



Inferiority and Superiority of the Character Vera in the Novel *Jobin* by Pidi Baiq: An Alfred Adler Psychological Study

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the complex personality of the character Vera in Pidi Baiq's novel *Jobin*, which reveals the dynamics between feelings of inferiority and the drive to achieve superiority, as explained in Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology theory. The study focuses on the forms of inferiority and superiority exhibited by Vera and the interconnection between these two aspects in shaping her personality development. The research aims to describe the manifestations of Vera's inferiority and superiority from the perspective of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology. A qualitative descriptive method with a literary psychology approach was employed. The data source is the novel *Jobin* by Pidi Baiq, while the research data consists of narratives, dialogue, and actions by Vera that reflect her psychological state. Data were collected through intensive reading, note-taking, and the classification of relevant excerpts, followed by analysis using a qualitative model involving data reduction, data presentation, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that Vera experiences feelings of inferiority—influenced by life experiences, emotional conflicts, and social relationships—which give rise to self-doubt. However, this condition acts as a catalyst for various forms of compensation, reflected in her courage to make decisions, her adaptability, and her efforts to maintain self-esteem and develop her potential. The findings confirm that inferiority and superiority are interconnected aspects in shaping Vera's personality development, consistent with the concepts of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology.

Keywords: inferiority, superiority, character, psychological study

INTRODUCTION

Literary works represent human life through the author's language, imagination, and experience. Through literature, the creator does not merely tell a story but presents various social, cultural, and psychological issues experienced by the characters (Muzakki, 2026). The novel is a literary form capable of visualizing the complexities of human life dynamics, as it presents plot, conflict, setting, and characters that evolve throughout the narrative. This complexity makes the novel a relevant subject for study in the field of literary psychology, particularly for understanding characters' psychological states through the behaviors, thoughts,

and responses they exhibit in reaction to various events (Puspasari & Wiyatmi, 2020).

Literary psychology is an approach that integrates literary studies with psychology to analyze aspects of personality, motivation, emotion, and the inner conflicts of characters within literary works (Azzahra et al., 2024). This approach posits that characters in literature are constructed with psychological dynamics, allowing them to be analyzed using psychological theories (Hasanah & Septiana, 2023). Studies in literary psychology not only reveal character traits but also explain the factors influencing a character's behavior and their

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personality development process (Septriani et al., 2022). Consequently, the literary psychology approach offers a deeper understanding of the meaning behind a literary work (Endraswara, 2022).

One psychological theory frequently employed in literary studies is Individual Psychology, proposed by Alfred Adler. Adler posited that every individual possesses feelings of inferiority arising from limitations, weaknesses, or specific life experiences. This feeling is not an inherently negative condition; rather, it serves as a driving force for the individual to engage in compensation by striving for superiority or self-perfection (Adler, 1927). Consequently, human behavior is viewed as a goal-oriented endeavor to achieve a better life through the development of one's inherent potential.

The concepts of inferiority and superiority are crucial to understanding the personality development of literary characters. Feelings of inferiority may manifest as self-doubt, a lack of self-confidence, anxiety, or an inability to cope with life's pressures (Antikasari & Raharjo, 2024). Conversely, superiority is not interpreted as a desire to dominate others, but rather as a process of attaining a better self through courage, responsibility, and the ability to face various life challenges. These two concepts are interconnected and shape the dynamics of an individual's personality development throughout their life.

Pidi Baiq's novel *Jobin* features characters whose personalities evolve through diverse life experiences, emotional conflicts, and complex interpersonal relationships. One particularly compelling character for analysis is Vera. She exhibits shifts in attitude, mindset, and decision-making in response to the events she encounters. These dynamics reveal a psychological struggle involving both feelings of inferiority and the drive to achieve superiority—concepts central to Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology (Meliasanti, 2025). Consequently, Vera serves as a fascinating subject for analysis from the perspective of the psychology of literature.

Research applying Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology to literary works has frequently focused on the concepts of character inferiority and superiority. A study by Fara & Sri (2024) on the novel *Hello Salma* demonstrates that the protagonist's feelings of inferiority evolved into a drive for superiority, manifested through self-confidence, patience, and idealism. This research confirms that inferiority is not a permanent weakness but rather a source of motivation for developing one's potential, in line with Adlerian theory.

Another study conducted by Fauziyah & Andriyanto (2024) on the novel *Prasetyane Wanita* explains that the manifestation of a character's inferiority is shaped by social conditions and life experiences that foster a sense of low self-worth. Their findings indicate that feelings of inferiority emerge through a lack of self-confidence, a sense of weakness, and difficulties in adapting to the social environment. This study highlights the continued relevance of Alfred Adler's theory in uncovering the psychological dynamics of characters in Indonesian literature.

Furthermore, recent research by Sugiyo et al. (2026) on the novel *Tanah Para Bandit* reveals that aspects of inferiority—such as insecurity, shame, and a tendency toward withdrawal—evolve into various forms of superiority, including ego resilience, self-confidence, patience, and idealistic behavior. These findings reinforce Adler's view that every individual possesses an innate drive to compensate for their weaknesses through the pursuit of self-perfection. While extensive research has been conducted on inferiority and superiority based on Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology, studies specifically examining the character Vera in Pidi Baiq's novel *Jobin* remain scarce. Much prior research has focused on other popular novels, leaving the psychological dynamics of the character Vera—specifically regarding Adler's concepts of inferiority and superiority—without in-depth analysis (Setiawan, 2022). Consequently, this study offers a novel contribution by examining Vera's personality development through the



interplay between feelings of inferiority and the striving for superiority within Pidi Baiq's *Jobin*. Based on this premise, the study focuses on analyzing the inferiority and superiority of the character Vera in Pidi Baiq's *Jobin* through the lens of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology. It aims to describe the forms of inferiority experienced by Vera, identify her efforts to achieve superiority, and explain the relationship between these two aspects in shaping her personality development. The findings are intended to enrich the field of literary psychology—particularly the application of Adler's Individual Psychology to Indonesian literature—and serve as a reference for future researchers interested in literary psychology and character analysis in contemporary novels.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method within the framework of a literary psychology approach. The qualitative descriptive method is utilized because the research focuses on describing and interpreting the psychological phenomena experienced by the character Vera in Pidi Baiq's novel *Jobin*, based on Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology theory. The literary psychology approach is intended to reveal the character's personality aspects through the behaviors, dialogue, narration, and conflicts that shape her psychological dynamics within the story (Nur et al., 2025; Elmustian & Razak, 2021).

The primary data source for this research is the novel *Jobin* by Pidi Baiq. The data consists of words, phrases, sentences, dialogue, narration, and event descriptions that illustrate manifestations of Vera's inferiority and superiority. Secondary data sources include books, scholarly articles, journals, and other references discussing literary psychology, Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology theory, and prior studies relevant to the object of analysis.

Data collection was conducted through a literature review involving repeated and thorough reading of the novel, identification of sections re-

lated to Vera's psychological state, and the subsequent recording and categorization of data based on indicators of inferiority and superiority according to Adler's theory. The collected data was then classified according to the research focus to facilitate the analysis stage.

Data analysis was performed using an interactive analysis model comprising data reduction, data presentation, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected excerpts relevant to the study's focus. Data presentation involved describing the selected excerpts based on the categories of inferiority and superiority. Subsequently, the data was interpreted using Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology concepts to explain the relationship between feelings of inferiority and Vera's efforts to achieve superiority. The final stage involved drawing conclusions based on the analysis results to provide an overview of Vera's personality dynamics in Pidi Baiq's novel *Jobin*. The validity of the data in this study was ensured through persistent observation, sufficient referencing, and theoretical triangulation—specifically by comparing the analysis results with key concepts from Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology and with findings from previous studies relevant to this research. These measures were taken to enhance the credibility and accuracy of the interpretation of the analyzed data.

RESULTS

1. The Inferiority of the Character Vera in the Novel *Jobin* by Pidi Baiq

This reaction demonstrates that Vera requires social support before making a decision. Rather than immediately taking a stance, she first seeks a response from her friends. According to Adler, individuals still influenced by feelings of inferiority tend to seek a sense of security through their social environment before deciding on a course of action. This indicates that Vera's self-confidence is not yet fully developed, leading her to still require validation from others.

Another form of inferiority is evident when Vera admits she does not understand what Jobin means regarding the plan to stage a fake strike.

"I don't get it, Kang,' you said."

This statement shows that Vera does not attempt to feign understanding of the situation but instead honestly acknowledges her confusion. From an Adlerian perspective, acknowledging one's limitations is a normal manifestation of feelings of inferiority. The individual recognizes a deficiency in understanding a situation and is thus unable to provide an appropriate response. However, this condition does not cause Vera to withdraw from social interaction.

Research findings indicate that the inferiority Vera experiences is primarily psychological rather than physical. Vera experiences anxiety, doubt, confusion, and caution when facing new situations, particularly during interactions with Jobin. Nevertheless, these feelings of inferiority do not escalate into an inferiority complex, as Vera remains capable of interacting with others, upholding her values, and making decisions based on her own judgment.

2. The Superiority of the Character Vera in the Novel Jobin by Pidi Baiq

This decision demonstrates Vera's ability to control her personal desires while remaining steadfast in the values and principles she holds dear. From an Adlerian perspective, an individual striving for superiority possesses the capacity to direct their behavior based on life goals deemed right, rather than merely following fleeting emotional impulses. Vera shows that she can uphold her self-respect and maintain boundaries in social interactions, even when faced with a rather confusing situation.

Vera's sense of superiority—in the sense of striving for mastery and self-determination—is also evident in her decision to accede

to Jobin's request for a private conversation. Despite initial feelings of confusion and nervousness, she ultimately chooses to face the situation head-on.

Instead of making a scene, you finally make a bold decision: 'Where?' you ask, as if thinking, 'Oh well, let's just go along with what he wants.'"

This decision highlights Vera's courage in confronting an unknown situation. Such courage does not imply an absence of fear; rather, it is the ability to manage anxiety so that it does not hinder necessary actions. Adler explains that individuals driven by the striving for superiority will attempt to resolve issues directly as part of their self-development process. Vera's attitude demonstrates that she does not shy away from problems but chooses to address them thoughtfully.

Furthermore, Vera's superiority is reflected in her ability to control her emotions when dealing with Jobin's often baffling behavior. Upon realizing that Jobin was deliberately feigning a breakdown, she neither displays anger nor humiliates him in front of their friends; instead, she chooses to keep the information to herself.

"It feels difficult to tell them that Jobin was faking the breakdown because, ultimately, it would only confuse them."

This attitude reflects emotional maturity. Vera is capable of considering the impact of sharing information with others. In Adlerian theory, the ability to control emotions and maintain social relationships is an indicator of developing "social interest" (concern for others). Rather than using the situation to shame Jobin, Vera chooses to maintain a constructive atmosphere. Another manifestation of superiority is evident in Vera's ability to find the positive side of her experiences. Upon realizing that Jobin's car had truly broken down, she responded with laughter.

"The answer that made you laugh was, 'It's karma!' And it felt true—that Jobin was indeed facing the consequences of his actions."

This reaction demonstrates Vera's ability to manage emotional stress in a positive way. Instead of becoming consumed by the confusion she had previously felt, she was able to view the situation with a more



relaxed attitude. The capacity to transform a tense situation into an experience she could accept represents a form of psychological adaptation that reflects personality development moving toward superiority.

Vera's superiority is also reflected in her ability to maintain a balance between her personal life, family, and education. Amidst her various interactions with Jobin and Radik, Vera continues to fulfill her responsibilities as a student. She keeps up with her studies, helps her parents, prepares for exams, and manages her time effectively.

"Your mother enters the room carrying a glass of hot tea... her face looks happy seeing you studying in preparation for the SNMPTN exam."

This excerpt demonstrates that Vera possesses a clear life orientation. Adler posited that a healthily developing individual possesses a life goal—or "fictional finalism"—that guides their every action. Vera does not allow emotional issues to interfere with her academic responsibilities, thereby demonstrating positive personality development.

The research findings indicate that the superiority of the character Vera is not manifested through a tendency to dominate others, but rather through her ability to develop her potential, control her emotions, uphold her life principles, and take responsibility for the choices she makes. This form of superiority is the result of a compensation process addressing the various feelings of inferiority Vera had previously experienced. Thus, Vera's personality development aligns with the concept of superiority in Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology: an individual's endeavor to become more mature and independent, and capable of facing life's various challenges.

3. The Relationship Between Inferiority and Superiority in the Character Vera in Pidi Baiq's Novel Jobin

The interplay between inferiority and superiority is also evident in Vera's ability to manage her emotions when dealing with Jobin's often baf-

fling behavior. She neither overreacts nor criticizes Jobin in front of their friends, even though she knows he is deliberately feigning a refusal to cooperate; instead, she chooses to keep this information to herself to avoid causing misunderstandings within their social circle. This attitude demonstrates her capacity for emotional control and her consideration of the social consequences of her actions. From an Adlerian perspective, the ability to maintain social connections—or "social interest"—is a key indicator of healthy personality development.

Furthermore, the development of Vera's sense of superiority is reflected in her ability to balance her personal life with her academic responsibilities. Despite growing closer to Jobin and maintaining communication with Radik, she does not neglect her duties as a student; she continues to attend classes, prepare for exams, and assist her parents with daily tasks. This demonstrates that her life goals are not focused solely on interpersonal relationships but also on personal growth. Adler termed this orientation an individual's "striving for superiority"—a pursuit of self-perfection through the achievement of positive life goals.

The study results indicate that the inferiority Vera experiences does not devolve into an inferiority complex, as she is able to manage various psychological experiences constructively. Feelings of anxiety, doubt, and confusion serve as learning opportunities that foster emotional maturity and decision-making skills. Thus, the superiority Vera exhibits is not a form of dominance over others, but rather a success in developing a personality that is mature, responsible, and adaptable to her social environment.

These findings reinforce Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology theory, which posits that personality development occurs through a process of compensating for various forms of inferiority. The character of Vera illustrates that feelings of inferiority do not inevitably lead to weakness; instead, they can become a source of strength, helping the individual improve themselves and achieve a more

meaningful life. Therefore, the relationship between inferiority and superiority within Vera is dynamic and complementary, shaping her personality development throughout the narrative of Pidi Baiq's novel *Jobin*.

DISCUSSION

The Inferiority of the Character Vera in the Novel *Jobin* by Pidi Baiq

The analysis of the novel *Jobin* by Pidi Baiq reveals that the character Vera experiences several forms of inferiority feelings, as described by Alfred Adler. This sense of inferiority manifests not only in the character's words but also in her emotional responses, hesitation in decision-making, anxiety regarding others' judgments, and a tendency to guard her self-image in social settings. According to Adler (1927), feelings of inferiority are a natural human experience that serves as a driving force for growth toward a better state. In Vera's case, this inferiority arises from social experiences, interpersonal relationships, and considerations regarding the norms she upholds.

One instance of Vera's inferiority is evident when she becomes nervous upon realizing that Jobin's car is following the public minivan (angkot) she is riding in. She reacts with anxiety, uncertain of what Jobin might do if he discovered her presence in the vehicle. The narrative describes the moment as follows:

"Your heart began to pound, as if you found it incredibly difficult to accept what Jobin might do if he discovered you were inside the angkot."

This passage illustrates that Vera experiences anxiety stemming from the uncertainty of the situation. From the perspective of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology, this state reflects a sense of inferiority—marked by insecurity—when an individual faces a situation beyond their control. Vera lacks confidence regarding the appropriate response, so her immediate reactions are fear and nervousness. These feelings indicate that her psy-

chological state is dominated by apprehension about potential outcomes.

Vera's sense of inferiority also surfaces when Jobin directly invites her to switch to his car. Although she inwardly desires to accept the offer, she chooses to decline, feeling that their relationship is not yet close enough. This refusal is grounded in considerations of social norms and her own self-perception.

"You have only a few seconds to make a decision. Yet, deep down, you know your mind has already decided. 'Thanks. I'm almost there,' you reply."

Vera's decision reveals an internal conflict between personal desire and social considerations. Adler explains that individuals harboring feelings of inferiority are often cautious when making decisions, fearing they might make a mistake or face negative judgment from those around them. Vera chooses to maintain a stance she deems appropriate according to her own values rather than acting on her personal desires. This attitude demonstrates that inferiority does not always manifest as weakness; it can also appear as hesitation regarding the decisions one is about to make.

Vera's sense of inferiority also becomes apparent when Jobin asks to speak with her privately in front of her friends. The situation leaves her feeling flustered, unsure of how she ought to conduct herself.

Hearing this, you become increasingly confused and glance toward your friends, trying to steady your thoughts.

The Superiority of the Character Vera in the Novel *Jobin* by Pidi Baiq

According to Alfred Adler, superiority is not defined as an attempt to dominate or feel superior to others, but rather as an individual's drive for self-development, overcoming limitations, and achieving a better life (Adler, 1927). This drive emerges as a form of compensation for the feelings of inferiority a person experiences. Based on the analysis of Pidi Baiq's novel *Jobin*, the character Vera demonstrates several forms of superi-



ority, reflected in her ability to make independent decisions, uphold her life principles, control her emotions, and adapt to the various situations she encounters. The first sign of superiority is evident in Vera's ability to stand by her principles, even when faced with a situation that tempted her otherwise. When Jobin flagged down the public minivan and invited her to switch to his car, Vera realized—deep down—that she actually wanted to accept the offer. However, she chose to decline, reasoning that they were not yet close enough. "Thanks. I'm almost there," she replied. She turned him down because she felt that going home with him like that wasn't normal, given that she didn't know him very well yet.

The Relationship Between Inferiority and Superiority in the Character Vera in Pidi Baiq's Novel Jobin

Alfred Adler's theory of individual psychology posits that inferiority and superiority are inseparable concepts in the development of an individual's personality. Feelings of inferiority are not viewed as weaknesses to be avoided, but rather as a natural condition that drives a person to grow through various forms of compensation toward superiority (Adler, 1927). Research findings indicate that the psychological dynamics of the character Vera demonstrate a close relationship between these two concepts. The anxiety, doubt, and confusion Vera experiences actually serve as factors that drive her to make more mature decisions, uphold her life principles, and develop the ability to adapt to various situations.

Early in her interactions with Jobin, Vera frequently displays emotional responses characterized by anxiety and doubt. She feels nervous upon realizing that Jobin is following the public minivan she is riding and is unable to predict what actions he might take. This situation reveals that Vera lacks a sense of security regarding the circumstances she faces, leading to feelings of inferiority as an initial response to a new experience. However, Vera does not allow this anxiety to overwhelm her; in-

stead, she maintains the ability to think rationally before making a decision. This is evident when she chooses to decline Jobin's invitation to go home together, despite harboring an internal desire to accept it. This decision demonstrates that Vera has begun to compensate for her feelings of inferiority through self-control.

The process of compensation is also apparent when Vera agrees to Jobin's request for a private conversation. Although initially confused and nervous, she ultimately decides to face the situation rather than avoid it. This attitude reflects the development of courage, emerging after she successfully manages her fear. According to Adler, individuals who develop healthily use experiences that trigger feelings of inferiority as a means to improve themselves. Therefore, Vera's courage in facing an unfamiliar situation represents a form of development toward superiority.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded that the character Vera in Pidi Baiq's novel **Jobin** undergoes personality dynamics consistent with Alfred Adler's concept of Individual Psychology—specifically, the interplay between inferiority and superiority. Vera's inferiority manifests as anxiety, doubt, confusion, and caution when facing new situations, particularly in her interactions with Jobin. These feelings are shaped by social experiences, emotional conflicts, and her desire to uphold the values she cherishes in her life.

Conversely, Vera demonstrates various forms of superiority as a means of compensating for her feelings of inferiority. This superiority is evident in her ability to uphold her life principles, make independent decisions, manage her emotions, maintain social relationships, and remain responsible regarding her education and family. This drive for growth indicates that Vera does not allow feelings of inferiority to hinder her personal development; instead, she transforms them into motivation to become a more mature individual.

The study confirms that inferiority and superiority are interconnected aspects shaping Vera's personality development. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates the continued relevance of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology in examining characters within contemporary Indonesian literature. This study aims to contribute to the field of literary psychology and serve as a reference for future research analyzing literary works through the lens of Adlerian Individual Psychology.

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