

Inferiority Complex and Striving for Superiority in Sayaka Murata's *Convenience Store Woman*

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ardahdeww2090@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

The issues that occur within a person, such as feeling inferior, are things that still exist today. It happens because there are factors where someone ultimately is an inferior person because they are not the same as other people. Those even become an inferiority complex. The issue of inferiority is reflected in the novel by Sayaka Murata entitled Convenience Store Woman, which describes the complex inferiority experienced by the main character, Keiko Furukura. This research aimed to explore the causes of the inferiority complex experienced by the main character and how the character struggles toward superiority, or striving for superiority. The study employed literary criticism, using novels as the object of research, and a psychological approach through the theory of individual psychology proposed by Alfred Adler, which views human behavior as a compensation for feelings of inferiority. According to Adler, the ultimate goal of human life is to overcome feelings of inferiority and strive for superiority. The findings of this research revealed that Keiko, the main character, experienced an inferiority complex due to the influence of others at school and in the workplace, as well as her own personality traits. Despite this, Keiko eventually discovered ways to overcome her inferiority by staying true to herself and continuing to work as a convenience store employee, which represented her form of striving for superiority. The researcher suggests that future studies could explore this novel using different approaches and criticisms to offer a broader perspective on the character's development and the novel's themes.

Keywords: *inferiority, inferiority complex, striving for superiority.*

INTRODUCTION

Everyone in this world has his own principles to find ways how he can live well in the future, especially principles in living life. These principles are found in the family environment, but can change when a person has reached adulthood. Thinking about the wider community makes them think again about the next step they will take in life. One of the problems is an inferior feeling that often develops in childhood due to invalid experiences or an unsupportive

environment (Syaefianti, 2017). Moreover, in this modern era, many people who are growing up prefer to live and fulfill their own needs. This happens because they do not want to bother their closest family or even do not want their family to interfere in their affairs again when they start getting work. Of course their thoughts begin to move to be more independent and do not want their decisions to be interfered with by their family or others. They will have independent choice as their awareness about how they will run their life better.

Cultural factors in society also can affect someone's inferiority. For example, in real life, some people think that someone who is successful is one who has a comfortable job with a large salary. It raises the inferiority of people who are pursuing a career from scratch or with a mediocre salary. Those things cause a person to choose to life independently without seeing the negative assumptions of society. Therefore, the researcher will discuss the cause of inferiority complex by main character and how she strives for superiority in the novel *Convenience Store Woman* by Sayaka Murata.

Inferiority complex and striving for superiority are included in Individual Psychology theory by Alfred Adler. Individual psychology is also a psychological system that seeks to comprehend, prevent, and treat mental diseases (Overholser, 2010). According to Nigam (2022) Alfred Adler is the first one who puts emphasis on "individuation", i.e. an individual should be understood as an indivisible whole. He emphasized that humans are creative and have the ability to select or change their aims. They are subjective beings who are strongly influenced by their surroundings, and their personalities reflect this. Apart from discussing personality, Adler believes that a very basic yet dynamic force resides beneath all human emotions, behaviors, and acts, independent of culture or background. This fundamental motivation is the desire to move from a perceived 'minus' condition to a 'plus' situation. This is known as progressing from feelings of inferiority to feelings of superiority or competence (Aslinia et. al., 2011). Adler (1927) identified two major tendencies that are prevalent in psychological life: the person's social feeling and the person's striving for power and dominance. Every behavior and attitude are influenced by these as the individual tries for security and to fulfill life's three major challenges: love, work, and society. This theory can be analyzed more about how the character activity and attitude through emotions, behaviors, and actions develop in the literary work also about inferiority and striving for superiority.

Convenience Store Woman by Sayaka Murata was written with a problem that is related to reality, the language is simple to understand, consists of a surprising storyline and also a lot of moral messages. The novel was an Akutagawa Prize winning novel and one of the New Yorker's best books of 2018. The novel tells about 36-year-old woman, Keiko Furukura, who has spent the last 18 years working part-time at a convenience store, or konbini. She has understood since childhood that she is "different" and that expressing her own thoughts and deeds is incomprehensible and disturbing to others, causing problems. The highly regulated world of the convenience store, where every action is specified by the corporate manual, allows her to preserve an acceptable identity and a sense of purpose to people around her. She attempts to appear "normal" by modeling her behavior, dress style, and even speech patterns after those of her coworkers. Keiko maintains some connections and a relationship with her sister, but it is becoming increasingly difficult for her to explain why she is still single and works as a temp in a convenience store after 18 years.

In the last five years, several studies also discussed *Convenience Store Woman* by Sayaka Murata. The first study by Kurniawan & Samanik (2022) discussed several standards that

emerged in the novel, namely normal standards in terms of a good child, normal standards in terms of a successful person, and normal standards in terms of the main character's marital status. The second study conducted by Herlina and Muhd. Al Hafizh (2022) focused on the stereotype of women, consisting of three forms: women as mothers, women as incompetent people, and women as sex objects. The next study by Nicolae (2018) discussed three stereotypes that transformed her into an abnormal, asexual being, a maiden stripped of any sex appeal who could not integrate into actual society. The fourth study by Hosuri (2020) discussed a feminist perspective, where the leading protagonist ultimately stopped compromising her happiness in order to fit into society. The fifth study by Tasya Pratama, et al. (2022) discussed the main character's positive politeness and how she never used the 'Joke' strategy and frequently used the 'Give gifts to Hearer' strategy.

Furthermore, other studies that used Adler's inferiority and superiority can be found in research by Ulfi Syaefianti (2017), which discussed the cause of the speaker's inferiority complex due to bad memories from childhood and during her growth, showing anxiety, sorrow, despair, insecurity, and weakness. Second, Normaningtyas and Wulandari (2021) discussed how the main character first felt inferior to others. Feelings of inferiority resulted from her physical weakness, anxiety, and pessimism. Next is research by Wildana Wargadinata, et al. (2021), which discussed the realization of his prior attitudes, qualities, and efforts to compensate for his inferiority, revealing the main character's uniqueness. Meanwhile, the main character's social interests evolved in line with the long process in rural society. Another research by Thenady T.P. and Limanta L. S. (2013) discussed the main antagonist's psychological defenses to ease his inferiorities; compensation and superiority complex. Based on the previous studies and the focus of the novel, the researcher found that none of the previous studies had used research on how the main character faced her problems through her inferiority, and then took her way of being a normal person using the object of the *Convenience Store Woman* novel. Because in the novel, there are characters with inferiority and superiority that are interesting to discuss. The researcher wanted to analyze using Adler's individual psychology to explore the character's activity and attitude represented in the novel. Therefore, the researcher evaluated the moral lessons, and the research findings from this work would be beneficial to readers and society in this modern era. The researcher regarded her research as a good example and simple to learn as character education for teenagers, parents, and readers.

RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher answered the problem of the study using literary criticism to be applied in the research design, since the data came from the words and utterances of the main character in the novel. The research focused on the inferiority feelings and striving for superiority of Keiko in the novel, using the individual theory from Alfred Adler. At this point, the researcher attempted to analyze the cause of the inferiority complex, which was still tied to the psychological approach. The data source for this study was Sayaka Murata's novel *Convenience Store Woman*, which consists of one hundred sixty-three pages.

To collect the data, the researcher went through several steps. First, the researcher read the novel and understood the contents. Second, the researcher delved deeper into the parts of the novel that were related to the research topic, highlighting the causes, forms, and connections to the data by taking notes. After that, the researcher categorized the data in accordance with the theory. In analyzing the data, the researcher organized the data and

selected particular topics deemed important and relevant for the study, related to the theory and supporting data. Then, the researcher began to classify the data to answer the research problem and made conclusions from the analysis.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

This study found the cause of the main character having an inferiority complex based on the theory by Adler (1927) and (1997). The researcher highlighted these causes into two types of causes which were causes from society and causes from the main character was personality.

Causes from Society

The causes of inferiority complex from society are divided into two causes. There was treatment from others in school and treatment from friends in convenience stores.

Treatment from Others about Keiko's Strange in School

People in the world have certainly had childhood experiences, whether they were good or bad. Every occasion they go through indeed leaves a different impression that can even be remembered until they grow up in the future. These experiences become a part of memory where everyone starts to recall what happened in the past, which shapes who they are now. Adler, in Ansbacher and Ansbacher (1956, p. 352), stated that memories are important only for what they are "taken as"; for their interpretation and for their bearing on present and future life.

Moreover, the researcher found the first data about the main character's inferiority, as she remembered her past events in which her friends and mother started to view her as a strange person. Keiko's response, which was different from other small children in general, made her friends consider her an abnormal or peculiar character. This happened when she was in nursery school. One day, she saw a dead bird in the park, and the other children were standing around it.

Datum 1

And that's what we did. Everyone was crying for the poor dead bird as they went around murdering flowers, plucking their stalks, exclaiming, "What lovely flowers! Little Mr. Budgie will definitely be pleased." They looked so bizarre I thought they must all be out of their minds. We buried the bird in a hole dug on the other side of a fence with a sign that said KEEP OUT and placed the flower corpses on top of it. Someone brought an ice lolly stick from the trash can to use as a grave marker. "Poor little bird. It's so sad, isn't it Keiko?" my mother kept murmuring, as if trying to convince me. But I didn't think it was sad at all. (Murata, 2018: 4-5)

Keiko gave a personal response about that incident. She appeared normal and did not feel guilty about what she had said to her mother. Furthermore, Keiko's mother was shocked and speechless after hearing Keiko's personal understanding. According to Adler (1997), people who use a personal (private) understanding demonstrate that other people, social institutions, and social norms hold no appeal for them. Keiko's behavior reflected a personal interest that did not readily discriminate between right and wrong. Even though she was raised in a typical household and setting, and was born into a regular family, she often made blunders for her own gain in challenging circumstances (Adler, 1997, p. 12). Thus, Keiko's personal interest or

private understanding about her mother's reaction became the cause of her inferiority complex because she was different or strange compared to normal people in society.

Keiko's childhood experience, which highlighted her difference, occurred when she started primary school. During break time, some boys began fighting. Keiko tried to break up the fight, but in an unusual way. This action made Keiko view herself even more negatively in the eyes of those around her.

Datum 2

Some teachers came over and, dumbfounded, demanded I explain myself.

"Everyone was saying to stop them, so that's what I did."

Violence was wrong, the bewildered teachers told me in confusion.

"...I just thought that would be the quickest way to do it," I explained patiently. Why on earth were they so angry? I just didn't get it. They held a teacher's meeting, and my mother was called to the school. Seeing her bowing to the teachers, apologizing over and over, her face strangely serious, I finally realized that maybe I shouldn't have done what I did, but I still couldn't understand why. (Murata, 2018: 5-6)

Keiko's rude action toward what her friends had done, instead of tearing them apart, was an attempt to gain attention from her teacher and classmates. The girls tried to stop them, and soon a teacher came over. Keiko tried to explain what she had done with the boys, but the teacher called her mother to the school. Datum 4 above illustrates that Keiko developed an inferiority complex after witnessing her mother apologize to her teacher. These actions, particularly the reaction from others, contributed to Keiko's growing awareness that she was not like other children.

Keiko's inferiority complex became evident when she made a big mistake in her class. When her young class teacher began bawling and hitting the desk furiously, the whole class started crying and begging her to stop. However, Keiko responded differently—she pulled the teacher's skirt and knickers down, shocking everyone, including the teacher. Another teacher from the following class rushed over to see what had happened. This incident further exacerbated Keiko's sense of being different, and her actions reinforced her feelings of inferiority.

Datum 3

"I wonder why you can't understand, Keiko..." she muttered helplessly on the way home, hugging me to her. It seemed I'd done something wrong again, but I couldn't for the life of me understand what was the problem. My parents were at a loss what to do about me, but they were as affectionate to me as ever. I'd never meant to make them sad or have to keep apologizing for things I did, so I decided to keep my mouth shut as best I could outside home. I would no longer do anything of my own accord, and would either just mimic what everyone else was doing, or simply follow instructions. (Murata, 2018: 6)

Keiko decided to become a quiet girl because she felt guilty about the situations she had been involved in, especially regarding her parents. After those incidents, she altered her personality to avoid further problems. She chose to remain silent and restrict her actions, limiting what she did outside of her house. Keiko was constantly concerned about the potential consequences if she continued her "bad" behavior in the future. This self-imposed isolation and restriction of her actions were signs of her inferiority complex, as she felt inadequate and insecure. By retreating from social situations, Keiko sought to avoid the possibility of further judgment or failure, reflecting her feelings of inferiority.

Treatment from Friends and Other People in Convenience Store

The main character, Keiko, had been a convenience store worker since she was a student. She chose to work part-time to support herself while attending college. During her time working there, she met various people. Her co-workers were friendly, and Keiko even tried to imitate some of them because she believed they were examples of "normal" people, which she aspired to be like.

While working at the convenience store, Keiko ran into some of her school friends. However, she felt disturbed by how they treated her. Her friends wanted to know how she was doing, since they hadn't seen each other in a long time. Despite their genuine interest, Keiko felt uncomfortable and wanted more than just casual conversation. She constantly avoided questions from her friends, especially those regarding her work or her romantic life. This behavior highlighted her internal conflict and her struggle with the idea of "normalcy," as she felt disconnected from others and unable to relate to their expectations of her.

Datum 4

Yukari had been nodding during their exchange, but now she abruptly directed her gaze to me. "Keiko, aren't you married yet?"

"No, I'm not."

"Really? But ... you're not still stuck in the same job, are you?"

I thought a moment. I knew it was considered weird for someone of my age to not have either a proper job or be married because my sister had explained it to me. Even so, I balked at being evasive in front of Miho and the others, who knew the truth.

"Yep, I'm afraid so."

Yukari looked flustered by my answer and so I hastily added, "I'm not very strong, so I'm better off in a casual job."

"Do you mind if I ask you a personal question? Have you ever been in love, Keiko?" Satsuki asked teasingly.

"In love?"

"Like, have you ever dated anyone? Come to think of it, I've never heard you talk about that sort of thing."

"Oh I see. No, I haven't," I answered automatically. (Murata, 2018: 21-22)

Keiko's character felt uncomfortable around her friends. Her friends' curiosity about her personal life made her uneasy and caused her to feel inferior because her achievements were different from theirs. Seeing Keiko's brief and minimal responses to their questions further emphasized her sense of inferiority. In short, Keiko's inferiority complex was triggered by the way her friends treated her.

The impact of this on Keiko was that she became increasingly convinced that she was incapable of working due to her weak health condition. She also believed that she could not be like most people who worked in stable, respectable jobs. Wangari's research stated that a person with an inferiority complex tends to exaggerate their feelings of inadequacy, making them believe that they are incapable of achieving their goals or possessing certain qualities (Wangari, n.d., p. 2-3).

Keiko met her friends again at a school reunion, where she engaged in conversation with them. They asked her questions about her current life. When she explained that she was physically weak and unable to work in any position other than as a part-time worker, her friends continued to express concern about her situation. They wondered if she was truly okay, given her age and the fact that she was still working part-time.

Datum 5

I wished I was back in the convenience store where I was valued as a working member of staff and things weren't as complicated as this. Once we donned our uniforms, we were all equals regardless of gender, age, or nationality—all simply store workers.

(Murata, 2018: 23)

Keiko struggled to keep her emotions in check during conversations with her friends about her job. She liked the atmosphere in the convenience store because there were no complications in her life there. In that environment, Keiko could consciously control her emotions, preventing long conversations about how she was different from her friends. Keiko also experienced similar treatment from her friends when she attended the New Year party at Miho's house. She had promised to help Miho with the shopping in the morning and had made time to attend the gathering. However, when the event started, a debate arose between Keiko and some of her friends. After arguing with them, Keiko felt like a foreign object—out of place and disconnected from those around her.

Datum 6

The next thing I knew, just like that time in elementary school, they all turned their backs on me and started edging away, staring curiously at me over their shoulders as though contemplating some ghastly life form. Oh, I thought absently, I've become a foreign object. (Murata, 2018: 48)

Keiko saw the reaction of her friends, who were no longer interested in talking to her. She felt unappreciated because she insisted on sticking with her part-time job. The conflict between Keiko and some of her friends stemmed from the fact that Keiko still chose not to marry and continued working in a part-time position. Keiko expressed her thoughts and outlook on life, but instead of being understood, she was once again seen as a stranger by her friends. Society caused Keiko to feel inferior again due to her friends' reactions after she tried to express her thoughts. She felt like she had become "a foreign object" after the debate, as her friends began to busy themselves and no longer paid attention to her responses. Keiko returned to her thoughts of being in an inadequate position—a form of feeling inferior.

The reactions of the people around Keiko were one of the causes of her inferiority complex. She reflected on how, even after she had a job, she was still overlooked by others. She thought about how society saw her as a foreign object that could be discarded.

Datum 7

The normal world has no room for exceptions and always quietly eliminates foreign objects. Anyone who is lacking is disposed of. So that's why I need to be cured. Unless I'm cured, normal people will expurgate me. Finally I understood why my family had tried so hard to fix me. (Murata, 2018: 48)

Keiko realized what her family had done in the past to improve her attitude in public. The stereotypes in society were different from her point of view. From Datum 7 above, Keiko's reflection and realization included her feelings of inferiority due to her position as "a foreign object." She also felt that the people around her were uninterested in her thoughts. These situations were a form of inadequacy and insecurity.

The cause of Keiko's inferiority complex arose when she felt that her thoughts and views aligned with Shiraha's experiences in society. Keiko tried to listen to Shiraha's concerns, and she could relate to several aspects of his perspective.

Datum 8

He seemed to have this odd circuitry in his mind that allowed him to see himself only as the victim and never the perpetrator I thought as I watched him.

"Really?" I said, even wondering whether he made a habit of being self-pitying. "That must be hard." I found society just as annoying as he did, but there wasn't anything about myself that I particularly wanted to defend, so I couldn't understand why Shiraha was taking it out on me like this. ... (Murata, 2018: 52)

Keiko felt that society's treatment could affect a person's life. She felt she could not help her friend, Shiraha. She did not know how to defend herself when dealing with society, including responding to Shiraha's concerns. Therefore, Keiko's feelings were a form of inferiority complex. Based on her behavior, some types of individuals did not trust their abilities to act and express themselves, preferring to exclude others as much as possible (Adler, 1997, p.29).

Causes from Personality

The causes of inferiority complex from personality are divided into two causes. There were feeling of inferiority and self-doubt.

Feeling of Inferiority

The feeling of inferiority, discussed as the key to the social process, was that people constantly strived to find a situation where they could excel. Thus, sometimes people did not notice someone's feeling of inferiority at work because they felt unsure of their ability. In the novel, Keiko had childhood incidents that showed her different traits from normal children around her. It made her change her manners, become a quiet person, and feel inferior about herself. She did not want to make her parents sad about her weird actions toward others.

Datum 9

After this, the adults seemed relieved when I didn't say a single word more than necessary or act on my own initiative. But as I got older, being so quiet apparently became a problem in itself. As far as I was concerned, though, keeping my mouth shut was the most sensible approach to getting by in life. Even when my teachers wrote in my school report that I should make more friends and play outside more, I doggedly refused to say anything more than absolutely necessary. (Murata, 2018: 7)

Keiko restricted her interaction with others. She stopped making friends and also stopped playing with them. Keiko kept herself isolated to minimize the trouble she might cause in the future. She was afraid that her actions would make her parents sad again. Based on her behavior, some types of people did not trust their abilities to act and express themselves, preferring to exclude others as much as possible (Adler, 1997, p.29).

The insecurity that Keiko experienced made her self-confidence decrease, causing her to become lost in her thoughts for fear of making another mistake. In short, Keiko had low self-confidence after realizing her different behavior.

The feeling of inferiority also appeared in Keiko's character even after she entered university. She did not believe in herself when it came to interacting with others. Keiko severely limited her friendships, choosing to do everything on her own during her school days.

Datum 10

I didn't make any friends at school, but I wasn't particularly picked on or bullied, and I managed to get myself through elementary and secondary without saying anything uncalled for. I didn't even change after graduating from high school and going on to university. I basically spent my free time alone, and didn't talk to anyone in private at all. I never repeated the kind of trouble I'd caused in primary school, but still my parents worried that I wouldn't survive in the real world. And so, believing that I had to be cured, I grew into adulthood. (Murata, 2018: 7-8)

Keiko limited her interaction with other people and feared repeating the mistakes she had made in the past. She closed herself off and avoided disturbing others with her presence because she believed that any interaction she initiated would only cause trouble. As a result, she spent most of her time alone and refrained from engaging in private conversations with anyone. According to Adler (1997) “*If people show off it is only because they feel inferior, and do not feel strong enough to compete with others in a more positive way. They are not in harmony with society, not socially well adjusted, and do not know how solve their social problems*”. In short, Keiko's inferiority made her even less willing to interact with other people—fear of making the same mistake she did in the past. Furthermore, since so many advised Keiko to find suitable employment, she hesitated to leave her comfort zone. It led her to continue choosing to be a convenience store woman at 36 years old. She also worried about her ability and appearance if she was not a convenience store worker.

Datum 11

Since I'd left the store, I no longer knew what time I should wake up in the morning. I slept whenever I felt sleepy and ate when I woke up. I didn't do anything all day except fill out résumé forms, as ordered by Shiraha.

I no longer knew what standard to live by. Until now, my body had belonged to the convenience store, even when I wasn't working.

Jet black hairs were sprouting on the fingers of my hand holding the glass and on my arms too. Until now I'd always been scrupulous over my personal appearance for the sake of the convenience store, but now that it was no longer necessary I didn't feel the need to shave. I looked in the mirror that stood in the living room and saw I had a faint moustache too. (Murata, 2018: 88-89)

Keiko expressed her worries and her inability to work anywhere other than a convenience store. She revealed that the convenience store was the only place where she could feel like a normal person and regulate her behavior accordingly. Her feeling of inferiority became more evident when she finally left the convenience store—she felt clueless about her life and stopped caring about her appearance, as she no longer saw herself as a part of the store.

Self-doubt

After spending some time as a part-time worker, Keiko planned to meet her friends on Friday. During the meeting, her friends began asking her about her current life. She felt uncomfortable because their questions made her aware that her life was not comparable to theirs.

Datum 12

What a pain I thought, wondering why everyone felt such a need for reassurance. But out loud I just parroted the excuse my sister had told me to use whenever I was in a fix: “No, no. It's just because I'm not strong. That's all!” (Murata, 2018: 23)

Keiko's friends from elementary school met her again at a school reunion. During the event, Keiko started to feel a desire to reconnect with her friends, as she had avoided making any friends during her school days. However, when her friends began questioning her about her part-time job, Keiko felt annoyed. They kept asking her for reassurance about her life choices, and she consciously responded that she wasn't strong enough for any job other than the one she had. In these situations, Keiko's feelings of inferiority became evident. She compared herself to others and felt that she didn't fit in with her friends. Her discomfort stemmed from the pressure of their questions, which reminded her of the differences in their lives. Keiko preferred the simplicity and security of her world in the convenience store, where she worked.

Moreover, Keiko was afraid to leave her comfort zone. Despite the suggestions from others to get a more "proper" job, she chose to remain in her current position. At 36 years old, Keiko continued to work as a convenience store woman, driven by her fear of change and the comfort that came with her familiar routine.

Datum 13

"I see. But I'm not capable of working anywhere else except the convenience store. I did give it a go, but it turns out the convenience store worker mask is the only one I'm fit to wear. So if people don't accept that, I have no idea what I can do about it." (Murata, 2018: 62)

Keiko expressed her worries and her inability to work anywhere besides a convenience store. She reveals that the convenience store is a place where she becomes a "normal" person and can regulate her behavior to fit in. This setting provides her with a sense of stability and normalcy. However, Keiko's feelings of inferiority continue to surface when people around her ask questions about her life. These questions challenge her sense of security and highlight her differences from others. According to Adler (1997, p. 29), some individuals lack trust in their abilities to act and express themselves, which leads them to exclude others and avoid new situations. They prefer to stay within their familiar and safe environments, limiting their interactions and experiences. Keiko's behavior, in which she avoids change and confines herself to the security of her part-time job, is a clear example of an inferiority complex. This complex is caused by her feelings of inadequacy in society and the belief that she cannot measure up to the expectations of others. Keiko's need to feel secure in her current environment is a direct result of this inferiority, and it limits her ability to grow beyond her current situation.

The Ways Keiko Strives for Superiority

The following sub-chapter was about how the main character in the novel strove for superiority. It was a form of character development of the character of Keiko, who had an inferiority complex from her experience in childhood. Therefore, she chose to go and live alone until she graduated from university. She tried a part-time job in a convenience store to get a salary and a new experience for her. The striving for superiority of Keiko could be identified when she felt comfortable in her workplace and then made a social relationship or interaction. Also, she chose to cultivate her empathy as she wanted to and decided her way of life.

Making a Social Relationship

People who strived for superiority rather than personal superiority maintained a sense of self. Their sense of personal worth was tied closely to their contributions to human society. As the researcher saw in the novel, the main character tried to make a social relationship around her. She also learned about how to be a normal person from her manager and her work colleagues.

Datum 14

My present self is formed almost completely of the people around me. I am currently made up of 30 percent Mrs. Izumi, 30 percent Sugawara, 20 percent the manager, and the rest absorbed from past colleagues such as Sasaki, who left six months ago, and Okasaki, who was our supervisor until a year ago. (Murata, 2018: 15)

Keiko learned by copying her manager and work colleagues' speaking skills and other manners. She chose to learn how to communicate well with others. Since Keiko had become an employee, she did not want to waste her time just being silent. Learning many things from people in her work environment seemed like an exciting choice to her. This action included the striving for superiority by establishing social interest.

Good appearance was also Keiko's choice to start her new habit as a normal person. She tried to learn or copy her manager's way of developing her appearance in the workplace. She thought that was one of the ways to be a normal person like Mrs. Izumi and Sugawara, her work colleagues in the convenience store.

Datum 15

It's only natural that my tastes would match hers since I'm copying her. I'm sure everyone must see me as someone with an age-appropriate bag and a manner of speech that has a perfect sense of distance without being reserved or rude. (Murata, 2018: 16)

Keiko also learned to appear well, like Mrs. Izumi and Sugawara, her work colleagues. From the clothes, makeup, and facial expressions, she had learned from people at her workplace. That was the way she developed herself and made social relationships with others. In the end, her co-workers also praised her best ways of speaking as a normal person. Because of her co-workers, she became acquainted with several new things, such as how to dress and use makeup. This way of improving herself to look normal is included in her striving for superiority.

Another form of Keiko striving for her superiority was helping her friend, Miho, shop and prepare for a party on New Year's Eve. It was here that Keiko began to show her concern for her friends, even though she often received treatment that irritated her. She had promised Miho, so she came to help her.

Datum 16

The next morning, as promised, I helped Miho with the shopping and preparations for the barbecue. At noon, Miho's husband, Satsuki's husband, and some friends who lived a little way away came over. It was the first time we'd all been together for ages. (Murata, 2018: 45)

Keiko's attitude of helping friends and keeping her promise to come to an event was her attempt to strive for superiority. Although Keiko initially refused her friend's invitation, she eventually promised to help Miho shop for party needs. Unconsciously, she had been responsible for what she had promised, so she wanted to be seen as a normal person by her friends. In short, Keiko struggled to overcome and strive for superiority. As stated by Adler in Hjelle and Ziegler (1992), everything that she did was designed to overcome feelings of inferiority and build a sense of superiority (Meiliana, 2020).

Keiko did not only start building relationships with her friends, but she also took other actions. She even dared to offer her co-worker, Shiraha, a place to live as a form of concern, so that Shiraha could live safely.

Datum 17

"Shiraha, if all you want is a marriage of convenience, then how about getting together with me?" I broached as I put my second cup of warm water on the table and took a seat.

"What the—" he exploded.

"If you hate people interfering in your life so much and don't want to be kicked out of the village, then the sooner you get it over and done with the better, surely," I persisted. "I don't know about hunting—I mean, getting a job—but getting married will at least remove the risk of people sticking their noses into your love life and sexual history, won't it?" (Murata, 2018: 51)

Keiko tried to calm Shiraha after they talked about society. Shiraha had gotten carried away, feeling that the society around him did not care about him. This action made Keiko realize that her situation was the same as what Shiraha was experiencing. Therefore, the data above shows a form of striving for superiority from Keiko, as she helped and calmed Shiraha after he cried in front of her.

Cultivating the Empathy

The main character in the novel strove for superiority by cultivating empathy, just as a normal person would. Keiko loved her work, and she always arrived on time at the convenience store when her shift started. She wanted to enjoy the convenience store as her safe place. As time passed, she became more attentive to the circumstances around her, especially when serving customers.

Datum 18

After the morning practice, which was livelier than usual, I was on my way to the cash register when I saw a regular customer, a woman with a walking stick, reaching for something on the bottom shelf, bending down so far it looked as though she would topple over.

"Let me help you! Is this what you were after?" I asked, picking up a pot of strawberry jam.

"Thank you," she said with a smile.

I carried her basket to the till. As she shed out her purse to pay, she again muttered, "This place really doesn't ever change, does it?" (Murata, 2018: 43)

Keiko's empathy is demonstrated through her caring for and understanding others, especially when she noticed situations at the convenience store. Her actions, such as recognizing when someone is in a complex emotional state, reflect her growing ability to empathize with others. Keiko becomes increasingly helpful to her customers because she

genuinely loves her workplace. Additionally, her efforts to be kind and attentive to those around her contribute to her image as a "normal person," which is part of her striving for superiority. Keiko also extends her empathy to others, including Shiraha, one of her co-workers. In this instance, Keiko and Shiraha discussed their views on society and how they interpret it. The data below illustrates how Keiko responds to Shiraha's emotional distress, calming him after he begins to cry. This shows that Keiko's efforts to help and support others are not only a reflection of her growing empathy but also part of her journey toward personal growth and striving for superiority.

Datum 19

Shiraha looked at me standing there in silence and suddenly pressed his hands to his face. I thought he was about to sneeze, but then I saw drops of water dripping through his fingers and realized he must be crying. It would be awful if we were spotted by any customers I thought. "Anyhow, let's go and sit down somewhere," I said, taking his arm and leading him to a nearby family restaurant. (Murata, 2018: 51)

Keiko tried to calm Shiraha after they talked about society. Shiraha had gotten carried away, and he felt the society around him did not care about him. This action made Keiko know that her situation was the same as what Shiraha was experiencing. The data above showed the form of striving for superiority from Keiko, which helped and calmed Shiraha after he cried in front of Keiko. Keiko's action when calming Shiraha, who was sad, included cultivating a sense of empathy because she felt what another person feels when something happened to them. Keiko showed her striving for superiority, like good behavior, where she became increasingly sensitive to things around her, especially in the convenience store where she worked. The following data below described the circumstances in which Keiko helped her co-workers and customers.

Datum 20

I was just recalling him muttering this under his breath when the automatic door chime sounded through the security monitor. I looked at the screen to see a group of male customers coming in. All at once the store was busy. Tuan, the new guy who'd started only last week, was alone on the cash register, so I thought I'd better get out there right away to help. I pointed at the screen. "He needs help on the till," I told him, and I rushed out into the shop. (Murata, 2018: 69)

Keiko was characterized as a person who helped her junior, Tuan, the new worker at the convenience store. Keiko saw from the screen that her junior seemed to need help because the convenience store was starting to get crowded. Keiko developed her empathy when she was a worker in the convenience store. She described a character who struggled to fix her character and be as normal a person as possible. Her change when helping others was part of striving for superiority because people have little or no regard for others while they attempt to be better characters.

Deciding the Way of Life

The form of striving for superiority by Keiko was that she decided on her own way of life. As part of her striving for superiority, she wanted to be free from the demands of her family. She tried to find the meaning of being a normal person in her own way.

Datum 21

I was considering whether there was any benefit to me in having him here. My mother and sister, and even I myself, were beginning to tire of me never being cured. I was beginning to feel that any change, good or bad, would be better than my situation now. "It probably isn't as tough for me as it is for you, Shiraha. But one thing's for sure: I won't be able to carry on working in the convenience store like this forever. Every time a new manager comes along, they ask me why I've only ever done the same part-time job. They're always suspicious until I give them some kind of excuse. And I was just looking for a good excuse to be able to give them. I don't know if you're it, though." (Murata, 2018: 64)

Keiko made her own decisions about how she lived her life. She also asked Shiraha for an agreement that they would help each other to be free from the negative prejudices of the people around them. Making this decision was part of striving for superiority for Keiko. She dared to make that decision because she had gone through a process toward finding her way of life. Keiko's desire to return to being a convenience store worker peaked when she saw a convenience store around the company where she would conduct an interview. Keiko was sure of her life goals and knew that she still wanted to be a convenience store worker because that was what she wanted.

Datum 22

"I realize now," I went on relentlessly. "More than a person, I'm a convenience store worker. Even if that means I'm abnormal and can't make a living and drop down dead, I can't escape that fact. My very cells exist for the convenience store."

I was wasting time talking like this. I had to get myself back in shape for the sake of the store. I had to restructure my body so it would be able to move more swiftly and precisely to replenish the refrigerated drinks or clean the floor, to more perfectly comply with the store's demands. (Murata, 2018: 96)

Keiko was described as working up the courage to tell Shiraha that she wanted to be herself as a convenience store worker. Although she had previously thought that living with Shiraha would improve her situation, she eventually found that her life as a convenience store worker was what truly made her feel fulfilled. The decision about Keiko wanting to be a convenience store worker was part of her striving for superiority, where she did not want to be controlled by those around her. She was able to choose her own way in life—to be what, who, and how she wanted.

CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION

Based on the findings in the previous chapter, the researcher identified two causes of Keiko's inferiority complex in Sayaka Murata's **Convenience Store Woman**. The first cause is societal, with Keiko's experiences in both her childhood school environment and her workplace at the convenience store contributing to her feelings of inferiority. The second cause is rooted in her personality, specifically in her feelings of inferiority and self-doubt. Based on these findings, it can be observed that Keiko strives for superiority through several means: by making social relationships with others, cultivating empathy, and ultimately deciding the course of her own life.

Moreover, the researcher only focused on analyzing the causes of the inferiority complex of the main character, Keiko, following how the character strives for superiority, because this aimed to narrow the focus of study. The suggestions from researchers that further researchers explore this book using other approaches and criticism, such as psychology using introversion

or introvert theory, feminism, sociology of criticism, or other criticism to take more differences in perspective.

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