

# ALFRED ADLER'S INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY: THE INFERIORITY FEELINGS OF ANNA AS MAIN CHARACTER DEPICTED IN *MIRACLES FROM HEAVEN* (2016)

<sup>1</sup>Amalia Normaningtyas\*  
<sup>2</sup>Diyah Fitri Wulandari

English Literature, Faculty of Language and Communication Science, Sultan Agung Islamic  
University

\*Corresponding Author:  
[amelia.norma20@gmail.com](mailto:amelia.norma20@gmail.com)

## *Abstract*

*This study analyzes Anna's feeling of inferiority in Miracles from Heaven movie using Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology theory. The research type in this study is a descriptive qualitative. In this study, there are two types of the data. The primary data are taken from Miracles from Heaven (2016) movie and the secondary data are taken from some books and e-books, journals and e-journals, also articles. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that Anna as the main character of Miracles from Heaven (2016) movie which the main character initially experiences feelings of inferiority. The feelings of inferiority because of her physical weakness, anxiety, and pessimistic. Those feelings appear on Anna because of physical disorder in the digestive organ that are not normal like others.*

**Keywords:** *Individual Psychology, Feeling of Inferiority, Physical Disorder.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Not all humans in this world are born perfectly and are not the same with others. Whether it is the characteristics or abilities, it certainly must be different for each individual. Since being born, humans also have strengths and weaknesses. The weaknesses meant can be either physically, like physical disability or because of illnesses that has a major impact on the life of someone who suffers from what happens during life. Therefore, people will try to strive for themselves when they realize their weaknesses, then they set the purpose for success or superiority with motivation. In fact, achieving success must go through long and tiring work and there is usually a problem as a trial from the process to success or superior.

Personal strivings are consciously accessible and personally meaningful objectives that people pursue in their daily lives. Personal strivings refer to the typical goals that a person characteristically is trying to accomplish (Emmons 732). Based on personal strivings to achieve success, meaningful goals are considered important for well-being.

The possession of and progression toward important life goals are essential for long-term well-being. Several investigators have found that individuals who are involved in the pursuit of personally meaningful goals possess greater emotional well-being and better physical health than do persons who lack goal direction (Emmons 734).

From the statement above, it can be seen that meaningful life goals are important for achieving well-being, producing better personal and emotional health than those who have no purpose in life.

Alfred Adler explains that individuals in this world was born differently, in both physical and abilities. Feelings of inferiority or weakness arise due to differences from other individuals which then trigger their feelings to strive for success or superiority with various sacrifices. The striving force is an innate. However, the nature and direction of the striving force happen because there are inferiority feelings and goal of success or superiority. They as humans will be faced with two choices when they have problems in their lives. That is trying to solve or avoid the problem. When they avoid the problem, then they will not find the solution. "Adler called the single dynamic force striving for superiority. In his final theory, however, he limited striving for superiority to those people who strive for personal superiority over others and introduced the term striving for success to describe actions of people who are motivated by highly developed social interest" (qtd. in Feist 70). Based on the explanation above, there is one figure whose life story relates to the theory, named Stephen Hawking.

Stephen Hawking is a legendary physicist like Albert Einstein. He is one of the inspirators who has striving for superiority through the journey of his life. At the age of 22 years, he struggled with rare motor neuron disease. At that moment, he was preparing for his marriage with his first wife, Jane. Their marriage was up to 26 years old and they had three children. Every day, he did his activities using a wheelchair and communicated with a sound synthesizer. During his life, he also contributed through his perception in the whole field of physics, which even normal people might not necessarily be able to do. From the 1988 book "A Brief History of Time" which was sold more than 10 million

copies, Hawking became famous. In 1995, Hawking married one of his nurses. Before divorce, they had been married for 11 years. Hawking, in the BBC TV film, played by Benedict Cumberbatch in 2004, was praised. He did not care about his physical shortcomings (Jones 1).

In 2014, Hawking also had an opportunity to meet world-famous figures in Johannesburg, they are Nelson Mandela and Queen Elizabeth during a charity event at St James' Palace. From his persistence, he won several awards in the field of science and mathematics in 2009 given by US President Barack Obama. It was an inspiring story of his life, later made into a 2014 film, played by Eddie Redmayne. He died at the age of 76 (Jones 1). Thus, people who have physical disorders can still achieve success or superiority with all the ideals. Because of these weaknesses, it becomes a challenge for them how to remain success or superiority.

*Miracles from Heaven (2016)* is a true story movie telling about the strive of someone who suffers from a rare disease. The movie tells about the strive that revolves around the main character named Annabel, and she is often called Anna. The main character, Anna, who suffers from Pseudo-Obstruction Motility disorder. The doctor said that the rare disease suffered by Anna had no cure, and if it was not immediately treated she would die. After that time she had given up on her life, she then tried to success and realize her dream of recovery. In the time she tried to get up, of course there were family, friends, and doctor who were loyal to support in the process of healing that made her excited.

This study analyzes Anna's feeling of inferiority as the problem formulation using the psychological approach called Individual Psychology theory from Alfred Adler which has a correlation between the main character and the theory to be discusses in this study. Therefore, based on the background above, the title of this study is: "*ALFRED ADLER'S INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY: THE INFERIORITY FEELINGS OF ANNA AS MAIN CHARACTER DEPICTED IN MIRACLES FROM HEAVEN (2016)*".

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research type in this study is a descriptive qualitative. Qualitative research is a research methodology to collect non-numerical data presented by interpreting the data (Crossman 1). Crossman states that observation, interviews, surveys, focus groups, analysis of visual and textual material content, and oral history are included in qualitative research methods (1). Also, according to Bogdan and Taylor in Moleong's work (2006) state that qualitative methods are used as research procedures that produce descriptive data in the form of spoken or written as well as observable people's behavior (4).

In other words, the qualitative research can also be said in the form of verbal data such as novel, short story, recordings or radio transcriptions, video, and movie. The researchers need to interpret the data with descriptive method when they have to convey the data. So, data analysis are presented in the form of phrases or sentences, prologues, and also dialogues or monologues.

This study used some stages in collecting the data. The first stage to collect the data is watching the movie. In data collecting method of this stage is watching the movie

entitled *Miracles from Heaven* (2016). In addition, the next appropriate technique is to read the movie script intensely in order to gain a deeper understanding of the storyline in the movie. The second stage to collect the data is identifying the data. The process of this stage is reading the movie script, it is continued by marking each dialogue related to the analysis. It aims to find the sections of movie which will be analyzed. The form of data identified at this stage is dialogue. The third stage to collect the data is classifying the data. The process of this stage are grouping the data into a table based on problem formulation. The data must be classified to make it easier to answer the problem formulation. It can also be used to ensure a match between the problem formulation and the answers of this study. The classification of the data is usually called the appendix. The last stage to collect the data is reducing the data. It aims to decrease data that is not needed in this study. It also becomes an effective technique in answering problem formulation.

There are two types of the data used in this study, as follows: *Miracles from Heaven* (2016) as the primary data and some books and e-books, journals and e-journals, also articles as the secondary data. The last stage of the research method is analyzing the data. It is a process which involves analyzing and reporting the data. In collecting the data of this study using a descriptive qualitative research by watching the movie. The complete analysis will be explained in Chapter IV as the result of the analysis by interpreting selected data with related quotations, statements, and also descriptions. The supporting data of the analysis are shown in the appendices.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Feeling of Inferiority

“Inferiority feelings are the normal condition of all people; the source of all human striving” (Schultz 132). Adler believes that all humans from birth are blessed with a weaker and lower body. The feeling of inferiority is triggered from the physical deficiencies experienced by the individual, which basically is a natural tendency to go to perfection. The inferiority feeling becomes the driving force in the struggle of each individual. This will determine how and whether the individual can achieve peace in his life. In addition, it will also be the determinant of the road to achieve a good life goal. An individual’s usual reaction to feelings of inferiority is the existence of excessive compensation, which generally occurs to deny the “weakness” in the individual.

Adler began to develop his theory of organ inferiority, that each individual has a body anatomy that can be stronger and weaker.

Some of us are born with heart murmurs or develop heart problems early in life; Some have weak lungs, or kidneys, or early liver problems; Some of us stutter or lisp; Some have diabetes, or asthma, or polio; Some have weak eyes, or poor hearing, or a poor musculature; Some of us have innate tendencies to being heavy, others to being skinny; Some of us are retarded, some of us are deformed; Some of us are terribly tall or terribly short; And so on (Boeree 7).

From the statement above, it can be seen that not all humans are physically born perfect. And also, they have deficiencies in themselves that are certainly different from other individuals. Therefore, feelings of inferiority arise in them.

Based on the concept of Adler's inferiority feeling, it consists of two categories, they are the feeling of primary and secondary inferiority. At the primary feeling of inferiority, it is categorized in young children. Meanwhile, secondary feelings of inferiority are categorized in adults. Both have the same causes, they may experience inappropriate care since childhood, such as child abuse, family neglect, or also because of economic difficulties (Rochemont-Best 4-5).

As a different term for inferiority feeling and compensation, Adler used the terms felt minus and perceived plus and believed that the individual struggles to move from a felt minus position or situation. such as a defeat, to the fictional plus personality ideal, which is a subjectively perceived and constructed the image of maturity, completion, mastery, fulfillment, and perfection (Kajino 21-22).

From the statement above, it can be seen that Adler uses the term that individuals struggle to overcome situations that are felt weak because of subjective feelings of inferiority to maturity, and ultimately to achieve perfection.

In the process of Anna's life journey, the feeling of inferiority arises when she first realized the existence of a rare disease that she suffered. From this feeling of inferiority, it triggers Anna to strive for superiority in healing from a rare disease that she suffered. As depicted in the movie, one night Anna felt inferior because of helplessness caused by the emergence of pain in her stomach. The doctor identified that Anna had a rare disease that attacked her digestive organs. Thus, Anna skipped her school agenda to go to the aquarium. It is suitable with what Adler states in Feist's work, "Adler states that individual psychology happens starting feeling of inferiority, the feeling of weakness and worst by the condition that he or she has" (67-68).

Friend: "Hey, Anna."  
Anna: "Hey."  
Friend: "I'm sorry you had to miss the aquarium."  
Anna: "Yeah, me, too."  
Friend: "Hey, where are you going?"  
Anna: "I don't know."  
"Library."  
( 00:24:23 – 00:24:35 )

It shows that at that time, Anna was unable to follow the agenda of her school who was going to the aquarium. Suddenly, something unexpected appeared which Anna's stomach seemed to expand. It was caused by an illness that attacked Anna's digestive organs so that it affected her stomach which looked different from usual. In fact, she really wanted to be able to come to the aquarium. Anna's feeling of inferiority because of her anxiety occurred when she felt insecure about meeting her friend who could follow the agenda, whereas she could not because of pain in the digestive organs and that made her stomach

expand. Then, she ran and decided to avoid her friend. It is proven in the sentence, (*I don't know*). Library).

Later, Anna felt that she was a burden to her family. Indeed, at that time, Christy and Kevin were arguing in front of their children. She felt guilty for what had happened to her, thus making her family also feel depressed. Adler believes that all human from birth are blessed with a weaker and lower body. The feeling of inferiority is triggered because of physical deficiencies experienced by the individual, which basically is a natural tendency to go to perfection (Feist 71). It means that all humans are born in a weak, so that it gives rise to a feeling of inferiority which then triggers from within to become perfect like other creatures.

Adelynn: "Why is Mommy yelling at the cows?"

Anna: "I think they're fighting about me."

Adelynn: "But why?"

Anna: "Well, because when someone you love gets sick, it causes stress."

( 00:30:20 – 00:30:29 )

The conversation began when Adelynn asked Anna why her parents were arguing in a cow shed. At the church, there were their church friends who said that Anna was sick because among the Beam family has sin, or it could be the sin on Anna herself. Christy did not accept the statement. Later, Kevin tries to calm Christy, but she snaps at Kevin. So, that's why Christy and Kevin argue about Anna. In Anna's mind, Anna thought that she had caused her family trouble. Anna feels inferior because of her anxiety that she is the center of trouble in her family. Anna believes that if one of your loved ones is sick, it makes everyone, especially her family, also think about her condition. That is reflected in the sentence, (*I think they're fighting about me*).

Then, Anna is pessimistic if she cannot visit her dream country, Paris. She felt unable to realize her dream because her illness was getting worse. Christy invited her to read her favorite book, but Anna refused it.

Christy: "Would you like to read? Can I read to you? I have King Arthur and His Knights, A Tale of Two Cities, Moby Dick."

Anna: "I don't feel like reading."

Christy: "A Moveable Feast. It is, um, Hemingway, and it's set in Paris."

Anna: "No. I'm never going to Paris anyway."

"I just want to go home."

"Haley got to go home."

Christy: "We just can't take a chance, honey."

( 01:06:32 – 01:07:00 )

The dialogue above shows that Christy tried to get Anna to read Anna's favorite books to divert pain in her stomach. Christy also invited Anna to read a book which the background is themed in Paris, Anna's dream country. But, Anna refused it because she focused on enduring the pain. She really has no desire to read with her mother. She just wanted to go home so she could meet her father and two sisters soon, because she was only accompanied by her mother while in the hospital. Anna's feeling of inferiority in the

dialogue when Anna no longer cared about the country of her dreams, because she was sure that she would not be able to visit the country. It is proven in the sentence, (*No. I'm never going to Paris anyway. I just want to go home. Haley got to go home*). Anna's feelings of inferiority also appeared instinctively, which she assumed that her body was powerless to do anything. She felt pessimistic. Moreover, if her dream was to visit another country that must require physical strength, while her condition is still weak. In addition, Anna wants to be like her friend named Haley because her friend can go home from the hospital.

Anna seemed to be gesturing to Dr. Nurko said that at that time, she felt inferior because she was in a wheelchair all the time. Then, Dr. Nurko intends to offer Anna to switch positions in the wheelchair as a tribute to his patient. Adler states in Schultz's work, "A condition that develops when a person is unable to compensate for normal inferiority feelings" (133). It means that the feeling of deep inferiority can refer to a condition that arises when someone is unable to balance the normal feeling of inferiority. It can be seen in the dialogue below.

Anna: "Why do I always have to go out in a wheelchair?"

Dr. Nurko: "My thoughts exactly."

"That's what I keep telling the nurse. I'm the one who's old, so let's switch. Okay? My turn, mademoiselle. S'il vous plat."

"Oh, I'm so tired. So tired."

"Faster."

"I'm so tired."

"Faster. Faster."

"Um, end of the trip."

"All right, pretty girl."

"Have a safe flight, okay?"

Anna: "Thank you, Dr. Nurko."

Dr. Nurko: "Okay."

( 01:12:49 – 01:13:29 )

In the conversation, Anna complained to Dr. Nurko that she did not want to be in a wheelchair for too long. Spontaneously, Dr. Nurko asked Anna to switch position with her. This was done by Dr. Nurko to protect the feelings of his patient. Moreover, Anna is classified as a child whose mind is still unstable. Therefore, Dr. Nurko was swiftly able to arrange that Anna not feel inferior because she continued to be in a wheelchair. (*Why do I always have to go out in a wheelchair?*). Anna's feeling of inferiority because of her anxiety occurs when she feels that she cannot do activities as usual like normal people without using a wheelchair.

One morning, Abbie invited Anna, who was sitting alone to play with her and Adelynn. Before Anna was sentenced to suffer from the disease, they always played together in front of their house. At that time, Abbie wanted to repeat the habit by inviting Anna and Adelynn. However, Anna refused because her body was still weak. According to Hjelle and Ziegler, "Each individual, certain organs are somewhat weaker than other, making the person more susceptible to illnesses and diseases involving these organs" (41).

This means that every individual will be susceptible to diseases caused by their organs which are indeed slightly weaker than other organs.

Abbie: “What are you doing?”

Anna: “Nothing.”

Abbie: “Why don’t you come outside with me and Adelynn?”

Anna: “And do what?”

Abbie: “I don’t know. It’s just better than being in here. Come on, it’ll be fun.”

Anna: “Sure.”

Abbie: “You want to climb?”

Anna: “You know I can’t, Abbie.”

( 01:14:35 – 01:15:21 )

In this situation, Abbie invited Anna to play with her and Adelynn again. After a long separation because Anna was hospitalized. At first, Anna was quite enthusiastic to play. Suddenly, she felt insecure because she felt unable when Abbie invited Anna to climb a tree together in front of their house. (*You know I can’t, Abbie*). That’s the evidence shows that Anna’s inferiority feeling because of her physical weakness when Anna rejects the invitation from Abbie because she feels her body is still weak and has not been able to climb on the tree.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that Anna’s feeling of inferiority because of her physical weakness, anxiety, and pessimistic occurred from the first time she felt pain in her stomach until she began to be hospitalized. Every day, she always complained because of the pain. Until one day, Anna’s feelings of inferiority had reached a climax. She could not follow her school agenda to the aquarium, it was caused by her illness which then made her stomach expand so that her pants would not fit. Because of these conditions, she also felt inferior to others because she had to use a wheelchair every time to do her activities. She also felt that she was a burden to her family because of illness that did not heal. Then, she also felt inadequate when Abbie invited her to climb on the tree they used to play with, because she felt her body was still weak and powerless to climb on the tree that was quite tall. The feeling of inferiority to Anna was normal, because she was also a child so her thoughts were not controlled. Because of her condition, she is also pessimistic about being able to visit her dream country, Paris. She considers that she can not do anything like other people who have more physical strength than herself.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research, it can be concluded that this study analyze Anna as the main character of *Miracles from Heaven (2016)* movie which the main character initially experiences feelings of inferiority. Those feeling of inferiority because of her physical weakness, anxiety, and pessimistic. Those feelings appear on Anna because of physical disorder in the digestive organs that are not normal like others. The feeling of inferiority to Anna was normal, because she was also a child so her thoughts were not controlled.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*Alkhamdulillah*, I would like to praise the gratitude to Allah SWT who has provided all the conveniences so that I can complete the final project as well as possible. Afterwards, *Salawat and Salam*, I present to Prophet Muhammad SAW who brought human beings from the darkness to the brightness as it is today. This final project is arranged as a requirement of graduation to achieve the *Sarjana Sastra* Degree.

Hence, I would like to declare my deepest appreciation to: the biggest support system of my life, especially my beloved parents, Susetyo Arief Hidayat and Tri Rinawati. My lovely brother, Hafidh 'Izza Aulia who have given me endless prayers, encouragement, and happiness. Ms. Diyah Fitri Wulandari, S.S., M.Hum as my best advisor, thank you for the sincere guidance to give advices and supports so that I can accomplish this final project properly. Also, my incredible partner, Arif D. P. Prasetyo who taught me to never give up in everything, because all the achievements in life are not instant.

## REFERENCES

- Boeree, C. George. *Personality Theories*. 2006: 1-14. Web. 13 April 2019.
- Crossman, Ashley. *An Overview of Qualitative Research Method*. ThoughtCo. 2019. Web. 3 July 2019.
- Emmons, Robert A. *Striving for the Sacred: Personal Goals, Life Meaning, and Religion*. Journal of Social Issues. Vol. 01 (04), 2005: 731-745. Print.
- Feist, J., and Gregory J. Feist. *Theories of Personality*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill. 2008. Web. 18 February 2019.
- Hjelle, Lary A., and Ziegler, Daniel J. *Personality Theories: Basic Assumptions, Research and Applications*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: McGraw-Hill. 1981. Web. 13 April 2019.
- Jones, Andrew Zimmerman. *Biography of Stephen Hawking, Physicist, and Cosmologist*. ThoughtCo. 2019. Web. 3 July 2019.
- Kajino, Makoto. *The Development and Expansion of Individual Psychology in Japan*. 2014: 1-92. Web. 13 April 2019.
- Moleong, Lexy J. *Qualitative Research Method*. 2006: 4. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya. Web. 13 April 2019.
- Rochemont-Best, Christina De. *Encouraging Lifestyle Change in the Discouraged Adolescent by Understanding Their Private Logic*. 2007: 1-16. Web. 14 April 2019.
- Schultz, Duane P., and Sydney E. Schultz. *Theories of Personality*. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. USA: Wadsworth. 2005. Web. 18 February 2019.

