

## PERSONALITY DYNAMICS OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN HUDA BARAAKAT'S BARIID AL-LAIL

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to explore the way life experiences determine how a person's personality changes dynamically throughout a span of time in their lifetime based on the person-centered theory proposed by Carl Rogers. This theory is the base for the corresponding research to understand more about oneself's actualization aspect. This literary study utilizes the contents of the main character's sad outpour and analyzes the personality dynamics. The object of this study is a novel entitled *Bariid Al-Lail* written by Huda Baraakat. By using content analysis techniques, the collected data are analyzed and scrutinized through the perspective of Carl Rogers' person-centered theory. The findings show that there is a unique portrayal of the psychological side of the main character, both in the way of her looking at the world filled with various kinds of dynamics and her mechanism regarding positioning herself in the reality of life. Depicted as an old woman, the main character still has the desire to continue to grow and achieve the goal of self-actualization. Based on the person-centered theory, the main character's personality dynamics goes through 1. Childish behavior; 2. Strong resolution; 3. Self-acceptance; and 4. Reality check. These findings thus provide evidence that age does not limit someone's desire to reach another dream.

**Keywords:** Personality Dynamics, Person-centered theory, *Bariid Al-Lail*, Huda Baraakat

### INTRODUCTION

Aspects of a person's personality determine how he/she spends his/her days. Can not be separated from the psychological and phenomenological aspects that make researchers interested in studying this aspect of personality. These aspects give rise to various forms of artistic value and beauty from the imaginative aspect of a literary work, how the main character has a unique character that is depicted in a literary work. Such figures appear to construct an object and psychologically represent its creator (Albertine, 2010).

It is also necessary to understand that the direction of life and human goals are nothing but to be the best version of themselves and a desire for healthy and creative self-actualization. Today researchers all know the popular saying "Experience is the best teacher". This sentence contains a deep and important meaning compared to the life experience of someone who has struggled to face all the challenges in every step of their life. Those experiences eventually shaped them to become more "mature", or "themselves". Self-actualization is one of the discussion concepts from Carl Rogers' personality theory, better known as the person-centered theory.

Carl Rogers' humanistic psychology is a branch of psychology that focuses on human experience and behavior and views humans as whole individuals, who can actualize themselves. (Rachmahana, 2008). Carl Rogers is a figure who put forward his theories and ideas in the realm of personality psychology. This science discusses the understanding of human behavior, thoughts, feelings, and

activities, using systematics, methods, and psychological rationalization. In short, the psychological theory of personality studies individuals specifically (Alwisol, 2004a).

Carl Rogers himself is a psychologist and psychotherapist who helps a person to change their personality into the most ideal version, thus giving the idea in the realm of psychotherapy that there needs to be an open attitude between clients and therapists, and mutual respect in helping someone overcome their problems. (Ratu, 2010). Carl Rogers argues that everyone tends to actualize themselves, unconsciously or consciously. Tendency to maintain and develop one's qualities and move toward full constructive achievement (Thorne, 2003). Aspects of personality cannot be separated from the essence of a literary work, because this is what makes us interested in researching a novel entitled *بريد الليل/Bariid Al-Lail* (The Night Mail) written by Huda Baraakat as the object of this research.

The novel *Bariid Al-Lail* was published by Dar Al-Adab in 2017, written by a writer from Lebanon named Huda Baraakat. Born in 1952, Huda Baraakat spent her childhood in Beirut before moving to Paris. She has published 6 novels, 2 plays, a book of short stories, and a book of memoirs. In 2019, her novel *Bariid Al-Lail* won the 2019 International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF). The novel tells the stories in the form of letters. These letters were then lost but each is linked to one another, and the fates of the writers were woven together. The novel uses the first-person point of view to develop the story. The complex characterization of the main character/narrator provides a certain psychological side that needs to be revealed. This study utilizes the second part of the novel which tells of an old woman who is waiting for her lover who never comes. The woman starts the beginning of the story by writing a letter about another letter that the previous writer did not get to finish. This premise is the hallmark of *Bariid Al-Lail* novels, presenting readers with stories that are truncated but have stories of their own. The woman had written down various kinds of complaints about herself when she was young with the man, she was faithful to wait for even though he never came. The complex feeling expressed in the letters provides evidence of psychological dynamics that can be scrutinized through personality or humanistic psychology proposed to Carl Rogers.

There have been several studies conducted within the scope of humanistic psychology. First, (Wardani et al., 2022) provides analysis on Matt Haig's *The Midnight Library* using the humanistic psychological theory of the character Abraham Maslow. Another study by (Rizqiyah & Ahmadi, 2021) used the theory from Carl Rogers in a novel entitled *Kerumunan Terakhir* by Okky Madasari. This novel provides a perspective about the psychological stuttering of the younger generation in dealing with changes in the technological age. Third, (Bunga et al., 2022) examined the film entitled *Freedom Writers* with the humanistic psychological theory of Carl Rogers, focusing on the concept of self-actualization contained in the film. In another perspective, (Doeka & Saartje Banja, 2022) examined the humanistic approach in interfaith counseling. This study emphasized the importance of freedom in human life, which must be supported by everyone's awareness. Lastly, (Harahap, 2020) provided evidence on the use of the theory of Carl Rogers in aiming to form a healthy personality. Rogers' findings provide evidence that clients/individuals will have good personal and social well-being, but sometimes a person cannot maximize the potential that exists within him, and someone sees only his weaknesses.

Carl Rogers gave rise to the Person-centered Theory based on some of his clinical experience, in that every human being essentially has a goal to keep moving, orientated towards positive and pure self-development and change. (Amalia, 2014). These assumptions have 2 tendencies: 1) the formative tendency is the tendency towards all things, both organic and non-organic, to develop from a simple form or state to a more complex one; 2) the actualization tendency is the integrated motivation of every living being who aims to develop all their potentials. Rogers believes that all living things must want to do or get the best for their existence. It is this singular urge that raises fundamental questions for living things as to why they need food, water, or shelter. This aspect is also supported by the living environment or certain ecosystems. For humans, the creation of society and culture is to actualize the potential they have (Boeree, 2017).

Rogers (in Alwisol, 2004b) proposed the concept of personality dynamics. Positive regard or positive acceptance is a feeling or internal characteristic of all people, namely the feeling of self-need to be well accepted, loved, and recognized by their environment. A positive reception from a mother will satisfy the baby, otherwise, without a positive reception, the baby will become frustrated or sad. This attitude from the mother is called unconditional positive regard: unconditional love, accepting the baby,

and his behavior as a whole person. When positive acceptance can be accepted by themselves, they can get satisfaction from accepting themselves or receiving positive self-regard. This includes the dynamic part of the personality of social life needs.

According to Rogers (Smith, 2016), every organism serves to maintain the consistency of self-perception, and congruence between self-perception and experience. Consistency here means a person's complete state of self-perception as normal. Meanwhile, congruence is the ability to adjust to something. An individual develops a value system whose center is self-assessment. This system includes everything that comes from within or outside himself, arranged in such a way as to maintain the real self as it should be. Congruence in detail is the symbolic relationship of the real self (subjective world) which contains the perceptions of oneself and others, which match the real experiences of the organism. If it does not match then it is called incongruent and will cause a person to feel threatened, anxious, behave defensively, think rigidly, and not clearly. If an individual feels a discrepancy between their real self and experience, he will feel incongruent, unable to adapt the situation to something. For example, a person who sees himself as a patient experiences an event that makes him lose his temper. An individual will encounter conflict within himself while trying to maintain the consistency of his real self. Subjectively, people distinguish reality from fiction by looking at sources of data or information. In this case, congruence or incongruence between the self and the organism determines adjustment and mental health. Congruence continuously requires improvement and change in one's values, adjusting to certain circumstances and situations. This is done to understand other people and be tolerant of the behavior of others.

Rogers (Cervone, 2011) views organisms as moving continuously to progress and self-actualizing (self-actualizing drive). This self-actualization is a person's motivation, encouragement, and purpose in life, to be how his ideal self is portrayed. In the process of self-actualization, there are many needs of an individual, but all of them are subject to serve the basic tendency of the organism to achieve actualization.

Based on the previous studies above, it seems significant to utilize Carl Rogers' theory of personality in analyzing human behavior outside and inside literary texts. This study thus believes that by utilizing Carl Rogers' theory of personality, readers will gain deeper understanding of the theory application in analyzing literary texts, especially Huda Baraakat's *Bariid Al-Lail*. This study thus proposes two objectives to explore the psychological aspects to be examined are the words or meanings contained in the story. Therefore, this study aims to describe the main character's sad outpour and analyze the personality dynamics according to the person-centered theory of Carl Rogers in Huda Baraakat's *بريد الليل/Bariid Al-Lail*.

## METHODS

This study is a literary criticism. The data, in the forms of Arabic quotations, are obtained and then described according to the literary theory used in the research. In this case, the study was conducted to achieve the goal of describing the analysis of Carl Rogers' person-centered theory of the main character in the novel *Bariid Al-Lail* by Huda Baraakat. The data source used is a novel entitled *Bariid Al-Lail* written by Huda Baraakat, by taking the second part of the story entitled "The Book of Isa". This study then examined the contents of the story related to the main character's phenomenologically/psychologically, then analyzed the data according to the person-centered theory of Carl Rogers.

The data of this study are collected library study techniques. Library study techniques are relevant to push this research in the right path, collecting necessary sources first and then progressing through the research (Prastowo, 2011b). The data analysis technique used is content analysis. Content analysis is a method whose research techniques are carried out by making contextual inferences (conclusions) that analyze the "meaning" of the research object. The content analysis aims to describe complex and large amounts of data while testing hypotheses and being able to make inferences (conclusions) from the research conducted (Prastowo, 2011a).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### The Main Character's Sad Outpour as the evidence of the Personality Dynamics

There are various examples and quotations from the novel *Bariid Al-Lail* which describe how the main character's feelings and dynamics from the psychological side are known. It should be noted that everyone has their views on the phenomena of life they face. The main character describes what she sees and experiences using various kinds of sentences that are quite difficult to understand. Based on the limitation of this paper, this study will use 5 data of quotations from the novel *Bariid Al-Lail* by Huda Barakat as evidence in this with the translation provided by (Alima, 2022).

#### Datum 1

مع أنني في هذه الغرفة لا أجد ما أتسلّى به، إلا أنني أعين وأتابع الأغراض كأنّ لها أهميّة ومعاني كبيره. من يقعد في الفراغ يبحث لا إرادياً عن صلة له بالمعنى الذي للأغراض. كأني أسترجع ذكرياتها، أعرفها، أنّ لها عندي مكاناً أو حكاية.

*"All I do is pay attention to the things around me as if they have great value and meaning. I like repeating memories of those items as if I recognize them, or as if those items have a place and story in my life. (Barakat, 2018, p. 31)"*

Datum 1 shows that the main character has a unique perspective on things around her. The in-depth and detailed view gives a unique feeling to the character of the main character. Initially, the writer assumed that the main character has a loving heart and nature, but this part provides evidence that her psychological side has indications of achieving self-actualization.

#### Datum 2

صحيح، أنا دائماً هكذا، أترجح بسهولة بين خيالي الخصب، أعني أو هامي، والواقع. أخلط كثيراً بين ما هو وهمّ وما هو حقيقة، لكنّ ذلك لا يقلقني، إنّه في الحقيقة يسليني كثيراً.

*"It's true, I've always been like this: I easily vacillate between wild imagination and reality, without really knowing what I'm doing. I often mix fantasy and reality, even though it doesn't bother me. I am amused. (Barakat, 2018, p. 33)"*

Datum 2 shows provides evidence that the main character from the beginning has a broad imagination and is psychologically emotional. As if accepting the reality around her with an unnatural thought process. It amused her. It is quite beautiful even though it seems odd.

#### Datum 3

هكذا أصبحت، وكما قلت لك، أفرح حين تخلط الأمور في رأسي، صراحة، حين أخلطها أنا في رأسي. إذ في خلطي الأمور أعطيتك موعداً في فندق صغير هنا، وفي الوقت نفسه أردد أنّك مستحيل أن تأتي، مع أنني هنا أنتظر. وأعتقد أنّ لذلك علاقة بالعمر الذي وصلت إليه الآن.

*"This is how I am now. As I told you, I like it when things get mixed up inside my head; or to be honest, When I mix things up in my head. Between fantasy and reality, I promise you to meet at this small hotel. And at the same time, I keep convincing myself that you won't come, Even though I've been waiting for you here, I'm sure it has something to do with my age now. (Barakat, 2018, p. 36)"*

Datum 3 illustrates that at her age, the main character begins to be unable to control exactly what her brain processes with the things around her. The tendency to mix reality and fantasy makes her unable to be in a stagnant and strong position, not having basic certainty about her way of thinking. However, she accepted this, realizing that this matter was innate to her relatively old age.

#### Datum 4

أنا، مثلاً، صار يؤذيني أن أسمع رجلاً يعدني بحبه ((إلى الأبد)). يشعري بالذعر، إذ هو لا يترك لي مجالاً لأن أعبر رأسي، لأن أنتعبر، كالحكم بالسجن المبتدئ. ماذا لو كفت أنا عن حبه ((إلى الأبد؟)).

*"I, for example, will feel hurt when I hear a man's promise to love me forever. I was horrified because he didn't give me room to change my mind, room to clean up. It was*

*like being imprisoned for life. What if I stop loving him forever?* (Baraakat, 2018, p. 40)”

In Datum 4, the main character has the desire and tendency to "progress", to change her state even though that state is permanent. Her thinking also seems exaggerated which causes unclear anxiety to herself. This style of behavior is also included in the process of self-actualization.

#### Datum 5

سأحتال، إن أتيت، بألا أقف حين تدخل، بأن أكون جالسة، على السرير، أو على الكرسي الذي أنا جالسة عليه أكتب.  
سيكون وضعي أفضل من وضعك بكثير، إذ أنت من سيكون مكشوفاً في هيئته، وخائفاً من نظري.

*"I will think of a way - if you do come - so that I am not standing when you enter this room, perhaps sitting on the bed or chair where I am now writing. My position has to be better than yours, because it's your physique that has to be exposed, you're the one who gets nervous when I look at you.* (Baraakat, 2018, p. 46)”

Lastly Datum 5 illustrates that the main character can even imagine what she or someone else will do even though it doesn't necessarily happen. It's like being trapped and tormented by her thoughts when it doesn't need to, from here the researchers can analyze her outpour that will be adjusted to the person-centered theory of Carl Rogers.

### The Main Character's Personality Dynamics

Carl Rogers put forward a person-centered theory as a reference in carrying out psychoanalytic procedures or psychotherapy. This theory can help anyone determine the right direction in the process of analyzing one's character, even for a fictional character. This study found 5 examples of quotes like the one above on the psychological "dynamics" of the main character in the novel *Bariid Al-Lail* by Huda Baraakat. These dynamics are an important aspect in determining the direction of analysis in this study.

The main character has a unique side to discuss. Based on the data above, "The Book of Isa" sees that the internal and external experiences of the main character are not seen as a common field of phenomena. The evidence in Datum 3 *"This is how I am now. As I told you, I like it when things get mixed up inside my head; or to be honest, When I mix things up in my head."* This saying gives the impression that there is a uniqueness/complexity in it, if not understood carefully. Other evidence from the examples above the author concludes that the main character is fully aware of herself, although there are indications, she still has not reached 100%. This study emphasizes in the main character that there is still a childish side to her. Namely not being able to control her thought process which mixes imagination and reality, the author takes this childish part as the first dynamics.

The data above also provide evidence on the main character's Self. Through the Self, the main character is fully aware that she is formed from all experiences in her life or around her life. Rogers divide Self into real self and ideal self, which will bring up about 3 levels of consciousness. The first level of awareness is taken from Datum 3: *"And at the same time, I keep convincing myself that you won't come, even though I've been waiting for you here, I'm sure it has something to do with my age now"*. Datum 3 provides evidence of the first level of awareness, which is ignoring anything other than herself. The main character knows her lover has a high probability of not coming, but she insists on staying focused on wanting to remain as herself who has personality dynamics, described as determination without thinking.

The second level of awareness is taken from Datum 2: *"It's true, I've always been like this: I easily vacillate between wild imagination and reality, without really knowing what I'm doing. I often mix fantasy and reality, even though it doesn't bother me. I am amused."* Datum 2 indicates the second level of awareness, which is comforting herself with her belief in a more acceptable way of your psychological state. The evidence shows that every individual, especially the main character, must tend to this second level of awareness, an acceptance of oneself that increases the level of self-confidence. This certainly has an impact on the real self aspect, these dynamics can be described as self-acceptance according to reality.



The third level of awareness is taken from Datum 3: *"I, for example, would feel hurt when I heard a man's promise to love me forever. I was horrified because he didn't give me room to change my mind, room to clean up. It was like being imprisoned for life. What if I stop loving him forever?"*. Datum 3 indicates the third level of consciousness, which is distortion of the phenomena that affect her to protect her real self. This happens to the main character because she wants to maintain self-respect and her ego, at least she still believes that she feels "imprisoned" when she is in a situation like in Datum 3. The dynamics in Datum 3 can be described as a tendency to wonder about realities that might befall her.

Another part of the main characters' personality dynamics is having positive regards. In this case, the main character indicates that she wants to get positive self-regard. This can be seen in Datum 3 *"As I told you, I like it when things get mixed up inside my head; or to be honest, When I mix things up in my head."* This needs to be understood in depth that the main character has accepted this fact and made it an output of self-positive regard, following its goal to be more self-accepting and real self. Rogers sees every individual as having Self-consistency and Congruence. Every individual, as well as the main character in this story, try as much as possible to remain consistent with themselves, and congruence is an effort to adjust to that. The story provides evidence that the main character still tries to be herself and even seems a little pushy. This becomes another main character's dynamics, that is congruently forced on others. However, there are also slight indications of incongruence, such as denial found in Datum 4: *"I was horrified because he didn't give me room to change my mind, room to clean up. It was like being imprisoned for life."* The main character slightly refuses that she will feel in a position that can not be reached by her control.

Through the evidence above, Self-actualization has been achieved by the main character, because in each of the quotes above, she does not lie to herself, but only tries to deceive the dynamics in herself, but it doesn't materialize. The dynamics only becomes an inner conflict within her. However, based on the findings, the main character has fulfilled all 4 aspects of self-actualization, namely maintenance, enhancement, positive regard for others, and positive self-regard.

Based on the findings above, based on Rogers' person-centered theory, the main character can be understood to have reached the stage of a fully functioning person, which is in tandem with the 5 traits from the fully functioning person aspects. This understanding is based on several factors of age, existential life, organismic belief, freedom, and decision making. The story reveals that the age of the main character, which is quite old, gives way to openness to experience, which forms itself as illustrated in the data above. Her existential life, on the other hand, provides her with energy to live to the fullest without underestimating anything, and gaining her perfect Self. In the meantime, organismic belief in herself directs her to the position experienced in the story. The main character also experiences freedom that has been achieved even though it is slightly hampered because the main character seems to be in a position that is trapped by her own thoughts even though she is physically free. Lastly, the aspect of creativity is no longer in doubt because the main character is an adult and can make all decisions and thoughts that are born from all kinds of experiences in her life.

From the results and discussion, the researchers have found 4 psychological dynamics in the main character in Huda Barakat's *Bariid Al-Lail*. First, the findings show that the main character still has childish characteristics at an old age as confirmed by (Ajhuri, 2019) that this trait is more common in old age, even though ever since adolescents, human must leave this childish nature behind. However, this childish characteristic may arise when someone is growing up to achieve emotional independence. Second, the findings show that the main character possesses strong resolution. The findings provide evidence that the main character has this trait because of her firmness when she is in a position where she still prioritizes herself rather than others. This confirms findings by (Fakhrunnisa, 2018) that human needs to strengthen the courage and strength of self-worth and ability.

Third, the findings show that the main character possesses self-acceptance. Self-love is a level where one can accept all the weaknesses and strengths of oneself (Gamayanti, 2016). In this case, the main character is in her old age. She manages to accept herself in any situation. These "dynamics" cannot be taken for granted, because it is not that easy to create this peaceful situation in her life. Lastly, the findings show that the main character undergoes reality checks. As an adult an adult, the main character cannot escape from all the fates and destinies of what can happen in this life. The main character does have a trait that can be considered an overthinker. This trait becomes her unique trait that she tries to

make calculations. All the calculations that she makes are always based on the realities of life, so it doesn't make her easily influenced or change her mind.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has limitations in finding aspects of a person's personality vary based on all kinds of experiences that occur in the main character. According to Huda Baraakat's *Bariid Al-Lail*, the main character has unique dynamics described in her sad outpour in her letters. The main character provides an overview from the psychological side, in which, with her old age, has a different perspective. The tendency to mix imagination and reality is an aspect that is unique and not easy to understand. There is a desire to continue to grow and persist in what she believes in, even though she does not always get the desired results. Various kinds of life experiences are a big factor in shaping one's perspective. After analyzing the data through Carl Rogers' Person-centered theory, which provides a lot more in-depth information, the findings show that the main character undergoes personality dynamics of childish behavior, strong resolution, self-acceptance, and reality check process. Furthermore, this is expected to contribute to understanding the personality of others in a more complicated way but has limitations of the only part that is important to the psychological part of the characters. Based on the limitations of this study, it is expected that future researchers further deepen the theory and the novel that have been selected and provide more findings on personality dynamics, personality development, and Self, through other perspectives from figures related to the scope of discussion of this study has carried out.

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