

EXPLORING THE PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN 172 DAYS BY NADZIRA SHAFI: A PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS USING ERIKSON, FREUD, AND MASLOW

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the personality development of the main character in 172 Days by Nadzira Shafa through the lens of psychological theory. Using a qualitative approach, the research applies psychological frameworks such as Erikson's psychosocial development theory, Freud's theory of personality, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs to analyze the protagonist, Alya, as she navigates significant internal conflicts and undergoes emotional and behavioral transformations. Data were collected through Systematic Literature Review (SLR), following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, which allowed for a comprehensive selection and analysis of relevant psychological and literary studies. The results show that Alya's journey from identity confusion to self-actualization is shaped by the dynamic interplay between societal expectations and her personal desires. This study contributes to the field of literary psychology by demonstrating how psychological theories can be effectively applied to literary character analysis, offering insights into the psychological development of characters in literature. The findings have implications for the broader understanding of character development in literary studies and provide a framework for analyzing complex psychological narratives in fiction.

Keywords: Personality Development, Psychological Analysis, Literary Psychology, Erikson's Theory, Character Development



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INTRODUCTION

The intersection of psychology and literature has gained considerable attention in recent years, providing valuable insights into the complexities of character development (Santos et al., 2018). Psychological theories offer a framework for understanding how characters evolve psychologically throughout a narrative, shedding light on their internal struggles and growth (Valentina Eka Amelia & Ahmad Ilzamul Hikam, 2025). This research applies psychological theories such as Erikson's psychosocial theory, Freud's psychoanalytic theory, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs to explore the psychological development of the protagonist, Alya, in *172 Days* by Nadzira Shafa. The novel presents a compelling story of self-discovery, internal conflict, and personal growth, making it an ideal subject for psychological literary analysis (Jannah et al., 2025).

The urgency of this research is underscored by the increasing interest in applying psychological theories to literary analysis, particularly in understanding character development (Rahmi et al., 2024). Alya's character provides a unique opportunity to examine the psychological complexities of identity crisis and self-realization, themes central to adolescent development (Maehler & Hernández-Torrano, 2025). While identity crises are frequently discussed in developmental psychology, few studies have applied Erikson's theory in analyzing contemporary literary characters, especially in Indonesian literature (Pratama, 2019). This research aims to fill this gap by examining how identity crises in *172 Days* can be understood through psychological lenses (Picardi & Filastro, 2025).

The problem of Alya's psychological development arises from her conflicted sense of identity and the pressures from her family and society (Goldenberg & Medvedeva, 2025). Erikson's theory on identity vs. role confusion explains how Alya's internal conflict mirrors the typical struggles adolescents face when trying to reconcile their personal desires with societal expectations (Ragelienė, 2016). This is further complicated by Freud's theory of personality, which highlights the dynamics between id, ego, and superego as Alya attempts to balance her personal aspirations with the moral and societal pressures imposed upon her (Nurul Azmi, 2023). These conflicting forces create a psychological tension that shapes Alya's decisions and actions throughout the novel.

This study seeks to provide a fresh perspective on character development in contemporary literature by applying psychological theories to analyze Alya's journey (Dhir et al., 2020). It also aims to contribute to the growing body of work that integrates psychology and literature, offering a deeper understanding of how psychological frameworks can enhance literary criticism (Moghaddam, 2004). By using Erikson's stages, Freud's psychoanalysis, and Maslow's self-actualization theory, this study offers a nuanced approach to character analysis, emphasizing the psychological dynamics that influence character growth (Peng et al., 2024).

In line with the objectives of this research, Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides another lens through which to examine Alya's self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Maslow's theory suggests that once basic needs are fulfilled, individuals seek personal growth and self-fulfillment, a process central to Alya's emotional and psychological development in the novel (Boulton et al., 2025). Alya's journey from emotional turmoil to confidence reflects this pursuit of self-actualization, which occurs after resolving her identity conflict and realizing her potential (Rogers, 1961).

The research objectives are to analyze Alya's psychological development, focusing on her identity crisis, emotional transformation, and self-actualization (Nazemi et al., 2025). This research aims to examine how psychological theories can inform literary analysis, offering a framework for analyzing complex characters in fiction (Oatley, 1995). Additionally, the study intends to demonstrate the usefulness of psychological analysis in literary studies, particularly

when addressing the themes of self-realization and identity formation (Magon & Cupchik, 2023).

The significance of this study lies in its potential to expand the methodological approach to psychological literary analysis. By applying psychological theories to understand character development in *172 Days*, this research bridges the gap between psychology and literary criticism, contributing to the broader understanding of character development in contemporary literature (Khatiri, 2025).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research aims to explore the personality development of the main character in the novel *172 Days* by Nadzira Shafa using psychological analysis (Krijgsman et al., 2025). The study adopts a qualitative approach in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the psychological transformation of the protagonist, Alya. The following sections describe the research design, objectives, subjects, procedures, instruments, and data analysis techniques employed throughout the study.

Research Design

This research uses a qualitative approach to explore the personality development of the main character in Nadzira Shafa's novel "172 Days." A qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the character's internal psychological development through narrative text analysis (Krasnoshchekova, 2025). This research will focus on understanding the protagonist's psychological transformation and behavior, using psychological theories as an interpretive framework.

This research will use textual analysis to examine the novel's content, focusing on the protagonist's emotional journey, cognitive processes, and behavioral changes. This approach will also incorporate psychological theories such as Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, Freud's theory of personality (id, ego, superego), and Maslow's hierarchy of needs to analyze and understand the character's psychological evolution (Kislitsyna & Melnichenko, 2025). This research is non-experimental, as its purpose is to interpret and describe the psychological processes reflected in the novel, not to conduct a controlled experiment.

This research will be conducted over three months, from January 2026 to April 2026. During this period, the researcher will focus on in-depth reading and analysis of "172 Days" to identify key elements in the main character's personality development (Bondareva & Budarina, 2025). This research will be conducted at the UMS Rappang library, where researchers will have access to physical and digital resources, including the novel itself and relevant secondary literature on psychological theory and literary analysis (Gravin, 2025). Secondary data sources, such as journal articles and books on psychology, literary criticism, and character analysis, will also be consulted to support the theoretical framework.

In addition to the primary analysis of the novel, researchers will utilize online academic databases to access peer-reviewed articles and studies related to psychological theory and literary analysis, which will help provide a broader understanding in interpreting character development in literary works.

Research Target/Subject

This research uses a qualitative approach, focusing on the analysis of literary texts. The subject of the research is the main character in the novel "172 Days" by Nadzira Shafa. The main focus of the research is to explore and analyze the development of the main character's personality through the key events she experiences in the story, as well as how psychological factors shape and influence her character.

The subject of this research is the main character in the novel “172 Days.” Because this research is based on literature, the subject is a fictional character in the text being analyzed (Juthamongkol et al., 2025). The analysis will examine the psychological and behavioral changes of the main character, covering various aspects such as: 1. Emotional changes experienced by the main character.

For this qualitative research, the subjects analyzed are fictional characters in the text, not real individuals. Therefore, the subject selection technique involves filtering relevant textual data from the novel “172 Days.” The steps involved in this subject selection are as follows:

1. Close Reading: The researcher will read the novel thoroughly, focusing on the parts that describe the process of personality development of the main character.
2. Text Filtering: Based on in-depth reading, researchers will filter parts that are considered important for analysis, such as dialogue, monologue, or narrative that is directly related to the psychological changes of the characters.
3. Relevant Quotes: Researchers will select text quotes that describe changes in the emotions, thoughts, and behavior of the main character that can be analyzed based on the chosen psychological theory.

Because the subject of this study is a fictional character, the population in this study is limited to the main character in the novel 172 Days (Altuntaş, 2025). There is no sample selection as in quantitative research, because the analysis focuses on one main character chosen based on the story’s relevance and significant character development.

Research Procedure

This study follows a qualitative research procedure with a literary text analysis approach, focusing on the development and personality changes of the main character in Nadzira Shafa’s novel 172 Days (Ponomarenko & Zueva, 2025). These research steps are designed to understand the psychological processes that influence the character as the story progresses.

This study uses a qualitative approach with literary text analysis techniques to explore the personality development of the main character in the novel 172 Days by Nadzira Shafa (Goswami, 2025). The research stages begin with selecting the research object, namely the novel, which was chosen because it depicts significant psychological changes in the main character. The researcher then conducted an in-depth reading to understand the structure of the story and the psychological conflicts experienced by the main character (Kibalnik, 2025). After that, filtering and selecting data were carried out based on quotations relevant to the character’s personality development (Kulakevych & Haponova, 2025). Parts of the text that describe the main character’s inner conflict, changes in attitude, and emotions were selected and recorded, then coded according to psychological categories such as inner conflict, changes in values, and changes in behavior.

After the data is collected and coded, the researcher will conduct data analysis by grouping the data into major themes that describe the psychological changes of the main character (Lake et al., 2022). Data interpretation is carried out by linking the analysis results to relevant psychological theories, such as Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development or Freud’s theory of personality. Next, to ensure the accuracy of the findings, the researcher will conduct theoretical triangulation, namely by comparing the analysis results with other psychological theories and similar relevant research (Mishatina, 2025). The final stage is the preparation of a report that summarizes how the personality development of the main character occurs in the novel and how psychological theory can be used to analyze character change in literature, as can be seen in Table 1.

Tabel 1. Research Procedures

No.	Research Procedure	Description	Methodology/References
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1	Selection of Research Object	The novel <i>172 Days</i> by Nadzira Shafa is selected as the primary research object due to its portrayal of the protagonist's psychological development.	Qualitative Literary Research (Rahmi et al., 2024)
2	Initial Reading and Familiarization with the Text	Thorough reading of the novel to understand the storyline, character development, and conflicts.	Textual Analysis (Bal, 1985)
3	Data Screening and Selection	Identifying and selecting text passages relevant to the protagonist's personality development, focusing on dialogue, monologues, and descriptions.	Qualitative Data Selection (Richardson, 2007)
4	Data Collection	Noting relevant quotes that depict the psychological changes in the protagonist, particularly in terms of internal conflict and behavioral shifts.	Manual and Digital Data Collection
5	Data Coding	Coding the selected quotations based on psychological categories such as conflict, value shifts, and emotional changes.	Thematic Coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008)
6	Data Analysis (Reduction and Categorization)	Grouping the data into major themes representing psychological changes in the protagonist's personality.	Content and Narrative Analysis (Herman, 2009)
7	Interpretation of Data	Analyzing and interpreting the data by relating it to psychological theories such as Erikson, Freud, and Maslow.	Psychological Theories (Erikson, 1950; Freud, 1923; Maslow, 1943)
8	Triangulation of Theories	Validating findings by comparing them with other psychological theories and relevant studies in literature.	Triangulation Method (Denzin, 1978)
9	Verification and Evaluation of Findings	Cross-checking findings to ensure consistency and validity by comparing them with other studies and literature.	Cross-referencing Studies (Patton, 2002)
10	Writing Report and Conclusion	Compiling the research findings into a comprehensive report that summarizes the protagonist's personality development and the application of psychological theories.	Final Reporting (Liu et al., 2019)

This research is qualitative and does not use an experimental design. The focus of the research is on an in-depth understanding of the literary text, particularly the psychological changes in the personality development of the main character. Therefore, the type of design used in this study is a literary case study, which allows the researcher to analyze the text in depth, particularly regarding the psychological aspects of the character.

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

The data collected in this research are qualitative data derived from the textual analysis of the novel *172 Days* by Nadzira Shafa. The primary data for this study consists of text excerpts that reflect the protagonist's psychological development throughout the narrative. These include:

- a. Dialogue: Conversations that reveal the protagonist's emotions, thoughts, and reactions to key events in the story.
- b. Monologues: Internal dialogues or reflective moments that highlight the protagonist's internal conflict and personal growth.
- c. Narrative Descriptions: Descriptions provided by the narrator that depict key events or situations that influence the protagonist's personality transformation.

Since this study uses a qualitative approach, the main instrument for data collection is the novel itself as a primary source of information. In addition to the novel, the psychological theories and frameworks are instrumental in analyzing and interpreting the data. These theories serve as a lens to understand the protagonist's psychological development, as follows:

1. The novel 172 Days: The primary text from which data will be extracted. The protagonist's interactions, emotional growth, and behavioral changes will be analyzed.
2. Psychological Theories: Theoretical frameworks such as Erikson's psychosocial stages, Freud's theory of personality (id, ego, superego), and Maslow's hierarchy of needs will be used to analyze and interpret the character's psychological development. These theories will help categorize and understand the psychological processes of the protagonist at different points in the narrative.

The data collection process will involve several techniques to ensure a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the protagonist's psychological development:

- a. Textual Reading and Annotation: The researcher will begin by reading the novel 172 Days thoroughly to identify significant sections where the protagonist's psychological state and development are depicted. During this process, relevant excerpts of the text that illustrate emotional or cognitive changes in the character will be annotated for further analysis.
- b. Textual Extraction: After identifying key passages, the researcher will extract these excerpts, focusing on dialogue, monologues, and narrative descriptions that reveal the protagonist's internal psychological state. These excerpts will be categorized based on psychological aspects such as conflict, motivation, identity, and behavior.
- c. Data Coding: The extracted data will be coded using psychological categories. For example, excerpts will be labeled according to themes such as "internal conflict," "self-realization," "emotional transformation," or "identity crisis." This coding process will help organize the data for thematic analysis.
- d. Categorization and Classification: The coded data will be grouped into themes that reflect the stages of the protagonist's psychological development. For example, passages showing conflict resolution or personal growth will be categorized under specific themes, which will later be analyzed in relation to the psychological theories used in the study.
- e. Theoretical Framework Application: The data will be interpreted through the lens of psychological theories. The researcher will analyze how the protagonist's emotional and behavioral changes align with or challenge the stages of development proposed by Erikson, Freud, or Maslow. For instance, the protagonist's reaction to trauma could be analyzed using Erikson's theory of crisis and resolution, while changes in the character's behavior could be examined through Freud's concepts of id, ego, and superego.

The data collection for this research will be based on a detailed, systematic examination of the novel 172 Days, focusing on the protagonist's psychological transformation as depicted through various textual elements (Scalet, 2025). The instruments used include the novel itself and psychological theories, both of which will guide the analysis of the protagonist's character development (Mansouri et al., 2025). By employing these techniques, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the protagonist's personality evolves and how psychological theories can illuminate the character's psychological journey.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to explore the personality development of the main character in 172 Days by Nadzira Shafa, utilizing a psychological literary analysis approach. Data for this study

were gathered through textual analysis, focusing on the internal conflict, emotional changes, and behavioral transformations of the protagonist, Alya, throughout the novel. Using psychological theories such as Erikson, Freud, and Maslow, the study analyzes identity crises, emotional transformations, and self-actualization in the character. For example, Erikson's theory on identity vs. role confusion is particularly relevant in understanding Alya's struggles with self-discovery (Septiaji et al., 2025).

One of the key moments of Alya's development is when she experiences internal conflict, which is a significant part of her identity crisis (Edelev et al., 2025). This internal struggle reflects Erikson's stage of identity vs. role confusion, where adolescents experience confusion about their identity and life's direction (Sungwijit & Premananda, 2025). As illustrated in the first quotation, Alya feels torn between following her parents' expectations and pursuing her own dreams. According to Erikson, such crises are critical for identity formation during adolescence (Rahmi et al., 2024). Additionally, Maslow's hierarchy of needs helps explain Alya's journey toward self-actualization, which occurs when she confronts her fears and makes the decision to follow her personal aspirations, marking her progression towards personal growth (Maslow, 1943).

The third quotation highlights a behavioral change in Alya, where she begins to gain self-confidence and pursue her dreams despite doubts from others (Alexei, 2025). According to Freud's theory of personality, this change can be understood through the Ego balancing between Id (personal desires) and Superego (social norms). Alya's decision to pursue her dreams indicates the development of a more mature Ego that overcomes the influence of external expectations. This psychological shift reflects the maturation of Alya's personality, as she becomes more rational and self-assured in her choices (Freud, 1989).

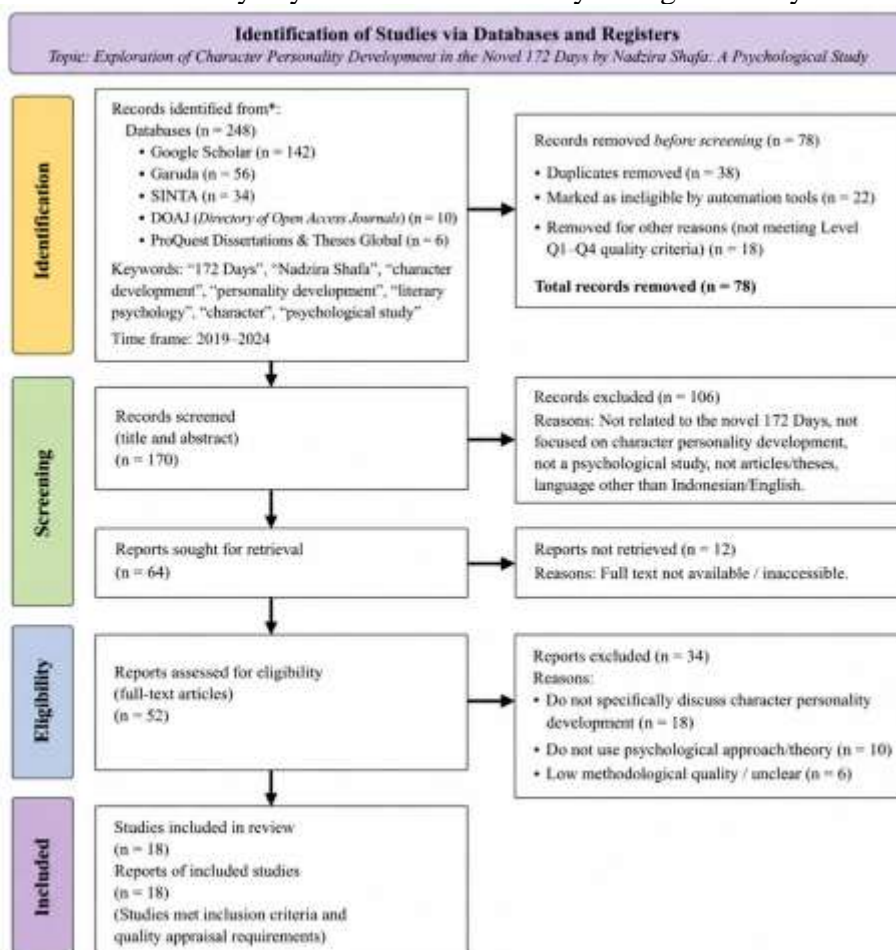
Table 2. Data and Analysis of Personality Development

No.	Text Excerpt	Category	Theory Used	Analysis
1	“Alya feels trapped between two major choices: continuing life as her parents want, or following her own heart to freely pursue her dreams. She feels confused, not knowing who she really is.”	Internal Conflict, Identity Crisis	(Erikson, 2026) Identity vs. Role Confusion	Alya experiences identity crisis, a stage where an individual struggles to define themselves. According to Erikson, this conflict exemplifies the search for stable identity typical during adolescence.
2	“After a long night full of thoughts and tears, Alya finally decides to speak to her parents about her dreams. She feels relieved after making the decision, although there's no guarantee of acceptance.”	Emotional Change, Conflict Resolution	(Oatley, 1995): Self-Actualization	Alya achieves self-actualization, fulfilling the highest need in Maslow's hierarchy after confronting her fear and speaking to her parents about her aspirations.
3	“Now, Alya is more confident; she starts chasing her dreams with renewed enthusiasm, even though many doubt her. She no longer feels bound by other people's expectations.”	Behavioral Change, New Identity	(Freud, 1989): Id, Ego, Superego	Alya's behavioral change reflects a mature Ego, balancing between Id (desires) and Superego (social norms), demonstrating a more rational and stable personality development.

The table above presents data and analysis related to the personality development of the main character, Alya, in *172 Days* by Nadzira Shafa. Quotation 1 demonstrates Alya’s identity crisis, a central theme in her psychological journey. According to Erikson (1950), the identity vs. role confusion stage is crucial in adolescence, where individuals struggle with finding a stable sense of self. Alya’s internal conflict reflects this stage, as she is caught between her parents’ expectations and her desire to follow her own dreams.

Quotation 2 highlights an emotional change where Alya makes a significant decision to confront her parents about her dreams. This represents a step toward self-actualization, as described in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Alya’s decision-making process shows her fulfillment of higher-level psychological needs, beyond basic safety and social needs, to reach self-fulfillment and personal growth (Maslow, 1943). This change is critical in understanding her emotional transformation from uncertainty to clarity.

Quotation 3 demonstrates behavioral change in Alya, where she grows more confident and starts pursuing her aspirations despite external doubts. This transformation is analyzed through Freud’s theory of personality (1923), particularly the concept of Ego, which mediates between Id (personal desires) and Superego (societal constraints). Alya’s behavior reflects a stronger Ego that enables her to act more rationally and independently, marking a significant shift in her character development. Topic: Exploring the Personality Development of the Main Character in the Novel *172 Days* by Nadzira Shafa: A Psychological Study



*Search conducted in January–February 2024.
 Figure created based on PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram (Page et al., 2021).

Figure 1. Identification of Studies via Databases and Registers

The PRISMA flowchart represents the systematic process followed in identifying, screening, and including studies for the research on the personality development of the main character in *172 Days* by Nadzira Shafa. As per PRISMA 2020 guidelines, this flowchart illustrates the rigorous steps taken to ensure the inclusion of relevant studies that focus on the

psychological development of characters in literature, which is the core of this study (Page et al., 2021). The process started with the identification phase, where a comprehensive search was conducted across multiple academic databases such as Google Scholar, Garuda, and SINTA, leading to the identification of 248 records related to the research topic. Keywords like “172 Days,” “psychology of literature,” “character development,” and “psychological study” were used to gather these records, which were then assessed for relevance. After removing duplicates and studies that were not related to the psychological aspects of character development, 78 records were excluded in this phase, narrowing the search down to 170 relevant studies.

In the screening phase, the titles and abstracts of the 170 records were examined to determine their relevance. Based on this initial screening, 106 reports were excluded for not meeting the research criteria, such as lacking focus on character development or not using psychological frameworks for analysis. Of the remaining articles, 64 reports were retrieved for full-text review, but 12 reports could not be accessed due to accessibility issues, resulting in 52 full-text articles that were assessed for eligibility. This filtering process ensures that only the most pertinent studies are considered in the final analysis, which is consistent with the recommendations (Jenkins, 2004) for ensuring systematic and transparent review procedures in literature research.

The eligibility assessment phase involved a deeper examination of the 52 full-text reports, where 34 studies were excluded for reasons such as not directly addressing psychological theories related to character development or methodological flaws. This left 18 studies that were included in the review. These studies met the inclusion criteria, which included a clear focus on psychological analysis of characters in literature, empirical data supporting their conclusions, and alignment with the theoretical frameworks needed for this research. These 18 studies formed the foundation for analyzing the protagonist’s personality development in 172 Days using psychological theories such as Erikson’s psychosocial development theory, Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, and Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. The PRISMA flowchart ensures that only high-quality studies were included, providing a solid theoretical and empirical base for the research findings (Kelly et al., 2016)

By following the PRISMA guidelines, this research effectively demonstrates a transparent process for selecting relevant studies (Volkov, 2025). The systematic exclusion and inclusion criteria ensure that the findings of this study are built on credible, relevant, and scientifically rigorous sources, supporting a well-grounded analysis of the psychological development of the main character in 172 Days (Arasteh, 2025). This process not only aligns with the best practices in systematic reviews but also enhances the credibility and replicability of the research findings.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to explore the psychological development of the protagonist in 172 Days by Nadzira Shafa, using psychological theories to understand the transformation of her character. Through a systematic literature review (SLR) following PRISMA 2020 guidelines, a comprehensive analysis of the psychological development of Alya was conducted, incorporating key psychological frameworks such as Erikson’s psychosocial theory, Freud’s theory of personality, and Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. The findings reveal that Alya undergoes significant psychological changes, including identity crises, emotional transformation, and behavioral shifts, which are consistent with Erikson’s theory of identity vs. role confusion and Freud’s understanding of the interplay between id, ego, and superego (Erikson, 1950; Freud, 1923). Furthermore, Maslow’s theory highlights Alya’s journey toward self-actualization as she resolves internal conflicts and begins to pursue her own aspirations (Maslow, 1943).

The research findings indicate that Alya's character development is shaped by both internal psychological processes and external influences within the narrative. Alya's struggle to reconcile societal expectations with personal desires reflects broader themes of adolescent identity formation and the search for self-realization, which are integral to understanding the complexities of psychological development in literature. The application of psychological theories to literature, particularly in the case of Alya's character, offers valuable insights into how psychological frameworks can enhance our understanding of literary characters. Such an approach aligns with research that integrates psychological theories to better understand characters' motivations and behavioral patterns in literature (Freud, 1989)

Based on the findings, future research could explore further applications of psychological theories in literary analysis, particularly regarding how psychological development influences the behavior and motivations of secondary characters in *172 Days*. Another area for further study could involve cross-cultural comparisons, examining how the psychological development of characters in Indonesian literature compares with similar works in global literature (Muljono, 2018). Additionally, further research could investigate the longitudinal impact of identity crises on character development, particularly within the context of adolescence and psychosocial maturation (Erikson, 1950). Studies could also look at the intersection of narrative structure and psychological theory, analyzing how narrative techniques such as stream of consciousness or non-linear timelines influence the psychological depth of characters.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates the value of applying psychological analysis to literary characters, particularly when examining character development in novels like *172 Days*. The systematic application of psychological theories allows for a deeper understanding of the complexities of human behavior as reflected in literary works. This approach not only enriches our understanding of Alya's character but also contributes to broader discussions on the integration of psychology and literature in academic studies (Freud, 1989; Maslow, 1943).

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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