Character Heroism in the Mecha Mobile Suit Gundam Anime Series: Iron-Blooded Orphans: A Psychoanalytic Study

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ABSTRACT

Purpose- This study investigates the psychological dimensions of heroism in the anime *Mobile Suit Gundam: Iron-Blooded Orphans* (2015–2017), focusing on the characters Mikazuki Augus and Orga Itsuka. Set in a dystopian future where war and survival define the lives of young orphans, the anime provides a compelling narrative to examine how trauma, leadership, loyalty, and moral responsibility shape heroic behaviour. The background of this study lies in the underexplored intersection between anime, heroism, and psychoanalytic psychology.

Methodology - This research employed a descriptive qualitative design. Data were collected through a literature study of all 50 episodes of the anime and supplemented with relevant scholarly sources. The analysis was grounded in Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, particularly the concepts of the id, ego, and superego, to understand the psychological underpinnings of each character's decisions and development. The data were processed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion.

Findings - The study finds that heroism in *Iron-Blooded Orphans* is shaped by a complex interplay of internal conflicts, moral values, and social expectations. Mikazuki's actions are driven by loyalty and emotional dependency on Orga, while Orga's decisions reflect the burden of leadership and psychological strain. Both characters exhibit behaviors influenced by their trauma and suppressed desires, with the id, ego, and superego dynamics influencing their perception of duty and sacrifice. These findings suggest that heroic behaviour in the anime is deeply tied to unresolved psychological tension and external moral pressures.

Novelty - This research offers a novel contribution by applying Freudian psychoanalysis to anime character analysis—a framework rarely used in this context. It provides a detailed mapping of the psychological structures driving heroic behaviour in anime, expanding the discourse on character psychology in popular media.

Significance - The study is particularly relevant for scholars and students of media psychology, literary and cultural studies, and anime studies. It demonstrates how anime can serve as a valuable lens for analyzing complex psychological themes, making it a useful reference for future interdisciplinary research on heroism, trauma, and identity in visual narratives.

Keywords: Anime; Character; Gundam; Heroism; Psychoanalysis.

1.   Introduction

In contemporary media narratives, especially Japanese anime, portrayals of heroism have shifted from idealized self-sacrifice to complex psychological responses to trauma and marginalization. Heroic figures are not born instantly but are born between a combination of a strong psyche and deep motives that push a person to act beyond personal boundaries. Heriosm is not just physical bravery but a manifestation of mental and emotional strength. Ertsgaard (2025) in a literary context, heroism is usually defined as an act of bravery, sacrifice, or struggle for the sake of values that are considered greater than individual interests. However, Pelfrey (2023) in contemporary works, especially in popular media such as anime, the concept of heroism has expanded. Heroism is traditionally associated with acts of extraordinary bravery, sacrifice, and moral integrity for the greater good. In classical literature, heroes were often depicted as noble individuals driven by divine destiny or moral righteousness. However, in the contemporary media landscape, the concept of heroism has undergone significant transformation. Today's portrayals often highlight flawed individuals whose heroic actions emerge from trauma, personal struggle, or ambiguous moral circumstances. Popular media, especially visual narratives such as film and anime, frequently present heroism not as an innate trait but as a response to complex psychological, social, and political pressures.

In Japanese animation (anime), particularly within the *mecha* genre, heroism takes on a unique form. Audisa & Kusumandyoko (2025) understand heroism not only as an act of bravery or sacrifice for the benefit of the people, but also as a complex reflection of the motivations, psychological background, and personality dynamics of the characters. The *mecha* anime genre typically features young protagonists piloting giant robots in dystopian or war-torn worlds. These narratives explore not only action and science fiction themes but also deep emotional and psychological conflicts. Heroes in *mecha* anime are often adolescents burdened with heavy responsibilities and forced into combat by oppressive systems or tragic personal histories. As a result, heroism in this genre is frequently characterized by emotional restraint, collective loyalty, and existential resilience. These elements reframe traditional ideals of heroism and offer rich ground for psychological and literary analysis. Psychoanalytic studies offer a critical view to understand heroic actions, which is not limited to the beginning of the action, but from the inner impulses hidden in the character's soul. Theoretically, Miharja (2024) argues that heroism in literature or narrative media is often closely related to the development of a character's personality. Freud's psychoanalytic theory, Jung's archetype theory, and the study of psychological trauma provide a strong framework for dissecting the motives of heroic actions that may stem from unconscious experiences, internal conflicts, or existential needs. Empirically, Mukti (2015) argues that the phenomenon of heroism in anime, especially in the *mecha* sub-genre, has become a field of exploration of social, political, and personal values. *Mobile Suit Gundam: Iron-Blooded Orphans* as one of the works of modern mecha anime, features young characters trapped in the brutal reality of war and exploitation. Characters such as Mikazuki Augus and Orga Itsuka show a form of heroism that is not idealistic, but is born from a situation of urgency, childhood trauma, and emotional attachment to the group. This phenomenon creates a new

dimension in the meaning of heroism that deserves to be analyzed more deeply. Given the strong connection between psychological conditions and the heroic actions of the characters, this research is important to reveal how psychological aspects shape the motives and expressions of heroism in the *Iron-Blooded Orphans* narrative.

Based on these considerations, this study seeks to address the following research questions: (1) How are the psychological aspects of the main characters in Mobile Suit Gundam: Iron-Blooded Orphans constructed? (2) What are the psychological motives underlying their heroic actions?

This research examines the heroism of mecha anime characters not merely as acts of physical bravery, but as the result of complex psychological dynamics, enriching the study of anime in the academic world of literature. By exploring heroic motives born from trauma and marginalization, this research provides a reflection on contemporary social issues such as violence, child exploitation, and solidarity under pressure. Psychoanalysis as part of literary psychology in analyzing anime brings together literary studies with psychology, opening up opportunities for innovative cross-disciplinary discussions. *Mobile Suit Gundam: Iron-Blooded Orphans* (2015–2017), a prominent installment in the *Gundam* franchise, exemplifies this reimagined heroism. The story centres on Mikazuki Augus and Orga Itsuka, two orphaned youths who lead a group called Tekkadan in their fight against systemic exploitation and injustice. Unlike idealized heroes, Mikazuki and Orga display deep psychological complexities shaped by childhood trauma, emotional dependency, and survival instincts. Mikazuki is emotionally detached and highly loyal, while Orga bears immense psychological pressure as a leader. Their heroic actions are motivated less by altruism than by the need for meaning, protection, and group identity within hostile circumstances. This psychological dimension makes the series a valuable text for exploring the interplay between character psyche and heroic behavior.

In the context of this research, the focus is on the psychology of the characters**.** Literary psychology considers that characters in works of fiction are seen as individuals who have personality characteristics like real people, so they can be analyzed through psychological theories. Storr (2001) Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis theory **is** one of the bases used in understanding character behavior, especially by paying attention to the dynamics of id**,** ego**,** and superego**.** The psychology of heroic characters is usually characterized by high empathy, firm moral conviction, and the ability to manage fear in a constructive way. They have a special sensitivity to the suffering of others, so they are moved to take great risks to protect or save others. In addition, Stevens' (2017) trauma psychology approach is relevant for analyzing the mental state of characters who experienced violence and mental distress from an early age. The motives behind heroism also play an important role in driving a character to make difficult decisions. These motives can be idealism, love, social responsibility, or a combination of them. Despite the rich psychological themes in *Iron-Blooded Orphans*, few studies have critically analyzed anime heroism through the lens of character psychology, particularly using psychoanalytic theory. Most existing literature focuses on narrative structure, cultural symbolism, or ideological critique, leaving a gap in understanding how internal mental states shape heroic decisions. This study seeks to address that gap by examining the psychological profiles and heroic motivations of Mikazuki and Orga through Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis. By focusing on the dynamics of the id, ego, and superego, the study aims to contribute to both anime scholarship and the broader field of media psychology, offering a deeper understanding of how trauma and internal conflict construct modern heroism in visual storytelling.

Heroism is shaped by the dynamics of an individual's identity and self-concept. Heroic figures often perceive themselves as part of a mission greater than their own interests. This psychological orientation, known as *self-transcendence*, enables individuals to find existential meaning in their

actions, which in turn strengthens their resolve to act heroically. Thus, heroism should not be seen as a spontaneous act, but rather as the product of intricate psychological processes involving internal conflicts, unconscious drives, and moral purpose. While previous studies on anime have primarily focused on narrative structures, ideological themes, or visual symbolism, very few have applied a psychoanalytic lens to explore how inner psychological states shape heroic behavior. This study addresses that gap by offering a focused psychoanalytic analysis—using Freud's structural model (id, ego, superego)—of the two central characters in *Mobile Suit Gundam: Iron-Blooded Orphans*. The novelty of this research lies in its systematic mapping of the psychological roots of heroism in anime characters, especially through the lens of trauma, emotional dependency, and moral responsibility. By doing so, it contributes to both anime scholarship and media psychology by highlighting how character psychology serves as a driving force for heroic action in contemporary visual narratives.

2.   Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach using a content analysis method as outlined by Krippendorff (2018), aimed at uncovering the psychological foundations of heroism in the anime *Mobile Suit Gundam: Iron-Blooded Orphans*. The study focuses on two main analytical categories: (1) the characters' psychological conditions and (2) their motives for heroic actions. The primary subjects are two central characters, Mikazuki Augus and Orga Itsuka, who are both members of the Tekkadan faction. Data collection was conducted through documentary analysis, which includes audiovisual texts (anime episodes), dialogue transcripts, and relevant academic literature. As Yin (2011) explains, documentation can include various forms such as narrative texts, visual art, and symbolic actions. In this study, data were gathered from all 50 episodes of the series, accessible via the streaming platform https://crunchyroll.com. The researcher interpreted scenes, character dialogue, and emotional expressions to identify patterns of behaviour and psychological indicators relevant to heroic motives. The research procedure followed three systematic stages: (1) orientation (description) – watching all episodes while noting significant psychological events, interactions, and narrative developments related to trauma, loyalty, leadership, and heroism, (2) data reduction – filtering scenes and dialogues that directly reflect psychoanalytic and trauma-related content, especially those involving expressions of the id, ego, and superego (Freud), and symptoms of psychological trauma (Stevens, 2017), (3) interpretation and selection – selecting scenes for close reading based on their relevance to the characters' internal conflicts and analysing them through the lens of Freud's psychoanalytic theory (focusing on id, ego, superego, and defence mechanisms) and Stevens' trauma psychology, which highlights emotional repression, dissociation, and the psychological effects of early exposure to violence.

The data analysis employed Krippendorff's content analysis model, which includes: Unitisation – Identifying meaningful units such as key scenes, actions, or dialogues that reflect psychological states, Categorisation – Classifying these units into analytic categories such as "trauma response", "moral leadership", or "emotional dependency", and contextual Interpretation – Interpreting the psychological meanings behind these expressions using Freud's psychoanalytic framework and trauma theory to understand the roots and evolution of heroism in both characters. By integrating this dual-theoretical approach—psychoanalysis and trauma psychology—this research aims to construct a deeper psychological understanding of heroic behaviour in anime, revealing the internal dynamics that drive acts of courage and sacrifice in characters shaped by loss, loyalty, and existential struggle.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

Mobile Suit Gundam Iron-Blooded Orphans is a series that follows the journey of orphans who belong to a private military group called Tekkadan, amidst complicated political and military conflicts on Mars and Earth. Led by Orga Itsuka and Mikazuki Augus, the Tekkadan group must survive a war that not only threatens their lives, but also tests their moral and psychological limits. The following is the research data on the identification and development of the three characters in questioning heriosm.

Table 1 - Heroism of Anime Characters

No.	Character Name	Character's Psychology	Heroism Action Motive	Episode
1	Mikazuki Augus	Calm yet cold, showing minimal emotion. It is clear that he is psychologically dependent on Orga's direction.	Absolute loyalty to Orga; wants to protect Tekkadan's comrades.	1
2	Orga Itsuka	High mental pressure due to the responsibility of being a leader. Hiding anxiety and fear behind his assertive demeanor.	The desire to free Tekkadan from exploitation by outsiders.	
1	Mikazuki Augus	Shows strong mental resilience when fighting. Emotions are still level and calm. Affirms reliance on Orga as a moral compass.	Act boldly to protect the group.	2
2	Orga Itsuka	Increased inner conflict between responsibility and fear of failure; trying to maintain the authority and confidence of members.	Perform heroic acts to assert his leadership.	
1	Mikazuki Augus	Increasingly clear psychology of dependence on the Organs; begins to show little emotion in interactions with other members, albeit limited.	Maintain total loyalty to the vision of Orga and Tekkadan.	3
2	Orga Itsuka	Emotions begin to stabilize after the first win, but are still wary and very cautious in making subsequent decisions for fear of failure.	Maintaining group morale and avoiding needless sacrifices.	
1	Mikazuki Augus	He began to explore his personal psychology a little more through interactions with Kudelia, although his emotional expressions were still very minimalistic.	Protecting people who are considered valuable by the Org.	4
2	Orga Itsuka	Constantly struggling with inner conflict as a young leader, trying to balance the idealized vision with the harsh realities faced.	Maintain a vision of freedom and dignity for all members.	
1	Mikazuki Augus	Showing extreme psychological strength in combat conditions, but starting to open up a bit of a psychological gap in more personal interactions.	Act without hesitation to protect the group and the Society's objectives.	5
2	Orga Itsuka	His psychology is maturing, although internal conflicts about fear of loss still persist. Shows more stable leadership under pressure.	Ensure the long-term safety of Tekkadan while maintaining group morale.	

(*Mobile Suit Gundam Iron-Blooded Orphans* 2015-2016 (episode 1 to 5))

In episodes 1 to 5, the psychological development of the characters' psyches and motives for heroism began to show. In the first five episodes, the Tekkadan group shows significant psychological changes. Initially, they experienced severe stress due to exploitation, feeling neglected and losing their self-esteem. Gradually, this collective trauma transforms into strong group solidarity and identity.

Their shared struggle triggered a collective psychological realization that they had to protect each other to survive, thus changing their status from mere victims to proactive fighters.

Mikazuki's character displays extreme emotional stability, even in critical situations. Mikazuki's psychology appears cold, rational, and almost fearless due to her harsh past, making her seem machine-like in her decision-making. However, in some interpersonal interactions, especially with Orga and Kudelia, there is a small hint that underneath this cold demeanor is a great emotional dependence on Orga. This psychological dependence is the main foundation for his heroic actions. Orga, as the leader of Tekkadan, experiences complex internal conflicts. He constantly struggles between the assertiveness he must display externally and the anxiety and fear of failing in the great responsibility he carries. The mental pressure of being a young leader, responsible for the lives of his members, produced deep psychological tension. However, this tension is gradually overcome as Orga experiences the initial challenges. In storytelling, be it literary texts or visualized images or films, it is common to begin the story by introducing the characters, then as the episode continues, the psychological aspects begin to be shown because the main point of psychological influence is in the conflicts that occur between other characters. Meanwhile, season 2, which aired from 2016 to 2017, can be observed in the following table.

Table 2 - Heroism of Anime Characters

No.	Character Name	Character's Psychology	Heroism Action Motive	Episode
1	Mikazuki Augus	More emotionally isolated, showing a deeper attachment to Gundam Barbatos due to physical injuries. His psychology is more closed and focused.	Total protection of Tekkadan and Orga	1
2	Orga Itsuka	Mentally stressed due to drastically increased responsibilities. Concerns about the future of the group are becoming more apparent.	Strong desire to secure a stable future for Tekkadan	
1	Mikazuki Augus	Psychologically stable but increasingly focused solely on combat and Orga's orders. Emotional connection is very limited.	Loyal and unwaveringly protect the vision of the Organization	2
2	Orga Itsuka	Started to experience internal conflicts about ideal leadership against the harsh realities Tekkadan faced.	Taking risks for the future of the group	
1	Mikazuki Augus	Increasingly, his physical and emotional dependence on the Gundam Barbatos began to affect his daily life.	Full protection to his colleagues as the main defender	3
2	Orga Itsuka	Psychological stress increases, starting to show signs of mental fatigue due to the constant pressure of being a leader.	Ensure strategic decisions for long-term security	
1	Mikazuki Augus	Remains emotionally stable but is clearly starting to sacrifice the human aspect in favor of maintaining his fighting strength.	Carry out missions without hesitation for the safety of the Organization and Tekkadan	4
2	Orga Itsuka	Begins to feel the dilemma between personal ambition and moral responsibility towards group members.	Placing collective interests above personal interests	
1	Mikazuki Augus	His psychology became more complex, as it seemed that his life was completely tied up in battle, losing the balance of life.	Absolute and unconditional loyalty to the Organization	5
2	Orga Itsuka	His psychological state is starting to crack due to the pressure that keeps	Mentally sacrificing oneself for the sake	

No.	Character Name	Character's Psychology	Heroism Action Motive	Episode
		piling up, but he is still trying to maintain the authority of his leader.	of survival Tekkadan	

(*Mobile Suit Gundam Iron-Blooded Orphans* 2016-2017 (episode 1 to 5))

In this second season, Mikazuki Augus became more emotionally isolated. The physical injuries he sustained made him even more attached to the Gundam Barbatos, causing significant physical and emotional dependence. The motive for his actions remains clear, which is to protect Orga and Tekkadan without hesitation. Mikazuki began to lose the balance of his personal life, with a singular focus on fighting as a form of loyalty. Meanwhile, Orga Itsuka experiences increasing psychological pressure due to the increasing burden of responsibility as a leader. His inner conflict grows between the idealism of leadership and the harsh reality that Tekkadan must face. His heroic motives were primarily driven by a sense of great responsibility in ensuring the survival of the group. Orga mentally began to show signs of fatigue, which gradually affected his decisions. However, he still maintained his heroic motives by putting Tekkadan's safety as his top priority.

Psychologically, Mikazuki increasingly exhibits a deep emotional and physical attachment to Gundam Barbatos, reflecting a dependency as a result of his physical wounds and previous combat trauma. This condition has led him to move further away from healthy interpersonal relationships, and his emotions are increasingly closed off, focused solely on combat missions. His heroic motives were clearly based on boundless loyalty to Orga as well as an obligation to protect Tekkadan. Mikazuki consciously sacrificed the balance of his personal life in order to optimally fulfill his heroic role.

3.2. Discussion
3.2.1 Psychoanalytic Analysis of Mikazuki Augus
The leitmotif of the group's heroism is simple but powerful: survival, gaining freedom from exploitation, and establishing the dignity that has been denied to them. Sukic (2025) argues that their actions are not driven by personal ambition, but rather by the basic human need to be respected, treated fairly and have their existence recognized. This spirit forms the basis of their heroism in the struggle against various conflicts. Mikazuki does not have complex heroic motives; instead, his motives are very clear and centered on absolute loyalty to Orga. Mikazuki's heroic actions are primarily directed by the desire to protect Orga's vision and Tekkadan's safety. His heroism is pragmatic and personally selfless, showing an extraordinary dedication to his group. Orga's heroism is based on moral responsibility as a leader who wants to ensure that every Tekkadan member's sacrifice has meaning. This motive is very complex as it involves immense pressure for his actions to always be appropriate and beneficial to all members. Behind each of Orga's heroic decisions is a deep fear of failure and losing those he trusts, as well as a great hope of permanently achieving group freedom and dignity.

In Freud's psychoanalytic perspective, Mikazuki shows a unique characteristic in that his id does not manifest in the form of primitive drives such as aggression or libido, but rather in the form of absolute dependence. The data shows that from episodes 1-5 of season one to season two, Mikazuki maintains "absolute loyalty to Orga" as the dominant motive. This indicates that Mikazuki's id has undergone sublimation - the process of redirecting primitive drives into socially acceptable actions. Mikazuki's ego appears to function as a very limited mediator, processing only information related to Orga's orders and Tekkadan's safety. The "minimalist emotions" and "psychology of dependency" that are consistent throughout both seasons suggest that his ego is not normally developed, but rather centered on a single object of reference (Orga). This is in line with Freud's concept of *object cathexis* - the investment of psychic energy in a specific external object. Mikazuki's superego is practically non-

existent or very weak, as his moral and ethical standards are completely dependent on Orga's directives. This can be seen from his consistent motives: "protecting Orga's vision" without any independent moral considerations.

Orga experienced severe psychological pressure as her responsibilities as Tekkadan's leader increased. This mental burden caused significant internal conflict between the idealism of his leadership and the harsh realities his group faced. Psychologically, this pressure began to leave him exhausted and emotionally fragmented. Allison, et al. (2024) motives his heroic actions out of moral responsibility and a sense of wanting to protect his group members, ensuring Tekkadan's future remains safe and stable. Orga consciously and consistently put the needs of the group above her personal ambitions and mental health, even if it meant sacrificing herself psychologically.

The relationship between character psychology and the motive for heroism in Mikazuki and Orga shows that intense psychological pressure often drives individuals to perform extreme heroic acts. Syarifullah (2019) in the psychological theory of heroism explained that heroism often arises from a state of high emotional distress, collective identity, and strong personal morality. Mikazuki displayed heroism through extreme reliance on his combat role, triggered by emotional distress from his physical and psychological attachment to Barbatos and his loyalty to Orga. While Orga displays heroism through internal conflict between moral responsibility towards his group and immense mental distress, reflecting the theory of "self-sacrificial leadership" where the leader sacrifices personal well-being for the safety of group members. Thus, both characters' psychological states directly influence their motives and heroic decisions in the context of struggle and sacrifice.

In particular, the results of this study show a close relationship between the psychological distress experienced by the characters and the motives for their heroic actions. The characters of Mikazuki Augus and Orga Itsuka show that trauma, mental distress, and inner conflict significantly shape their heroic behavior. Wangarry (2024); Palm (2023) this is relevant to psychoanalytic theory, particularly Freud's concept of self-defense mechanisms, sublimation, and Jung's theory of heroic archetypes born from internal conflict. The implication of this study for future literary research is the importance of exploring the psychoanalytical aspects of characters in heroic narratives. Further research can explore more deeply how psychological pressure and past trauma become the basis for heroic behavior. With this approach, psychoanalytic literary studies can provide deeper insights into the emotional complexity of characters, as well as explain the motives and psychological consequences of heroic actions in various literary works.

3.2.2. Superego-Ego Conflict with Suppressed Ideas

In contrast to Mikazuki, Orga shows strong but problematic superego development. The data shows an evolution from "wanting to free Tekkadan from exploitation" (season 1) to "mentally sacrificing himself for Tekkadan's survival" (season 2). This indicates an overdeveloped superego, creating overly high moral standards. Orga's ego is constantly under stress as it has to balance the demands of the superego (moral responsibility as a leader) with the harsh external reality. The "inner conflict between responsibility and fear of failure" that appears consistently in both seasons shows intense *ego conflict*. Orga's id seems very suppressed, almost invisible in the manifestation of his behavior. Personal drives for survival or individual satisfaction are always put aside in favor of the group.

Mikazuki exhibits extreme sublimation mechanisms. Allison (2024) aggressive and destructive impulses that may arise from childhood trauma are channeled into loyalty and protectiveness towards the group. The data suggests that his consistent motive of "protecting Orga and Tekkadan" is a form of sublimation of potential violence into defensive heroism. Karcher (2025); Noh (2024) that Orga uses

projection mechanisms by projecting his personal needs (security, recognition, love) onto all Tekkadan members. "Ensuring the long-term safety of Tekkadan" is not only the leader's responsibility, but also Orga's way of coping with his own existential anxiety. *Displacement* is seen when internal conflicts about his leadership abilities are redirected into excessive concern for group members.

3.2.3 Trauma Theory and Heroic Identity Formation

Data from the early episodes showed that "collective trauma turned into strong group solidarity and identity." From a psychoanalytical perspective, Tekkadan's childhood trauma created what Jung called a *complex* - a collection of charged ideas and emotions that influence behavior unconsciously. Heroism in this context arises not from natural courage, but from *repetition compulsion* - the tendency to repeat traumatic experiences in a controllable form (Notario, 2024). Tekkadan repeatedly put themselves in dangerous (heroic) situations as a way to master their past traumas.

The progression from "exploited victim" to "proactive warrior" seen in the data demonstrates a psychological process Jung calls *individuation* - the process of becoming a complete and integrated self. However, in Tekkadan's case, this individuation occurs in a collective context, creating the phenomenon of "collective heroism." A comparison of the data between seasons 1 and 2 shows significant regression in Mikazuki (a) season 1: "began to explore his personal psychology" and "opened up a bit of a psychological gap"; and (b) season 2: "more emotionally isolated" and "lost life balance".

This regression in a psychoanalytical perspective suggests that Mikazuki's defense mechanisms (sublimation and dependency) began to fail to cope with the mounting psychological stress. The attachment to the Gundam Barbatos can be interpreted as a *transitional object* - an object that provides a sense of security in stressful situations (Rajarajeswari, 2025). Orga showed a progressive pattern of decompensation (a) season 1: "his psychology matured" with "more stable leadership"; and (b) season 2: "his psychological state began to crack" and "signs of mental fatigue".

This indicates that Orga's overdeveloped superego eventually becomes destructive to his own ego. In Freud's terminology (Ogden, 2024; Zevnik, 2023) this is a manifestation of *neurotic guilt* - the neurotic guilt that arises when the superego is too demanding. These findings enrich our understanding of heroism as a complex psychological phenomenon, rather than a mere manifestation of bravery or altruism . Heroism, in this context, is the result of a complex interaction between personality structure, trauma history, and the psychological need for meaning and identity. The analysis also shows that heroism born out of psychological trauma and conflict, while effective in the short term, tends to be unsustainable and can lead to psychological decompensation if not addressed appropriately.

In conclusion, this study offers a significant contribution to both theoretical and practical dimensions in the field of literary psychology and media analysis. Theoretically, it extends Freud's psychoanalytic framework—particularly the dynamics of the id, ego, and superego—into the analysis of animated characters, demonstrating how internal conflicts and psychological trauma manifest in heroic behaviours. By applying this classical theory to the contemporary medium of anime, the research bridges the gap between traditional psychoanalysis and modern visual narratives, contributing to the evolving discourse on media psychology. Practically, the study provides a nuanced model for understanding heroism in anime not merely as action-driven spectacle, but as the product of deep psychological conditioning, identity formation, and social pressures. This approach can serve as a methodological reference for scholars, educators, and pop culture analysts seeking to explore character complexity in other animated or visual media. By highlighting the psychological construction

of heroism in *Mobile Suit Gundam: Iron-Blooded Orphans*, the study encourages a more empathetic and multidimensional interpretation of animated storytelling, ultimately enriching both psychoanalytic and anime-based heroism studies.

4. Conclusions

Mobile Suit Gundam: Iron-Blooded Orphans Season 1 (2015-2016) and Season 2 (2016-2017) is a Gundam anime series that dares to explore dark themes such as child exploitation, the psychology of war, and political battles. Through its emotionally strong characters, the series managed to leave a deep impression on the audience. The first season is a solid foundation that is well worth watching for fans of both the mecha genre and serious political drama. An analysis of the first five episodes shows that the acts of heroism in *Mobile Suit Gundam: Iron-Blooded Orphans* are closely related to the psychological aspects of the main characters. The complex mental states and past traumas experienced by Tekkadan, Mikazuki, and Orga create strong, realistic, and emotionally touching heroic motives. Heroism in the series does not arise from empty bravado, but from deep psychological needs, a strong sense of solidarity, and moral responsibility towards oneself and others. Meanwhile, at the beginning of season two, Mikazuki and Orga exhibit increasingly complex psychological dynamics, showing how pressure and responsibility significantly affect their heroic actions. Mikazuki and Orga have very complex and intense psychological states, which directly shape their motives and heroic actions. Both undergo heroism based on great sacrifice for the welfare and safety of Tekkadan, albeit with high psychological consequences. Heroism in *Mobile Suit Gundam: Iron-Blooded Orphans* demonstrates the psychological complexity that is often overlooked in traditional conceptualizations of heroism. Through a psychoanalytical lens, heroism is not only a noble moral act, but also a manifestation of (a) sublimation of primitive drives (in the case of Mikazuki); (b) compensation for past trauma (in the case of Orga); and (c) a defense mechanism against existential anxiety (in the case of Tekkadan collectively).

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