

**Sibling Rivalry in Jeff Kinney's  
*Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules* (2008)**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the portrayal of sibling rivalry in the novel *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules* (2008) by Jeff Kinney. The purpose of this study is to describe how sibling rivalry is portrayed in the novel *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules*. The sibling rivalry aspects in the novel is analyzed using the theory of psychoanalysis proposed by Freud (1989) through the events occurring in the novel among the Heffley siblings, which are Rodrick, Greg, and Manny. This study is also supported by the theory of sibling rivalry proposed by Hurlock (2001). This study uses a qualitative method to interpret the data. From the analysis of the study, it was found that the sibling rivalry aspects portrayed in the novel appear in the Heffley sibling's *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. The findings of the study suggest that the novel portrays some of the sibling rivalry aspects proposed by Hurlock (2001), which are aggression and jealousy. The portrayal of sibling rivalry in the novel is articulated through selfishness, aggression, competition, humiliation, avoidance, jealousy, and lack of appreciation. In addition, the most dominant sibling rivalry aspect is selfishness. However, the sibling rivalry aspects between the Heffley sibling is different from one to another; the eldest, Rodrick, shows the most sibling rivalry aspects.

**Keywords:** *ego*, *id*, psychoanalysis, sibling rivalry, *superego*

## INTRODUCTION

Many children grow up with a sibling, either brother or sister, stepbrother or stepsister, and few or many. Siblings usually teach each other many social skills, even before they face the outside world. The sibling relationship is one of an essential human being relationships besides the parent-child relationship. According to Buist et al. (2012), there are five reasons why it is so important. They reported that recent statistics showed that around 90% of the population have a sibling (Milevsky, 2011). Second, the sibling relationship is also one of the most lasting relationships during a human's lifespan, starting from birth until death (Noller, 2005). Third, siblings usually spend much time together, more than anyone else. It is no wonder because they live under the same roof and maybe share the same room (Sanders, 2004). Fourth, sibling relationships may affect other relationships in the family. The last reason is that they strongly affect psychosocial functioning (Noller, 2005). However, the problem is that a sibling relationship is typically complicated and can lead to sibling rivalry.

According to Whiteman et al. (2011), the rivalry between siblings is grounded in each child's need to overcome potential feelings of inferiority. Chaplin (2000) describes

sibling rivalry as a competition between siblings. In this definition, there is only one thing which is highlighted in sibling rivalry, which is the element of competition, including the feeling of compete and jealousy. Sibling rivalry which caused by jealousy comes from the feeling of fear and anger because they may feel that there is a threat to their self-esteem and relationship. Sibling rivalry is characterized by aggressive and regressive behaviors.

Many literary works, particularly novel, have raised the issue of the sibling relationship. The classic novel by Jane Austen titled *Pride and Prejudice* portrays the unique relationships among five sisters. Another novel is *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. The novel depicts the love-hate relationship between the main character named Jean and her brother. Next is *The Lowland* by Jhumpa Lahari which tells about the lives of two brothers, Subhash and Udayan, who share contradictive views of the world. Lastly, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules* by Jeff Kinney portrays the issue of sibling relationship using the perspective of an adolescence who deals with many conflicts in his family and school.

This novel, written by Kinney is a well-known novel among teenagers and young adults in many countries. The

popularity of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* novel has been proven by its 13 sequels and three movie adaptations since 2007. *Rodrick Rules* is Jeff Kinney's highly anticipated sequel to his #1 New York Times best-selling *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series (Rokoten kobo, n.d.). This novel has also been nominated as one of the top ten of Amazon's adolescence best-selling books in 2012 (Desk, 2012). The novel takes the main character's perspective, which gives a sense of closeness and familiarity for the young reader. The novel portrays the complex yet lovely relationship among the Heffley brothers: Greg, Rodrick, and Manny.

Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules* is mainly an interesting novel as proven by many studies on this novel. The novel sequels had been translated into many languages. Therefore, many studies on the novel had focused on translation strategies. For instance, Susain (2013) and Triagustina (2015) were similarly using translation strategies to examine the novel. Nevertheless, there are also some previous studies focusing on the novel itself. The study conducted by Sari (2016) discusses the illustrative elements from the sequel titled *Cabin Fever*. She analyzes the design of the picture book consisting of line, shape, color, texture, and composition interconnected to the

text. Pamungkas (2018) attempts to prove that the sequel titled *The Ugly Truth* belongs to children realism genre and the characters of Greg Heffley, Rowley Jefferson, and Dad suit for a realistic novel. Lastly, Simanjuntak (2016) analyzes the sentence structure in the sequel titled *The Last Straw*.

The issues raised in the previous study of the selected novel about sibling relationship are mostly concerned about sentence structure, visual grammar, genre, and translation strategy. However, the issue of the sibling relationship, particularly sibling rivalry, that is very apparent in the novel has not much been discussed. Therefore, the present research focuses on analyzing the sibling rivalry among Greg Heffley, Rodrick Heffley, and Manny Heffley and its influence on their relationship as a sibling. The analysis will focus on the main character's characterization in the novel *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules* using the sibling rivalry concept by Hurlock (2001), according to psychoanalysis theory proposed by Sigmund Freud (1989).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study is a descriptive analysis which uses a qualitative method. This study drew upon the qualitative method because it aimed to reveal how sibling

rivalry is portrayed in the novel *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules*. This portrayal was achieved by using qualitative description. This type of research method can be applied to an analysis of a novel, which is called a textual analysis.

The data were collected from the novel written by Jeff Kinney entitled *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules* (2008). This novel was chosen as the primary data source because it is one of the novels which famously portray the relationship between siblings, particularly sibling rivalry in a family. The data were in the forms of words, phrases, sentences, and dialogues between the selected characters in the novel, which are the Heffley siblings: Rodrick, Greg, and Manny.

Based on the statements and aims of the research, the collection of data were analyzed in order to answer the research question proposed. Regarding the research question in this study, the procedure for the analysis of the sibling rivalry portrayed in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules* was conducted in three steps. First, the data were collected from the novel. The collected data were in the form of text. The events in which the Heffley sibling showed the sibling rivalry characteristics. The data were categorized into three aspects of the

elements of personality by Freud (1989), which consists of *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. The data were categorized in tabular form, as it makes the process of analysis more manageable. Second, the selected data were interpreted and analyzed. The analysis focused on the portrayal of sibling rivalry in the novel through the psychoanalysis theory by Freud (1989) and sibling rivalry theory by Hurlock (2001). Finally, the findings were generated to discover how is sibling rivalry portrayed in the novel.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Findings have shown that sibling rivalry is portrayed in the novel *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules* using the psychoanalysis theory by Freud (1989) and also sibling rivalry theory by Hurlock (2001). The psychoanalysis shows that there are numerous conflicts between the sibling, which lead them to sibling rivalry's behavior. The conflicts are mostly caused by the dominance of the *id*, which results in negative behavior. Meanwhile, the *ego* takes part in the decision-making of the characters. Besides, the dominant *ego* defense mechanism portrayed in the novel is displacement. Thus, the *superego* plays its role to remind the characters about moral and value. The result of the study suggests that the novel portrays some of

the sibling rivalry aspects proposed by Hurlock (2001), which are aggression and jealousy. The findings of this study show that the novel *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules* depicts the sibling rivalry characteristics in the form of aggression, avoidance, selfishness, competition, humiliation, jealousy, and lack of appreciation. In addition, the most dominant sibling rivalry's aspect is selfishness.

The sibling rivalry in this novel involves the *id*, *ego*, and *superego* within the Heffley siblings, which consist of Rodrick, Greg, and Manny. Moreover, the most dominant personality of the Heffley siblings differs from one to another. The eldest sibling, Rodrick, tends to have more sibling rivalry characteristics than the others. It is in line with Leung (1991), who argues that sibling rivalry is more common in first-born children. Rodrick is portrayed as a lazy, abusing, manipulating, and dishonest person. He is also depicted to have sibling rivalry aspects as follow: selfishness, aggression, and humiliation. He often gives his sibling a hard time because of what he does. For instance, when his parents discover that he holds a party without their consent, Greg also gets scolded and punished.

Rodrick and Greg's parents are aware of the sibling rivalry between their

children. Hence, their mother does anything to make them get along well. However, most of her ideas do not interest both siblings, especially Rodrick. For instance, Rodrick, who is a lazy person, is given the job to pick up Greg, whom he does not like to hang around with. As a result, Rodrick does the job unwillingly; he only wants to make sure his mother knows that he has carried out his responsibility. As argued by Hurlock (2001), if the child's role-given is not a self-chosen role, hence the possibility of a conflict is strong and it can cause a deterioration in the relationship between parents and siblings. Since Rodrick becomes the main topic of the novel, his activity is highlighted and becomes the cause of most of the conflicts, particularly those between him and his sibling. Most of his actions towards his sibling are based on the dominance of his *id*. Hurlock (2001) states that if the *id* wins over the *superego*, the responds of the *ego* will be in the form of aggression and violence. Thus, any textual evidences of the appearance of Rodrick's *superego* in the novel were not found. In most situation, Rodrick's frustration leads him to express his anger towards a person or object that poses no threat; in this case, his younger brother. This type of *ego* defense mechanism is called displacement.

The main character of the novel, which is also the narrator, Greg Heffley, is portrayed as the character who encounters sibling rivalry the most. It is found that he is presented to have the most sibling rivalry's aspects as follow: selfishness, aggression, competition, avoidance, jealousy, and lack of appreciation. Most of the conflicts occur between him and Rodrick since the same-gender siblings tend to have more conflicts than a sibling with different gender (Garg & Morduch, 1998). Rodrick and Greg are often involved in a fight; they even have a massive argument as portrayed in the novel. Greg usually represses his *id* side; thus, his *ego* makes a decision based on his *superego*. For instance, when he is mad because Manny breaks his video games, he does not let his anger control him. As a matter of fact, he thinks of another plan that will make the situation much better.

There is a time when Greg loses his temper and lets his *id* side control him. Greg is once annoyed by his older brother behavior toward him; he becomes frustrated. It pushes him to rebel and release his anger. Frequently, Greg gets into more fights with his older sibling rather than with his younger sibling. In the late childhood age, the antagonism between the siblings will get stronger and eventually triggers significant conflicts

between them (Garg & Morduch, 1998). The age difference between Greg and Rodrick is close; they have a four-year difference. On the other hand, the age difference between Greg and Manny is 11 years. Hence, the close age between sibling will likely support the development of sibling rivalry characteristics (Putri, 2013).

The conflict between siblings can be worsened if the parents take part in the conflict since they are usually accused of taking side with one of the children (Garg, A., & Morduch, J., 1998). As portrayed in the novel, the parents often take side with one child; most of the time, it is Manny. As the youngest child, his parents put more attention and affection to him than his older brothers. Greg accidentally messes up the situation when he is having fun with Manny. Hence, his mother nags at him, and it makes the situation worse. Their mother is more protective of Manny rather than to the other children. The attitude of parents who seem to favor one child over another can cause a feeling of jealousy and resentment towards siblings (Dinengsih & Agustina, 2018). The different parental treatment between the Heffley siblings is also done by their father. As evidenced in the novel, Greg asks his father to help him finish his assignment. However, his father refuses

to do it. Greg thinks that it is unfair because, in the past, his father always helped Rodrick on his assignments.

The youngest child, Manny, is often driven by his *superego*. According to Freud (1989), *superego* develops around the age of 3-5 during the phallic stage of psychosexual development. A three-year-old Manny acts according to his super-ego. At his age, his *superego* appears strongly on how he behaves and he upholds a sense of right and wrong. In the novel, Manny often finds out about Greg's mistakes, which he assumes as 'wrong' and 'bad' according to his moral and value standard. He tells his parents about it because he learns these values from them. As a result, Greg keeps his distance from Manny, and their relationship becomes tenuous. In the novel, Manny's action and behavior are not much portrayed compared to the other siblings. Therefore, it is found that he only possesses the competition aspect of sibling rivalry since he is still a little child who needs more attention from his parents.

Nevertheless, the findings of the present study are different from several previous studies which have been mentioned earlier. The differences cover the theoretical frameworks used, the data used, and also the findings. The frameworks used in this study are

psychoanalysis (Freud, 1989) and sibling rivalry (Hurlock, 2001). Besides, the objects of studies in the research about sibling rivalry are mostly an actual person, not literary works, such as done by Diarawati (2018), Fauziyah et al. (2017), Dinengsih and Agustina (2018), and Wijaya (2017). While there are studies about sibling rivalry in a literary work such as those done by Padilla (2015), Giobbi (1992), and Latifah (2015), not many of them acquired the data from an adolescence novel. This study also contradicts the finding of a similar study done by Latifah (2015). She concluded that the only sibling rivalry's aspect appeared in the novel *The Cuckoo's Calling* is jealousy.

Different from the previous studies, the most dominant aspect of sibling rivalry portrayed in the novel is selfishness. From the findings, it can be inferred that Rodrick portrays selfish behavior more than the others. Out of 30 events, there are 11 events in the novel which indicate his selfishness toward his younger siblings. It can be concluded that most of the sibling rivalry events in the novel are caused by the selfish trait of the siblings, particularly Rodrick. According to Wallace (1999), one of the most positive experiences the eldest sibling receives as a first born, is nurturing a younger sibling. However, Rodrick

contradicts the social expectations of a firstborn in a family. As mentioned earlier, Rodrick is selfish in nature; he does not like to hang around with his brothers. Perhaps, it was caused by the experiences of terrible feelings of loss as a firstborn when he must share his parents' love and attention to a 'newcomer'.

Regarding the birth order, Greg has the expected personalities as a middle child, in opposite to Rodrick. Wallace (1999) argues that in general, middle children tend to possess the following characteristics, namely people-pleasers, rebellious, thrives on friendships, has large social circle, and peacemaker. This sort of hierarchical grouping leads Greg to make his mark among their friends, since his parents' attention is usually devoted to the firstborn or baby of the family. Lastly, Manny as the last child, is portrayed as uncomplicated, manipulative, attention-seeker, and self-centered child even though his existence is not much visible in the novel. It is in line with Wallace's theory of birth order and personality (1999).

## **CONCLUSION**

This study has shown the portrayal of sibling rivalry aspects through psychoanalysis theory of the main characters in Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a*

*Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules* (2008). Based on the findings in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that the sibling rivalry in the novel is portrayed through aggression, avoidance, selfishness, competition, humiliation, jealousy, and lack of appreciation of the characters. However, the findings also show that the most influential element of personality of the Heffley sibling differs from one to another.

The analysis was focused on three characters, which are Rodrick, Greg, and Manny Heffley. The sibling involved in numerous conflicts between each other and show the tendency to reveal the characteristic of sibling rivalry. From the findings, it can be seen that the conscious and unconscious human mind has a profound effect to control how a human behaves, thinks, and acts. In the novel, the firstborn, whose name is Rodrick, dominantly influenced by his *id* or unconscious mind. He let his *id* controlled him, so his acts mostly depend on his satisfaction. The second born, Greg, was portrayed in many events in the novel since the novel itself was narrated by him. Greg is portrayed to experience the *id*, *ego*, and *superego* depending on the situation. Greg's *id* mostly shows when he had a conflict with his older brother, Rodrick. While his *ego* appeared when he had control of his



action, as *ego* acts as a 'shield' between the *id* and the external world; it has the task of self-preservation (Freud, 1989). On the other hand, Manny does not appear much in the novel. However, he provided the insight of the third part of a human's mind, which is *superego*. At his age, Manny upholds a sense of what it is called 'good' and 'bad'.

It can be concluded that all of the combinations between the *id*, *ego*, and *superego* inside Rodrick, Greg, and Manny influences their relationship as a sibling. There is a significant amount of conflict between the Heffley sibling in

the novel which shows the unstable condition between the unconscious mind and the *superego* which caused anxiety which contributes to *ego*'s change in each character. The novel shows that most of the time, the *id* of the characters wins over their *superego*. As a result, their unconscious mind take control over their behavior and action. In addition, by using the basic principle of psychoanalysis theory proposed by Freud (1989), it can be interpreted that the human personality can be portrayed through real life and also literary work.

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