1. Analysis of Id, Ego, and Superego of Miguel Rivera

Psychoanalytic Aspect	Evidence in the Film	Interpretation
Id	Miguel strongly desires to become a musician despite family prohibition.	Miguel’s id reflects his instinctive passion, personal dreams, and emotional impulses toward music.
Ego	Miguel secretly practices music and searches for information about Ernesto de la Cruz while trying to avoid family conflict.	The ego functions as a mediator between Miguel’s desires and external family rules.
Superego	Miguel eventually understands the importance of family love, honesty, and respect for ancestors.	Miguel’s superego develops through moral awareness and responsibility toward his family values.

The analysis shows that Miguel Rivera experiences strong psychological conflict between personal ambition and family expectations. His id dominates at the beginning of the story through his uncontrollable desire for music. However, the ego gradually helps him negotiate reality by seeking safer ways to pursue his interests. In the final stage, the superego becomes stronger as Miguel realizes that family relationships and honesty are more valuable than fame. This development reflects positive character formation relevant to elementary character education.

Table 2. Analysis of Id, Ego, and Superego of Héctor

Psychoanalytic Aspect	Evidence in the Film	Interpretation
Id	Héctor wants to reunite with his family and avoid being forgotten.	His id reflects emotional longing, survival instinct, and desire for recognition.
Ego	Héctor cooperates with Miguel to obtain access to the living world.	The ego appears through practical strategies to achieve his goals realistically.

Superego	Héctor shows sincere love and sacrifice for his daughter and family.	His superego reflects moral responsibility, affection, and familial devotion.
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Héctor demonstrates a balanced interaction between emotional desire and moral consciousness. His id is represented by his deep longing to be remembered by his family. The ego enables him to survive in the Land of the Dead by negotiating with others and making strategic decisions. Meanwhile, the superego appears strongly through his genuine care for his daughter and his willingness to sacrifice personal success for family happiness. These qualities portray values of loyalty, love, and responsibility.

Table 3. Analysis of Id, Ego, and Superego of Mamá Coco

Psychoanalytic Aspect	Evidence in the Film	Interpretation
Id	Mamá Coco emotionally remembers her father through songs and memories.	Her id reflects emotional attachment and longing for familial affection.
Ego	She quietly preserves memories despite her old age and limited communication.	The ego helps maintain emotional connection with reality and family identity.
Superego	Mamá Coco values family unity, love, and remembrance of ancestors.	Her superego reflects moral wisdom and emotional integrity within the family.

Mamá Coco symbolizes emotional memory and family attachment. Her psychological structure is dominated by emotional affection toward her father. Although physically weak, her ego still maintains meaningful memories that connect the family’s history. Furthermore, her superego is represented through the preservation of family love and emotional harmony. The character illustrates moral values such as respect for parents, remembrance, and familial loyalty.

Table 4. Analysis of Id, Ego, and Superego of Ernesto de la Cruz

Psychoanalytic Aspect	Evidence in the Film	Interpretation
Id	Ernesto desires fame, admiration, and public recognition.	His id reflects selfish ambition and excessive desire for popularity.

Ego	Ernesto manipulates others and hides the truth to maintain his image.	The ego operates strategically to protect his social status and success.
Superego	Ernesto shows weak moral consideration and ignores ethical values.	His superego is underdeveloped because personal ambition dominates his behavior.

Ernesto de la Cruz represents the negative side of psychological imbalance. His id strongly controls his actions through ambition, narcissism, and obsession with fame. The ego functions manipulatively to maintain his reputation and deceive others. However, his superego appears weak because he lacks guilt and moral responsibility. This character provides an important moral contrast in the film by illustrating the dangers of selfishness and dishonesty.

Table 5. Defense Mechanism Analysis of Miguel Rivera

Defense Mechanism	Evidence in the Film	Interpretation
Rationalization	Miguel justifies disobeying family rules because he believes music is his destiny.	He creates logical reasons to reduce feelings of guilt.
Denial	Miguel initially ignores the negative consequences of family conflict.	He refuses to fully accept the emotional impact of his actions.
Sublimation	Miguel expresses emotional tension through music performance and creativity.	His emotional impulses are redirected into positive artistic expression.

Miguel demonstrates several defense mechanisms to cope with emotional conflict and family pressure. Rationalization appears when he convinces himself that pursuing music is morally acceptable despite family opposition. Denial is reflected in his temporary ignorance of the emotional pain experienced by his family. In contrast, sublimation becomes the most constructive mechanism because Miguel transforms his emotional struggles into creativity and musical talent. These mechanisms illustrate adolescent emotional development and identity formation.

Table 6. Defense Mechanism Analysis of Héctor

Defense Mechanism	Evidence in the Film	Interpretation
Suppression	Héctor hides emotional pain related to separation from his family.	He consciously avoids painful memories to continue functioning.
Compensation	Héctor uses humor and cleverness to overcome his social limitations.	He attempts to balance feelings of loss and weakness.
Projection	Héctor sometimes accuses others of selfishness while hiding his own fears.	His anxiety is indirectly expressed toward others.

Héctor uses defense mechanisms as emotional protection against loneliness and loss. Suppression enables him to endure emotional suffering while surviving in the Land of the Dead. Compensation appears through humor and adaptive behavior that help him maintain social relationships. Additionally, projection occasionally emerges when Héctor transfers his fears and insecurities onto others. These mechanisms portray his vulnerability as well as his emotional resilience.

Table 7. Defense Mechanism Analysis of Mamá Coco

Defense Mechanism	Evidence in the Film	Interpretation
Repression	Mamá Coco passively stores painful memories from the past.	Emotional memories remain in the unconscious mind.
Regression	Her childlike emotional responses emerge in old age.	Psychological behavior returns to earlier emotional patterns.
Identification	Mamá Coco maintains emotional identity through memories of her father.	She preserves psychological attachment to loved ones.

Mamá Coco’s defense mechanisms are closely related to memory, aging, and emotional attachment. Repression appears through the hidden emotional pain associated with family separation. Regression is reflected in her vulnerable and childlike emotional

expressions during old age. Moreover, identification allows her to maintain emotional connection and identity through memories of her father. These mechanisms strengthen the emotional depth of the film and emphasize the importance of family remembrance.

Table 8. Defense Mechanism Analysis of Ernesto de la Cruz

Defense Mechanism	Evidence in the Film	Interpretation
Denial	Ernesto refuses to admit his crimes and betrayal.	He rejects reality to protect his self-image.
Rationalization	Ernesto justifies unethical behavior for the sake of success.	He creates excuses to defend immoral actions.
Projection	Ernesto blames others for threatening his reputation.	His fears and guilt are redirected toward external targets.

Ernesto de la Cruz demonstrates maladaptive defense mechanisms that support his narcissistic personality. Denial becomes evident when he continuously rejects responsibility for his crimes. Rationalization helps him justify unethical actions as necessary for fame and achievement. Meanwhile, projection appears when he accuses others of causing problems that actually originate from his own dishonesty. These psychological patterns reinforce his role as the antagonist and provide moral lessons concerning integrity and ethical behavior.

Discussion

The findings reveal that Miguel Rivera demonstrates a strong psychological conflict between individual desire and family expectations. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Miguel’s dominant id is reflected in his intense passion for music despite strict family prohibitions. Freud (Freud, 1987) explained that the id operates according to the pleasure principle and seeks immediate satisfaction of desires. In the context of Indonesian elementary education, Miguel’s struggle reflects the developmental stage in which children begin to negotiate personal interests with social norms. This finding supports previous studies indicating that films can become meaningful tools for developing self-awareness and moral reasoning among young learners (Bridgewater et al., 2021; Chen & Cho, 2022; Kirsh, 1998; Yun & Kim, 2026). Through classroom discussion, teachers may encourage students to critically evaluate the balance between ambition and responsibility, which aligns with Indonesia’s character education framework emphasizing integrity and self-control (Lickona, 2009; Power, 2008; Pratiwi et al., 2023; Stirling et al., 2002).

Miguel’s ego development further illustrates how children attempt to adapt personal desires to external realities. His secret musical activities symbolize an effort to mediate

internal impulses and family expectations. According to Paramitha (Paramitha et al., 2025), the ego functions as a rational mediator between instinctive drives and social constraints. In Indonesian elementary school contexts, such psychological negotiation is relevant to students' emotional and social development, particularly within collaborative learning environments (Isnaini et al., 2025; Nuansari & Sriyanto, 2021; Thomas & Manalil, 2025). Character education programs in Indonesia increasingly emphasize reflective thinking and emotional regulation as essential competencies for twenty-first-century learners. Therefore, Miguel's character may help students understand that decision-making requires both emotional awareness and social responsibility.

The strengthening of Miguel's superego at the end of the film reflects moral maturation and ethical awareness. After discovering the truth about his family history, Miguel prioritizes honesty, empathy, and familial love over personal ambition. Freud (Freud, 1987) argued that the superego develops through internalized moral standards shaped by family and society. This transformation aligns closely with Indonesian elementary character education goals that prioritize respect, responsibility, and family values (Kollo et al., 2024; Prabandari, 2020). As researchers (Ramadhani et al., 2025; N. K. Sari & Puspita, 2019) emphasized, effective character education must cultivate moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action simultaneously. Consequently, Miguel's development provides an appropriate representation of moral growth that can support values-based learning in primary education.

The analysis of Héctor reveals that emotional attachment and the desire to be remembered become central aspects of his psychological structure. His longing to reconnect with family reflects the operation of the id through emotional needs for love and recognition. Contemporary psychoanalytic scholars argue that emotional memory significantly shapes identity formation and interpersonal behavior (Fonagy & Target, 2003; Mayes, 2009). In Indonesian elementary schools, themes of family connection and emotional belonging are highly relevant because character education often emphasizes social harmony and collective responsibility (I. N. Amalia et al., 2025; Asri & Deviv, 2023; Muftianti & Supriyatna, 2025; Santoso et al., 2020). Héctor's portrayal may therefore encourage students to appreciate family relationships and maintain empathy toward others.

Héctor's ego is represented through adaptive strategies that allow him to survive and pursue reconciliation with his family. He cooperates with Miguel, negotiates with others, and demonstrates resilience despite emotional suffering. Such behavior reflects emotional intelligence and social adaptability, both of which are increasingly recognized as important outcomes in elementary education (Hughson, 2024; Souza, 2024; Zembylas, 2023). Indonesian classrooms implementing student-centered learning approaches seek to foster

cooperation, empathy, and communication skills among learners (Lathifah et al., 2022). Through Héctor's experiences, students may learn that resilience and collaboration are necessary for overcoming personal difficulties while maintaining positive social relationships.

The moral dimension of Héctor's superego becomes evident through his willingness to sacrifice personal recognition for his daughter's happiness. This finding supports previous research showing that animated films often communicate ethical values through emotionally meaningful narratives (Susanti et al., 2024). In Indonesian elementary education, moral exemplars are frequently used to strengthen students' understanding of honesty, loyalty, and responsibility. Lickona (Lickona, 2009) stated that moral role models help children internalize positive character traits through observation and reflection. Thus, Héctor's character may function as an educational model that supports the implementation of character-based instruction in Indonesian primary schools.

The findings regarding Mamá Coco indicate that memory and emotional attachment strongly influence her psychological identity. Her emotional responses toward music and family memories reflect unconscious emotional preservation. Freud (Freud, 1987) explained that repressed memories often continue influencing emotional behavior even when they are not consciously expressed. In Indonesian cultural contexts, respect for parents and ancestors remains an important social value integrated into elementary character education (Asri & Deviv, 2023). Therefore, Mamá Coco's portrayal reinforces educational principles related to filial respect, gratitude, and family solidarity, which are central components of the national character education movement.

Mamá Coco's psychological representation also highlights the importance of intergenerational relationships in children's moral development. Her emotional connection with Miguel demonstrates how family narratives contribute to children's identity formation and moral understanding. According to Berk (Berk, 2022), children's emotional and ethical development is significantly shaped by meaningful family interactions. Indonesian elementary education similarly promotes parental involvement and family-oriented learning as part of holistic character formation. Through discussions of Mamá Coco's role, students may develop greater appreciation for older generations and understand the importance of preserving cultural and familial traditions.

In contrast, Ernesto de la Cruz represents psychological imbalance dominated by excessive ambition and narcissistic desire. His id controls behavior through the pursuit of fame and recognition without ethical consideration. Freud (Freud, 1987) argued that when the id dominates personality, individuals may prioritize selfish gratification over moral responsibility. This character provides a critical moral contrast within the film and offers

valuable discussion opportunities in elementary classrooms. Indonesian character education seeks to prevent egocentric behavior by emphasizing humility, honesty, and social responsibility (N. K. Sari & Puspita, 2019). Consequently, Ernesto's character can function as a negative example that encourages students to critically reflect on ethical behavior.

Ernesto's manipulative ego further demonstrates how intelligence may be misused when separated from moral values. He strategically deceives others to preserve his social image and personal success. Contemporary educational research suggests that character education should not focus solely on cognitive achievement but also on ethical competence and empathy (Nucci et al., 2015). This perspective is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where educational reforms increasingly stress the integration of academic excellence with moral development. Through Ernesto's actions, students may learn that success achieved without honesty ultimately leads to social and personal consequences.

The defense mechanisms identified in Miguel's character, particularly rationalization and sublimation, reveal adaptive psychological coping strategies. Miguel transforms emotional tension into musical creativity, illustrating Freud's concept of sublimation as a socially acceptable outlet for instinctive drives (Freud, 1987). In elementary education, creative activities such as music, storytelling, and art are widely recognized as effective tools for emotional expression and character development. Indonesian schools implementing Merdeka Belajar approaches increasingly encourage creative and reflective learning experiences that support emotional well-being. Therefore, Miguel's character demonstrates how creativity can positively channel emotional conflict into productive behavior.

The defense mechanisms observed in Héctor and Mamá Coco also reflect emotional resilience and psychological adaptation. Héctor's suppression of emotional pain and Mamá Coco's preservation of emotional memories illustrate how individuals cope with loss and attachment. According to Erikson (Erikson, 1994), emotional resilience develops through meaningful relationships and supportive social environments. Indonesian elementary schools increasingly integrate socio-emotional learning into classroom activities to strengthen empathy, cooperation, and psychological well-being among students. Consequently, these characters may help learners recognize emotional experiences and develop healthier interpersonal relationships within school and family contexts.

Ernesto de la Cruz's denial, rationalization, and projection illustrate maladaptive defense mechanisms associated with moral failure. His refusal to acknowledge wrongdoing reflects weak moral consciousness and distorted self-perception. This finding supports previous studies suggesting that antagonistic characters in educational media can encourage ethical reflection when guided appropriately by teachers (Asri & Deviv, 2023;

Ramadhani et al., 2025; Susanti et al., 2024). Within Indonesian elementary education, reflective discussion activities may help students analyze the consequences of dishonesty, selfishness, and manipulation. Overall, the psychoanalytic analysis of *Coco* demonstrates that animated films can function as meaningful pedagogical media for strengthening character education, emotional literacy, and moral reasoning in Indonesian primary school settings.

Although Freud's psychoanalytic theory provides valuable insights into children's emotional conflict and personality development, several scholars criticize the theory for emphasizing unconscious drives while underestimating social, cultural, and educational influences on children's behavior. Contemporary educational psychology argues that children's moral development is shaped not only by instinctive impulses but also by interaction, environment, and reflective learning experiences (Berk, 2022). In the context of Indonesian elementary education, relying solely on Freud's framework may oversimplify students' emotional experiences because children's character formation is strongly influenced by collectivist cultural values, religious teachings, and family-centered social norms. Furthermore, psychoanalytic interpretation tends to be highly subjective and difficult to empirically measure within classroom contexts. Therefore, this study suggests that Freud's theory should be integrated with socio-cultural and constructivist perspectives to provide a more comprehensive understanding of children's emotional and moral development through film-based learning activities.

From a practical perspective, the implementation of animated films in elementary classrooms requires structured pedagogical strategies to ensure meaningful learning outcomes. Teachers may divide film-based activities into three stages: pre-viewing, while-viewing, and post-viewing discussions. During the pre-viewing stage, teachers can introduce key themes such as honesty, empathy, family responsibility, and emotional regulation to activate students' prior knowledge. While watching the film, students may complete reflective worksheets, identify character behaviors, and discuss emotional conflicts experienced by the characters. In the post-viewing stage, collaborative discussions, role-playing activities, storytelling tasks, and reflective journaling may help students connect film narratives with real-life social situations. Such activities support active learning, emotional literacy, and critical thinking while aligning with the Merdeka Belajar approach that emphasizes student-centered and contextual learning experiences in Indonesian elementary education.

Based on these findings, this study proposes a film-based learning model for elementary education consisting of four interconnected phases: emotional engagement, critical reflection, collaborative interpretation, and character reinforcement. In the emotional

engagement phase, students develop interest and emotional connection with the film narrative and characters. The critical reflection phase encourages learners to analyze moral conflicts, psychological motivations, and social consequences represented in the story. During collaborative interpretation, students work in groups to exchange perspectives, solve problems, and relate film events to classroom and family experiences. Finally, the character reinforcement phase focuses on applying positive values such as honesty, empathy, responsibility, and respect through classroom projects and daily behavioral practices. This model may serve as a practical pedagogical framework for integrating animated films into character education programs while simultaneously supporting students' emotional, social, and moral development in elementary school contexts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the psychoanalytic analysis of the characters in *Coco* demonstrates that animated films can serve as meaningful media for character education in Indonesian elementary schools. The findings reveal that the psychological dynamics of id, ego, superego, and defense mechanisms portrayed by Miguel Rivera, Héctor, Mamá Coco, and Ernesto de la Cruz reflect important moral and emotional values such as responsibility, honesty, empathy, resilience, and family loyalty. Through these characters, students may develop greater moral awareness, emotional understanding, and critical reflection toward human behavior and ethical decision-making. Furthermore, the study highlights that psychoanalytic literary analysis can support character-based learning by connecting students' emotional experiences with educational values relevant to the Indonesian primary school context. Therefore, the integration of animated films into classroom instruction may contribute to more engaging, reflective, and value-oriented learning practices that strengthen students' character development in the era of contemporary education.

However, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The research focuses only on selected characters from the movie *Coco* and applies a psychoanalytic perspective based primarily on Sigmund Freud's theory, which may limit broader interpretive perspectives from other educational or psychological frameworks. In addition, the study is conceptual and descriptive in nature, without direct classroom implementation or empirical measurement of students' character development outcomes. Therefore, future studies are recommended to conduct experimental or classroom-based research involving elementary school students to examine the effectiveness of film-based psychoanalytic learning in improving moral reasoning, empathy, and social behavior. Researchers may also compare different animated films or integrate other theoretical approaches such as social learning theory, constructivism, or multicultural education perspectives. Practically, the findings imply that teachers can utilize animated films as interactive learning media to

encourage discussion, reflection, and value-based activities in the classroom. By guiding students to analyze characters' emotions, conflicts, and moral decisions, teachers may create more engaging and meaningful character education practices that support students' emotional and social development in contemporary elementary education.

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