

DETERMINANTS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONFLICT IN JO PIAZZA'S EVERYONE IS LYING TO YOU

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Abstract

Psychological conflict remains a central concern in contemporary literary studies as it reveals how individuals negotiate identity, desire, and control within increasingly complex social environments. However, existing literary analyses often emphasize intrapsychic tension while giving limited attention to how external forces—particularly domestic oppression and digital influencer culture—are narratively mediated and psychologically internalized. Addressing this gap, this study examines the internal and external psychological determinants shaping Rebecca Sommers's psychological conflict in Jo Piazza's *Everyone Is Lying to You*. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, the research analyzes narration, dialogue, and character actions through Freudian psychoanalytic theory, focusing on the interaction among the Id, Ego, and Superego within the socio-cultural contexts of patriarchal domestic control and influencer-driven digital culture. The findings demonstrate that Rebecca's psychological conflict emerges from a sustained and ambivalent negotiation between instinctual desires for autonomy, Ego-based strategies of self-regulation, and Superego-driven moral discipline, rather than from a single traumatic rupture. Domestic oppression, social media pressure, and isolation function as active psychological forces that intensify repression and self-surveillance through narrative voice, performativity, and temporality. This study concludes that psychological conflict in contemporary literary narratives is produced through the interaction between intrapsychic dynamics and externally mediated socio-digital environments, highlighting the importance of integrating psychoanalytic and narrative perspectives in the analysis of modern subjectivity..

Keywords: Psychological conflict, freudian psychoanalysis, id, ego, superego

INTRODUCTION

Psychological conflict in literature refers to the tension experienced by characters when individual desires collide with social, moral, and cultural expectations, particularly when they attempt to preserve a sense of self amid competing impulses. Such inner conflict emerges from the confrontation between emotional needs and normative standards, often resulting in anxiety, emotional depreciation, and a distorted self-image. Literary characters frequently embody intense psychological pressure that mirrors real human emotional negotiation, especially within contexts shaped by guilt, self-control, authenticity, and moral responsibility (Furente et al., 2023; Jain et al., 2022; Paulus et al., 2021; Pérez-Martín et al., 2025). These dynamics indicate that psychological conflict in contemporary literature is no longer solely internal, but is produced through the interaction between personal motivation and mechanisms of social control. Consequently, psychological conflict has become a central concern in recent literary analysis. Syamira & Thohiriyah (2024) further argue that such pressures are multidimensional rather than unilateral, reflecting the complexity of human emotional negotiation.

Internal determinants play a crucial role in the formation of psychological conflict, as they shape individual desires, feelings of guilt, and senses of moral responsibility. Tensions between authenticity, self-expression, and the need to meet external expectations often generate emotional strain and self-contradiction (Alchin et al., 2024; Bailey et al., 2020; Barta & Andalibi, 2021; Henry, 2025; Li et al., 2025). These tensions intensify when instinctual impulses confront internalised moral norms, producing guilt, repression, and impaired decision-making (Agustina & Thohiriyah, 2025; Gangemi et al., 2025; Henry, 2025;

Kuriakose & Maragathavel, 2024; O'shiel, 2021). Freud's psychoanalytic theory provides a foundational framework for examining this dynamic, as the id represents instinctual desire, the superego embodies moral restraint, and the ego mediates between the two. This structural model remains particularly relevant for analysing how psychological conflict emerges when the ego becomes overburdened by competing internal forces (MeenaKumari & Shelonitta, 2020; Mellor, 2021; Mitscherlich, 1978; Schwartz, 2024; Traynor, 2023).

Psychological conflict is further intensified by external determinants that situate individuals within systems of surveillance, control, and comparison. Social structures marked by relational dominance, moral pressure, and normative expectations have been shown to increase emotional vulnerability and psychological strain (Giacolini et al., 2024; Lamoureux et al., 2024; Li et al., 2025; Sheek-Hussein et al., 2021; Van Kleef & Côté, 2022). In the digital age, these pressures are amplified through social media environments that promote constant visibility, self-monitoring, idealised self-presentation, and emotional exhaustion (Ibrahim et al., 2025; Kräft et al., 2024; Orben et al., 2024; Popat & Tarrant, 2023; Souchet et al., 2023). While studies in digital psychology have extensively examined how online validation reshapes self-perception and heightens anxiety, such analyses predominantly focus on real-life users rather than fictional representations (Dinh & Lee, 2025; Nor et al., 2025; Odgers & Jensen, 2020; Portingale et al., 2024; Walther & Lew, 2022). As a result, the psychological consequences of digital identity have not been sufficiently explored through psychoanalytic literary analysis, particularly in narratives that dramatise influencer culture.

Jo Piazza's *Everyone Is Lying to You*

provides a contemporary literary context in which internal psychological tensions intersect with external pressures, particularly those generated by influencer culture. Influencer narratives increasingly shape cultural expectations surrounding identity, morality, femininity, and emotional performance, imposing demands for self-regulation and the repression of personal desires. The ethical complexity of influencers is further intensified by the deliberate construction of personas that blur the boundary between private life and public performance, encouraging audiences to interpret these curated identities as moral and behavioural exemplars (Archer & Robb, 2024; Roberti, 2022). Rebecca Sommers embodies these tensions as she negotiates competing roles as a wife, a religious adherent, an influencer, and an individual seeking autonomy. Her psychological conflict arises from the clash between instinctual desires for freedom and the moral constraints imposed by her superego, while her ego is increasingly burdened by digital visibility, relational control, and social comparison. Although previous studies on psychological conflict have addressed themes of guilt, trauma, and domestic repression, they have largely overlooked literary characters whose conflicts are shaped by digital identity and influencer culture. Moreover, Freudian psychoanalytic frameworks remain underutilised in literary analyses that engage with digital psychology. Addressing this gap, this study examines the internal and external determinants of psychological conflict in Rebecca Sommers, demonstrating how Freud's structural model elucidates the emotional consequences of contemporary digital and social demands in modern fiction.

METHOD

Research Design and Approach

The research design employed in this study is a qualitative descriptive approach with a psychoanalytic interpretative framework to examine psychological conflict in literary texts. This approach is appropriate for providing a systematic and contextual explanation of human psychological experiences as represented through narrative structures, character development, and emotional expressions in literary works (Finkelstein et al., 2024; Gülpınar, 2024; Hall & Liebenberg, 2024; Younas et al., 2023). As argued by Putrayuda & Thohiriyah (2024), qualitative descriptive research enables the presentation of findings that remain faithful to the original text, making it particularly suitable for psychological literary analysis where meaning is embedded in language, narration, and character consciousness.

The primary data source of this study is the novel *Everyone Is Lying to You* by Jo Piazza (2025), while secondary data consist of academic articles and journal publications related to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory and contemporary studies on psychological conflict. Data were collected through close reading and systematic note-taking, focusing specifically on narrative passages that indicate internal conflict, emotional tension, and behavioural inconsistencies experienced by the main character, Rebecca Sommers (Boyd et al., 2020; Dibekulu et al., 2025; Gawda, 2023; Naeem et al., 2023; Thohiriyah, 2023).

Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis in this study was conducted through a systematic psychoanalytic interpretation process. The unit of analysis consists of narrative passages,

dialogues, and inner monologues that reveal psychological tension within the character. In the initial stage, textual indicators of psychological conflict were identified, including expressions of anxiety, guilt, hesitation, repression, emotional contradiction, and behavioural inconsistency as represented in narration, dialogue, and internal monologue.

In the subsequent stage, the identified textual units were categorised into internal and external determinants of psychological conflict. Internal determinants were operationalised using Freud's structural components—namely the id (instinctual desire and impulsive motivation), the ego (mediating and decision-making processes), and the superego (internalised moral norms and ethical restraint). External determinants were identified through narrative representations of social control, relational dominance, digital visibility, moral pressure, and social comparison that influence the character's psychological condition. The Freudian psychoanalytic model was then applied to interpret unconscious motivations and structural psychological tensions underlying the character's actions and emotional responses (Finkelstein et al., 2024; Kuriakose & Maragathavel, 2024; O'shiel, 2021). As noted by Syamira & Thohiriyah (2024), narrative events in literary texts often function as symbolic manifestations of latent emotional structures. Finally, recurring psychological tendencies were synthesised to address the research questions and to explain the development of psychological conflict experienced by Rebecca Sommers, prioritising interpretive depth and theoretical consistency over quantification (Agustina & Thohiriyah, 2025; Cundoko & Thohiriyah, 2025; Prasetya & Thohiriyah, 2024).

Theoretical Justification

Freud's psychoanalytic theory is employed due to its structural clarity in explaining psychological conflict as a dynamic interaction between instinctual desire, moral regulation, and mediating rational processes. Unlike Lacanian psychoanalysis, which emphasises linguistic structures and symbolic order, Freud's structural model provides a more direct framework for analysing internal psychological tension as manifested through narrative action and emotional response. Similarly, while feminist psychoanalysis and trauma theory offer valuable perspectives on power relations and psychological damage, they are less suited to examining the intrapsychic negotiation between desire, guilt, and moral restraint that constitutes the central focus of this study.

Given that *Everyone Is Lying to You* portrays psychological conflict arising from the interaction between internal impulses and external moral and digital pressures, Freud's id–ego–superego model allows for a coherent and systematic interpretation of how these forces collide within the character's psyche. Therefore, the selection of Freudian psychoanalysis aligns closely with both the object of analysis and the research objective, enabling a focused examination of psychological conflict in the context of contemporary digital culture.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The results of this analysis show that the psychological conflict of Rebecca Sommers is produced by the interplay of internal and external forces that evolve in the story. The development of psychological tension can be said to be a cumulative process, as the instinctual desire, ego regulation, moral pressure and environmental influence combine to create them, becau-

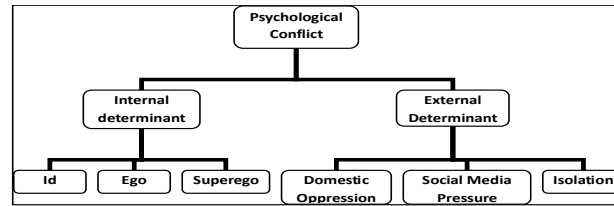


Figure 1. Psychological Conflict Determinant

se the interaction between the individual psychology and the social environment is inseparable. It is broken down into internal psychological determinants that include id, ego and superego, and external psychological determinants that include domestic oppression, social media pressure and social isolation. These are the outside influences making Rebecca struggle with herself. The Psychological Conflict is summarized below in the following figure:

Internal Psychological Determinants: Id, Ego, and Superego

Table 1. The First of Internal Psychological Determinants

Category	Textual Evidence	Psychological Function
Id – Freedom	“I’m almost always performing.” (p. 22)	Indicates suppression of instinctual freedom under constant self-surveillance.
Id – Freedom	“I honestly can’t wait to get out of here.” (p. 44)	Expresses desire to escape control and surveillance.
Id – Freedom	“I wanted to run.” (p. 131)	Expresses id-driven urge to escape domination.
Id – Freedom	“Being anonymous feels like stepping into a warm bath.” (p. 161)	Freedom is equated with psychological safety and relief.
Id – Freedom	“That’s all I wanted—freedom.” (p. 231)	Reveals core instinct motivating Rebecca’s conflict.
Id - Honesty	“The right way to be ‘authentic’ online is to give away bits and pieces of yourself, but never big ones.” (p. 22)	Shows conflict between the desire for honesty and the fear of exposure.
Id - Honesty	“But who am I to throw stones? I’m lying about practically everything.” (p. 40)	Reveals internal tension caused by sustained dishonesty.
Id - Honesty	“I want to tell you about the beginning of my marriage.” (p. 68)	Indicates an ID-driven urge to reclaim personal truth.
Id - Honesty	“They know nothing about our real lives.” (p. 160)	Affirms psychological strain created by prolonged concealment.
Id - Honesty	“I didn’t kill my husband, but I didn’t save him either.” (p. 234)	Raw honesty surfaces once repression collapses.
Id - Self-Expression	“I’m a baker. It’s all I ever wanted to be.” (p. 25)	Baking functions as a sublimation of the Id’s desires.
Id - Self-Expression	“All of this is a performance.” (p. 43)	Shows suppression of authentic self-expression.
Id - Self-Expression	“It was the most assertive I’d ever been with him.” (p. 135)	Mark’s rare breakthrough of repressed self.
Id - Self-Expression	“She was about to announce her big deal.” (p. 225)	Public self-expression becomes an act of resistance.
Id - Self-Expression	“I wanted her to see how I lived so she could tell my whole story.” (p. 236)	Need to be witnessed reflects the Id’s demand for recognition.

Rebecca Sommers’s psychological conflict is rooted in persistent tension among the id, ego, and superego. Her suffering emerges from repressed instinctual needs, excessive ego adaptation to social demands, and rigid moral regulation imposed by the superego. Rather than functioning adaptively, these internal forces interact in ways that sustain fragmentation rather than resolution, allowing psychological conflict to persist throughout the narrative (Modlin et al., 2025).

Id

The id functions as the earliest and most fundamental internal psychological determinant in Rebecca Sommers’s conflict. As summarized in Table 1, the findings show that id-driven impulses consistently manifest through frustrated needs for freedom, honesty, and self-expression. These impulses do not appear sporadically but recur across the narrative as suppressed desires that intensify psychological strain.

The need for freedom emerges as a central id-driven pattern. Rebecca’s life is repeatedly experienced as performative rather than authentic, indicating the persistent inhibition of instinctual autonomy, as reflected in her admission, “I’m almost always performing” (Piazza, 2025, p. 22). This chronic suppression aligns with psychological findings that prolonged inhibition of spontaneous expression increases internal tension and undermines emotional well-being (Batool et al., 2024; Robson et al., 2020). As repression accumulates, the id’s

frustration shifts into escape-oriented impulses, signaling that freedom functions as a psychological survival need rather than a situational preference.

Alongside freedom, honesty represents a second recurring id-driven impulse. The findings reveal a sustained conflict between selective self-disclosure and the desire for authentic truth. Rebecca’s acknowledgment of pervasive dishonesty indicates that concealment does not stabilize her psychological state but instead deepens internal division. This pattern culminates in moments where repression collapses and unfiltered honesty surfaces, supporting the view that chronic shame and concealment intensify intrapsychic conflict and emotional fragmentation (Dolezal & Gibson, 2022).

Self-expression constitutes the third id-driven pattern sustaining Rebecca’s psychological conflict. Initially, this impulse appears through sublimation, such as her identification with baking, which provides

Table 2. The Second of Internal Psychological Determinants

Category	Textual Evidence	Psychological Function
Ego - Pleasing Others	“I’m supposed to appear a certain way to certain people.” (p. 22)	Ego mediates social expectations.
Ego - Pleasing Others	“They see me as a ‘good’ mother because they see me do it on my own.” (p. 41)	Approval regulates self-worth.
Ego - Pleasing Others	“Always checking that we’re on brand.” (p. 60)	Ego aligns identity with market demands.
Ego - Pleasing Others	“Other women would comment and tell me I was perfect.” (p. 182)	Reinforces dependency on approval.
Ego - Pleasing Others	“We have to get your story out first.” (p. 235)	Ego prioritizes reputation for survival.
Ego - Secrets	“They don’t need to know the truth about him or about us.” (p. 27)	Secrecy as ego defense.
Ego - Secrets	“The fact that I can never reveal that I have help is insane but necessary.” (p. 41)	Concealment prevents judgment.
Ego - Secrets	“I clammed up.” (p. 126)	Repression blocks anxiety.
Ego - Secrets	“Gray didn’t need to know.” (p. 184)	Survival through withholding the truth.
Ego - Secrets	“She isn’t using that phone. She has a prepaid one.” (p. 225)	Strategic secrecy under threat.
Ego - Image Control	“The audience loves the fun-house mirror I created.” (p. 27)	Ego constructs a false self.
Ego - Image Control	“I don’t take too many pictures, it’s about self-preservation.” (p. 41)	Image regulation reduces anxiety.
Ego - Image Control	“People are happy to think I just take pictures.” (p. 64)	Simplification protects identity
Ego - Image Control	“I edited the video slightly.” (p. 183)	Control over narrative.
Ego - Image Control	“I tried to think of the recording as content.” (p. 231)	Ego distances trauma through framing.

partial emotional release but fails to satisfy deeper expressive needs. As repression intensifies, self-expression shifts from muted assertion to acts of resistance and demands for recognition. However, these moments remain temporary and insufficient to resolve internal tension. On the psychological level, these manifestations demonstrate the desire of the id to be valid and complete; the lack of it results in invisibility and identity fragmentation, which confirms the statement by Branje et al. (2021) the idea that the long-term repressions of the expressive agency weaken the processes of identity integration and maintain intrapsychic conflict.

Ego

Following the identification of the id as a primary source of instinctual conflict, the ego emerges as the second internal psychological determinant mediating between Rebecca Sommers's inner impulses and external social demands. As summarized in Table 2, the findings show that the ego operates through three dominant regulatory strategies: pleasing others, secrecy, and image control. Rather than resolving internal tension, these strategies prioritize social survival and functional stability, thereby sustaining psychological conflict.

Pleasing others functions as a central ego mechanism through which Rebecca adapts her identity to meet social and market expectations. The data indicate that self-worth becomes increasingly dependent on external validation, approval, and reputation management, as reflected in her awareness that she must "appear a certain way to certain people" (Piazza, 2025, p. 22). This externally regulated self-concept stabilizes visibility but limits authenticity, reinforcing psychological vulnerability. Consistent with prior research, self-worth contingent on approval undermines au-

tonomy and weakens internal integration, increasing susceptibility to distress rather than resilience (Araújo et al., 2024; Brueckmann et al., 2023; Haines & Schutte, 2023).

Secrecy emerges as a complementary ego strategy that evolves from selective withholding into normalized repression. As shown in Table 2, concealment initially functions to reduce immediate threat and social judgment, but increases cognitive and emotional burden. The progression from conscious silence to strategic concealment indicates that secrecy does not eliminate psychological conflict but instead amplifies it by sustaining internal division. This finding aligns with evidence that secrecy temporarily lowers perceived risk while intensifying mental load and emotional strain over time (Bedrov & Gable, 2024; Slepian, 2024).

In addition to pleasing others and secrecy, image control functions as a foundational ego strategy for managing anxiety under persistent public scrutiny. The findings show that Rebecca deliberately constructs a curated and simplified public persona to regulate exposure and preserve psychological stability, exemplified by her acknowledgment that "the audience loves the fun-house mirror I created" (Piazza, 2025, p. 27). Over time, image control extends to narrative ownership and emotional framing, allowing distress to be aestheticized and distanced. Although this strategy enhances social legibility, it promotes compartmentalization and widens the gap between lived experience and public identity. As noted by Nor et al. (2025), curated self-presentation operates as an affect-regulation mechanism in visibility-driven environments, yet simultaneously slows emotional integration.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the ego sustains Rebecca Sommers's psychological survival through adaptive

strategies that manage visibility, threat, and approval. However, these same strategies structurally maintain internal conflict by reinforcing fragmentation, emotional avoidance, and dependency on external regulation rather than facilitating internal coherence.

Superego

Following the analysis of the id and ego, the superego emerges as the third in-

ternal psychological determinant shaping Rebecca Sommers’s psychological conflict. As summarized in Table 3, the findings show that superego regulation operates through three interrelated forms: moral pressure, internalized husband control, and religious doctrine. Rather than guiding psychological integration, these forces function as internalized authorities that transform vulnerability into guilt, fear, and obedience, thereby sustaining internal conflict.

Table 3. The Third of Internal Psychological Determinants

Category			Textual Evidence	Psychological Function
Superego	-	Moral	“My lack of self-reliance is a moral failing.” (p. 24)	The superego induces guilt.
Pressure	-	Moral	“I stopped drinking because I hate feeling out of control.” (p. 42)	Internalized discipline.
Superego	-	Moral	“It was my job—my duty.” (p. 62)	Moral obligation suppresses desire.
Pressure	-	Moral	“It was the Catholic guilt.” (p. 127)	Religious morality enforces shame.
Superego	-	Moral	“It was my fault.” (p. 231)	Superego redirects blame inward.
Pressure	-	Husband	“There would be consequences for saying it out loud.” (p. 25)	Internalized authority silences Rebecca.
Superego	-	Husband	“He forbade her from pursuing them.” (p. 110)	Patriarchal dominance restricts agency.
Control	-	Husband	“You’d be nothing without me.” (p. 131)	Superego shaped by abuse.
Superego	-	Husband	“He belittles every accomplishment.” (p. 226)	Undermines self-worth.
Control	-	Husband	“When he beat me and locked me in the closet.” (p. 234)	Violence ingrains obedience.
Superego	-	Religion	“Building our ranc, with God’s grace.” (p. 17)	Religious framing legitimizes restraint.
Superego	-	Religion	“Submission to your husband is paramount.” (p. 119)	Doctrine enforces patriarchy.
Superego	-	Religion	“The church looks down on divorce.” (p. 171)	Moral pressure traps Rebecca.
Superego	-	Religion	“Plow through the pain through prayer.” (p. 196)	Suffering is normalized morally.

Moral pressure restructures Rebecca’s experiences of limitation and dependence into guilt and self-blame. The findings indicate that the superego frames vulnerability as ethical failure and discipline as moral virtue, compelling Rebecca to interpret suffering as personal fault rather than contextual constraint. Over time, this rigid moralization consolidates into pervasive shame and totalized self-criticism, even in situations involving abuse. Psychologically, this reflects a conversion of anxiety into

guilt, where moral coherence is prioritized over emotional integration. This dynamic is consistent with evidence harsh self-criticism functions as an internal threat-regulation system that intensifies distress rather than alleviates it (Zaccari et al., 2024).

Beyond abstract morality, the superego is concretely shaped by internalized husband control, through which external domination becomes embedded as enduring self-surveillance. As indicated in Table 3, fear of punishment, prohibition, de-

gradation, and violence are internalized as psychological authority, eroding autonomy and normalizing obedience as a survival strategy. This process transforms coercion into self-regulation, ensuring that control persists even in the absence of direct external enforcement.

Religious doctrine further legitimizes and stabilizes this superego structure by sanctifying restraint, endurance, and submission. The findings show that religious morality frames suffering as virtue and resistance as transgression, while communal surveillance reinforces conformity and compliance. Through this sanctification process, fear, guilt, and obedience are embedded within Rebecca's intrapsychic system, making psychological escape increasingly inaccessible. In line with Uvelli et al. (2025), these dynamics demonstrate how coercive control and sanctified morality become internalized as superego authority, sustaining psychological conflict by institutionalizing fear and moral self-regulation within the self.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the superego does not function as a regulatory system promoting balance or resolution, but rather as an internalized structure of domination that maintains fragmentation, guilt, and submission. Through moralization, control, and sanctification, the superego secures psychological survival at the cost of autonomy and internal coherence, thereby perpetuating Rebecca Sommers's intrapsychic conflict.

External Determinant

External psychological determinants function as continuous environmental pressures that sustain and intensify Rebecca Sommers's psychological conflict beyond its internal origins. Domestic abuse, intimidation, and enforced silence threaten her psychological safety and restrict agency,

while social media pressure demands perfection, curated identity, and constant validation that transform private life into public performance. At the same time, social isolation marked by loneliness, distance, and power imbalance deprives Rebecca of emotional support and alternative sources of self-definition, reinforcing fear and dependency.

These external forces do not remain solely environmental but become internalized, reshaping Rebecca's coping systems and psychological functioning. Prolonged exposure to coercive control, visibility-driven evaluation, and social isolation embeds fear, helplessness, and emotional suppression into her intrapsychic structure, reinforcing internal conflict rather than alleviating it. As argued by Jakovljevic & Nkopodi, (2023), sustained oppression and social isolation reorganize psychological functioning by instilling powerlessness and dependency, demonstrating that Rebecca's psychological conflict is socially constructed, continuously maintained, and progressively intensified through external domination.

Domestic Oppression

The first and most immediate external psychological determinant is domestic oppression, which operates through sustained abuse, fear, and enforced silence. As shown in Table 4, domestic oppression functions not merely as a contextual background but as a direct psychological force undermines Rebecca's sense of safety, restricts agency, and conditions survival-oriented responses. By organizing the findings into abuse, fear, and silence, the table establishes analytical framework for understanding how coercive control penetrates psychological functioning and intensifies Rebecca's internal conflict, as presented in the following table:

Table 4. The First of External Psychological Determinants

Category	Textual Evidence	Psychological Function
Domestic Oppression – Abuse	“You’ll never see my bruises.” (p. 28)	Indicates concealed physical violence as a constant external threat shaping psychological trauma.
Domestic Oppression – Abuse	“The bruise around my left eye has mostly faded.” (p. 44)	Confirms repeated physical abuse producing fear and hypervigilance.
Domestic Oppression – Abuse	“Her left eye is heavily bruised and nearly swollen shut.” (p. 156)	Visible injury validates abuse as a dominant external trigger of conflict.
Domestic Oppression – Abuse	“When he hit me so hard I passed out on the floor of our bathroom.” (p. 167)	Severe violence causes dissociation and long-term psychological damage.
Domestic Oppression – Abuse	“He struck me with his open palm.” (p. 216)	Explicit bodily assault reinforces learned helplessness.
Domestic Oppression – Fear	“I would never say it out loud.” (p. 25)	Fear suppresses disclosure and reinforces obedience.

Domestic oppression constitutes the most immediate and destabilizing external psychological determinant shaping Rebecca Sommers’s psychological conflict through sustained abuse, fear, and enforced silence. As summarized in Table 4, recurrent physical violence is not episodic but continuous, requiring constant psychological regulation and concealment, as reflected in statements such as “You’ll never see my bruises” (Piazza, 2025, p. 28) and the repeated presence of visible injuries (Piazza, 2025, p. 156). Severe assaults, including being struck unconscious or physically beaten (Piazza, 2025, pp. 167, 216), normalize bodily harm within intimacy and condition survival-oriented responses marked by submission, dissociation, and learned helplessness. Consistent with Paphitis et al. (2022), prolonged interpersonal violence restructures psychological safety systems toward compliance rather than recovery, directly intensifying internal psychological conflict.

Fear operates as the mechanism through which abuse is internalized and maintained, shifting Rebecca’s orientation from agency to survival. Anticipatory self-censorship (“I would never say it out loud,” Piazza, 2025, p. 25), embodied hypervigi-

lance (“Out of necessity, I keep my sunglasses on,” Piazza, 2025, p. 44), and explicit terror (“I’ve never been more scared in my life,” Piazza, 2025, p. 64) demonstrate how fear governs perception and behavior. Threats targeting loved ones (“I know where your children are,” Piazza, 2025, p. 222) further consolidate coercive control, culminating in enforced silence as a protective yet damaging survival strategy. Emotional suppression, narrative self-censorship, and concealment of violence (Piazza, 2025, pp. 28, 44, 113) reinforce isolation and psychological abandonment, deepening internal fragmentation. As Lohmann et al. (2024) argue, coercive control operates through intimidation, isolation, and domination to strip autonomy and entrap victims, illustrating how domestic oppression sustains Rebecca’s psychological conflict by embedding fear and silence into her coping system.

Social Media Pressure

Following domestic oppression, social media pressure is identified as the second external psychological determinant shaping Rebecca Sommers’s psychological conflict. Within a digital culture of visibility, social media operates as a normative system that regulates identity through ideals

of perfection, fabricated self-presentation, and validation-seeking. As presented in Table 5, the findings are organized into perfection, fake image construction, and validation to demonstrate how social media functions not merely as a background context but as an active psychological force sustaining anxiety, dependency, and identity fragmentation.

Table 5. The Second of External Psychological Determinants

Category				Textual Evidence	Psychological Function
Social Perfection	Media	Pressure	–	“No one in her family ever wears shoes, but their feet are somehow never dirty.” (p. 14)	Unrealistic perfection intensifies self-surveillance.
Social Perfection	Media	Pressure	–	“Show a dirty dish, but not an entirely messy countertop.” (p. 22)	Controlled imperfection heightens anxiety.
Social Perfection	Media	Pressure	–	“The single biggest complaint is that I make motherhood look too easy.” (p. 42)	External expectations distort self-worth.
Social Perfection	Media	Pressure	–	“Everything is content.” (p. 89)	Life becomes performative, erasing authenticity.
Social Perfection	Media	Pressure	–	“Show the world your joy.” (p. 181)	Emotional performance replaces authenticity.
Social Image	Media	Pressure	– Fake	“They want the pretty shit.” (p. 42)	Reality is distorted to satisfy the audience’s fantasy.
Social Image	Media	Pressure	– Fake	“It was all a lie.” (p. 99)	Public identity contradicts lived reality.
Social Image	Media	Pressure	– Fake	“Rebecca’s account is mostly smoke and mirrors.” (p. 120)	Fabrication sustains psychological fragmentation.
Social Image	Media	Pressure	– Fake	“It made it seem like you were self-made.” (p. 130)	Narrative manipulation hides dependency and abuse.
Social Image	Media	Pressure	– Fake	“What we saw on our screens was not Rebecca’s reality.” (p. 180)	Confirms falsification as structural pressure.
Social Validation	Media	Pressure	–	“That video got something like eight million views.” (Ch. 1)	Popularity becomes psychological currency.
Social Validation	Media	Pressure	–	“That video got something like eight million views.” (p. 15)	External praise substitutes for emotional safety.
Social Validation	Media	Pressure	–	“Anything written about Bex has been going viral.” (p. 36)	Public attention reinforces dependency.
Social Validation	Media	Pressure	–	“It was the validation I didn’t know I needed.” (p. 182)	Validation compensates for emotional deprivation.
Social Validation	Media	Pressure	–	“SAVE BAREFOOT MAMA campaign running.” (p. 185)	Trauma is commodified for mass approval.

Based on Table 5, social media pressure intensifies Rebecca’s psychological conflict by enforcing perfection-oriented norms that heighten self-surveillance and transform everyday life into performance. Unrealistic depictions such as “No one in her family ever wears shoes, but their feet are somehow never dirty” (Piazza, 2025, p. 14) normalize flawlessness, while controlled imperfection (“Show a dirty dish, but not an entirely messy countertop,” Piazza, 2025, p. 22) frames authenticity as calcu-

lated display rather than lived reality. External judgments, including “The single biggest complaint is that I make motherhood look too easy” (Piazza, 2025, p. 42), position Rebecca within a double bind between idealization and relatability, sustaining anxiety and self-monitoring. As daily life becomes aestheticized (“Everything is content,” Piazza, 2025, p. 89), emotional expression is regulated through performative positivity (“Show the world your joy,” Piazza, 2025, p. 181), displacing authentic

affect.

In addition to perfection, social media pressure operates through sustained fake image construction that structurally distorts Rebecca's lived reality. Audience expectations ("They want the pretty shit," Piazza, 2025, p. 42) drive the fabrication acknowledged as "It was all a lie" (Piazza, 2025, p. 99) and described as "mostly smoke and mirrors" (Piazza, 2025, p. 120). Narrative manipulation ("It made it seem like you were self-made," Piazza, 2025, p. 130) conceals dependency and abuse, culminating in the recognition that "What we saw on our screens was not Rebecca's reality" (Piazza, 2025, p. 180). These practices maintain psychological fragmentation by widening the gap between public identity and private experience.

Validation-seeking further reinforces psychological conflict by externalizing emotional regulation and anchoring self-worth in public approval. Visibility becomes a form of psychological currency, as reflected in the viral reach of content ("That video got something like eight million views," Piazza, 2025, p. 15) and sustained attention ("Anything written about Bex has been going viral," Piazza, 2025, p. 36). Temporary emotional relief ("It was the validation I didn't know I needed," Piazza, 2025, p. 182) evolves into the commodification of trauma in campaigns such as "SAVE BAREFOOT MAMA campaign running" (Piazza, 2025, p. 185). In line with Xuan Vu (2023) and Steinert & Dennis (2022), platform-based validation provides short-lived affirmation while deepening dependence on external approval, thereby sustaining Rebecca's psychological conflict within the economy of digital attention.

Isolation

Isolation functions as the third external psychological determinant shaping

Rebecca Sommers's psychological conflict through sustained disconnection and social withdrawal. Rather than operating as a passive background condition, isolation removes relational support, limits external reference points, and erodes personal agency. As presented in Table 6, the findings are organized into loneliness, distance, and helplessness to demonstrate how isolation actively consolidates vulnerability, dependency, and powerlessness within Rebecca's psychological system.

Based on Table 6, loneliness emerges as a primary mechanism through isolation intensifies Rebecca's psychological conflict by producing prolonged social rupture and emotional abandonment. Long-term disconnection, such as "I really haven't talked to her in fifteen years" (Piazza, 2025, p. 13), weakens relational support and increases susceptibility to control, while early motherhood amplifies emotional solitude ("I was all alone with my first baby," Piazza, 2025, p. 23). The absence of peer relationships ("No. I just don't have any actual friends," Piazza, 2025, p. 69) culminates in explicit emotional collapse ("I felt more alone than I ever had in my entire life," Piazza, 2025, p. 181) and total social disconnection ("I had no family, no friends," Piazza, 2025, p. 230). In line with Brandt et al. (2022), chronic loneliness functions as a persistent psychosocial stressor dysregulates emotional regulation and removes social buffering, thereby sustaining psychological vulnerability.

Beyond loneliness, physical and social distance further consolidate isolation by restricting access to support and reinforcing dependency. Geographic separation ("She now lives somewhere out West," Piazza, 2025, p. 13) and environmental remoteness ("The ranch is at least a ninety-minute drive from the nearest city," Piazza, 2025, p. 23) limit external intervention,

Table 6. The Third of External Psychological Determinants

Category	Textual Evidence	Psychological Function
Isolation – Loneliness	“I really haven’t talked to her in fifteen years.” (p. 13)	Long-term social rupture deepens isolation.
Isolation – Loneliness	“I was all alone with my first baby.” (p. 23)	Motherhood intensifies emotional solitude.
Isolation – Loneliness	“No. I just don’t have any actual friends.” (p. 69)	Social disconnection reinforces vulnerability.
Isolation – Loneliness	“I felt more alone than I ever had in my entire life.” (p. 181)	Emotional isolation becomes explicit suffering.
Isolation – Loneliness	“I had no family, no friends.” (p. 230)	Absolute isolation heightens psychological collapse.
Isolation – Distance	“She now lives somewhere out West.” (p. 13)	Physical remoteness separates support systems.
Isolation – Distance	“The ranch is at least a ninety-minute drive from the nearest city.” (p. 23)	Geographic isolation reinforces dependency.
Isolation – Distance	“I’m the one who disappeared.” (p. 43)	Withdrawal as a coping mechanism.
Isolation – Distance	“Gray hated any woman I got close to.” (p. 74)	Enforced social isolation
Isolation – Distance	“So now we are all off the grid.” (p. 161)	Total withdrawal as a survival strategy.
Isolation – Helplessness	“Do you think she would be capable of that?” (p. 11)	Rebecca is positioned as a powerless object of suspicion.
Isolation – Helplessness	“I barely believe me.” (p. 68)	Self-doubt reflects internalized powerlessness.
Isolation – Helplessness	“Pathetically enough, I believed him.” (p. 74)	Learned helplessness sustains abuse.
Isolation – Helplessness	“What choice do I have?” (p. 222)	Loss of perceived alternatives traps Rebecca.
Isolation – Helplessness	“Time to go home, Rebecca Sommers. For good.” (p. 236)	Final erosion of autonomy under coercion.

while withdrawal (“I’m the one who disappeared,” Piazza, 2025, p. 43) and enforced social control (“Gray hated any woman I got close to,” Piazza, 2025, p. 74) normalize disengagement from potential support systems. This trajectory culminates in total withdrawal (“So now we are all off the grid,” Piazza, 2025, p. 161), illustrating how distance operates as a structural condition that maintains isolation and dependency.

Helplessness represents the final mechanism through which isolation is internalized and sustained, transforming external constraint into psychological resignation. Rebecca is positioned as powerless and doubted (“Do you think she would be capable of that?” Piazza, 2025, p. 11), leading to self-doubt (“I barely believe me,” Piazza, 2025, p. 68) and learned compliance (“Pathetically enough, I believed him,” Piazza, 2025, p. 74). The erosion of perceived choice (“What choice do I have?” Pia-

za, 2025, p. 222) culminates in total loss of autonomy (“Time to go home, Rebecca Sommers. For good,” Piazza, 2025, p. 236). Consistent with Hoffmann et al., (2024), Hulley et al. (2023) and Motillon-Toudic et al. (2022), enforced isolation and structural helplessness embed powerlessness into psychological functioning, demonstrating how isolation operates as a decisive external determinant sustaining Rebecca’s psychological conflict.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Rebecca Sommers’s psychological conflict emerges from a prolonged and dynamic tension among the Freudian psychic structures—Id, Ego, and Superego—continuously reinforced by external conditions such as domestic oppression, social media pressure, and isolation. Rather than origi-

nating from a single traumatic event, her distress develops through accumulated intrapsychic strain in which instinctual needs (Id) are persistently repressed by adaptive self-regulation (Ego) and internalized moral authority (Superego). Importantly, this process should not be understood as psychologically deterministic. Rebecca's conflict unfolds through moments of negotiation, hesitation, and contradiction, where repression coexists with partial resistance (Ningrat et al., 2021). Psychological conflict thus operates as a relational and processual phenomenon, shaped by the interaction between internal psychic tensions and the environments in which they are embedded. In line with Kirkbride et al. (2024), psychological distress is not reducible to individual pathology but emerges through relational and environmental entanglements that sustain fragmentation rather than resolution.

The central axis of Rebecca's internal conflict lies in the unstable negotiation between the Id and the Ego, particularly around freedom, honesty, and self-expression. While the Id persistently seeks autonomy and recognition, the Ego prioritizes safety, social acceptance, and reputational control, especially within a visibility-driven context. However, this tension does not position Rebecca as a purely passive subject. Her compliance is frequently accompanied by ambivalence, reflective awareness, and fleeting acts of assertion, indicating constrained agency rather than total submission. The Ego's overstretched mediating function produces anxiety, performative adaptation, and episodic breakdowns when repression becomes unsustainable, consistent with psychoanalytic accounts of defensive self-regulation (Buchborn et al., 2023; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Drawing on Dibekulu et al. (2025) and Campbell and Kearney (2024), such ambivalence

can be read as a form of agency operating within constraint, where contradiction and hesitation themselves signal an ongoing, if limited, struggle for self-authorship rather than psychological inertia.

Conflict intensifies further at the intersection of the Id and the Superego, where desire confronts moralized authority and ideological discipline. Rebecca's longing for freedom and authenticity is repeatedly reframed as selfishness, failure, or sin through religious doctrine, patriarchal marital norms, and internalized self-blame. The Superego converts vulnerability into guilt and shame, foreclosing internal dialogue and organizing the psyche around endurance rather than integration (Baratta et al., 2023; Evans & De France, 2022). Yet even here, moral domination is not absolute; moments of doubt, narrative confession, and retrospective reflection complicate the Superego's authority. Dibekulu et al. (2025) demonstrate that harsh self-criticism rooted in moralized standards sustains psychological distress, but the presence of reflective narration also reveals fractures within moral absolutism, suggesting that Rebecca's psyche remains contested rather than fully colonized by punitive self-surveillance.

Crucially, external determinants in this narrative do not operate as mere sociological backdrops but are mediated through literary form. Domestic oppression, social media pressure, and isolation are filtered through first-person narration, confessional voice, and temporally fragmented storytelling, which shape how psychological conflict is experienced and interpreted. The retrospective structure allows Rebecca to oscillate between immediacy and reflection, exposing gaps between lived experience and narrative articulation. Social media pressure, in particular, is rendered through performative narration and aest-

heticized self-description, aligning external visibility with internal fragmentation. As Wang (2024) and Bilali (2024) suggest, narrative perspective and performativity actively structure psychological meaning, demonstrating that external forces are encoded within narrative voice, focalization, and temporality rather than functioning as detached social themes.

Finally, this study positions itself within contemporary literary scholarship by extending existing analyses of female suffering and trauma narratives. While previous studies often foreground domestic abuse, motherhood, or patriarchal domination as thematic determinants of distress (Garrett, 2023; Widodo et al., 2024), this article contributes a psychoanalytic-literary synthesis that emphasizes ambivalent agency, narrative mediation, and intrapsychic contradiction. Rebecca is neither reduced to a passive victim nor elevated to a fully autonomous subject; instead, her psychological conflict is shown to emerge through constrained agency negotiated within oppressive narrative environments. By foregrounding the interaction between psychic structure and narrative form, this study advances current debates in contemporary literary studies on trauma, subjectivity, and female agency, demonstrating that psychological conflict in fiction is produced through both internal tension and textual mediation rather than deterministic social causality (Zafar et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that Rebecca Sommers's psychological conflict in *Everyone Is Lying to You* is not a momentary emotional disturbance but a structurally sustained condition produced through prolonged tension among the Id, Ego, and Superego. Rebecca's instinctual desires for freedom, honesty, and self-

expression are persistently constrained by Ego strategies oriented toward safety, social acceptance, and reputational control, while the Superego reinforces obedience through guilt and self-blame. This intrapsychic configuration situates Rebecca's life as a continuous performance, in which authentic impulses are recognized internally yet regulated and concealed to preserve stability within marriage, community, and digital visibility. Her distress, therefore, cannot be reduced to individual weakness or poor judgment; rather, it reflects a psychological system in which repression functions as a conditional mode of survival, normalizing endurance and silence over integration and resolution.

The primary contribution of this research lies in its integration of Freudian psychoanalytic analysis with a narratively mediated understanding of external determinants. This study demonstrates that domestic oppression, social media pressure, and isolation do not merely operate as thematic backdrops but actively reorganize Rebecca's psychic structure by amplifying Ego defensiveness and Superego punishment. Domestic abuse conditions secrecy and compliance as rational survival strategies, while social media culture rewards curated self-presentation and emotional performance, transforming repression into a socially validated practice. By foregrounding how external forces are filtered through narrative voice, temporality, and performativity, this study advances psychoanalytic literary criticism by showing that psychological conflict in contemporary fiction is produced through the reciprocal interaction between intrapsychic tension and textual mediation rather than deterministic social causality alone.

Despite its contributions, this study remains limited by its focus on a single literary text and its reliance on qualita-

tive analysis. While this approach enables examination of Rebecca's psychological configuration, it restricts broader generalization across genres and narrative traditions. Future research may extend this inquiry by conducting comparative analyses of similar patterns of constrained agency, psychic regulation, and narrative mediation in contemporary novels, particularly those engaging with digital culture and domestic power relations. Interdisciplinary approaches combining literary analysis with psychological and sociological perspectives may further illuminate how such representations are interpreted by readers and circulated within cultural discourse. Viewed in this way, the limitations of this study function not as constraints but as productive openings for expanding psychoanalytic engagement with contemporary narrative forms and subjectivities.

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