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The Personality Transformation of Lestari in Tenderlova's *Meant 2 Be*: An Analysis through Allport's Trait Theory

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the personality development of the protagonists in Tenderlova's *Meant 2 Be* by applying Allport's trait theory, which classifies personality into traits, attitudes, and intentions. The research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive design with a library research approach, in which textual evidence from the novel was systematically analyzed and triangulated with relevant scholarly sources to ensure interpretive validity. The findings reveal that Lestari is initially characterized by insecurity, introversion, and sarcasm, yet also demonstrates kindness and empathy, while Adinata displays perseverance, humor, creativity, and affection but struggles with impulsivity. As the narrative progresses, both characters undergo significant transformation: Lestari becomes more open and emotionally resilient, whereas Adinata evolves into a more stable and caring figure. These results affirm Allport's proposition that personality is a dynamic construct shaped by the interaction between individual dispositions and social environments. The discussion highlights how this novel contributes to broader understandings of identity formation in contemporary Indonesian youth literature and demonstrates the analytical value of applying trait-based psychology to popular fiction. The novelty of this study lies in extending Allport's framework to a modern Indonesian novel rarely explored in prior research, thereby bridging literary psychology and cultural studies. The implications suggest that such an approach can enrich literary pedagogy by fostering empathy, critical engagement, and psychological awareness in the study of fiction, while also informing future comparative analyses across diverse literary works.

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Introduction

Literary works represent the intersection of imagination, experience, and cultural context, often serving as a medium through which authors communicate values, ideas, and critiques of human existence. van Kuijk et al., (2018) and Wimmer et al (2021) argue, literature not only reflects the author's worldview but also provides readers with access to diverse perspectives on human behavior, social interaction, and psychological complexity. Within this framework, novels emerge as particularly rich forms of narrative fiction that combine aesthetic construction with thematic depth, enabling readers to encounter characters whose development symbolizes broader existential, cultural, and psychological realities. The study of literary characters, therefore, extends beyond textual analysis and enters the interdisciplinary terrain of psychology and

sociology, offering insights into how human personality is represented and transformed within fictional worlds.

The analysis of personality in literary characters has been a consistent concern in literary psychology, which applies psychological theories to deepen the understanding of fictional constructions. As noted by Sujanto, (2009), Ja'far (2016), and Karim (2020), personality psychology emphasizes the enduring traits, behaviors, and motivations that define individuals' actions and social relations. Gordon Allport's trait theory, in particular, has been recognized for its systematic classification of personality into traits, attitudes, and intentions, thereby providing a structured approach to character analysis (Ismanto Ismanto, 2024; Sujanto, 2021). The applicability of Allport's framework to literature enables researchers to identify how characters' traits manifest through narrative evidence, how attitudes reflect subjective evaluations, and how intentions indicate future-oriented aspirations. Such theoretical grounding ensures that literary analysis is not confined to subjective impression but is anchored in psychological constructs that are replicable and interpretable across texts.

Previous studies have employed psychological approaches to examine Indonesian novels, highlighting the richness of local narratives in exploring character development. For example, (Vianinsia & Pusposari, 2023; Warnita et al., 2021) demonstrated how Allport's and Freud's frameworks could reveal the dynamic interplay of traits and conflicts within protagonists in works such as *Anak Rantau*, *Malik dan Elsa*, and *Tempat Paling Sunyi*. Similarly, (Ahmadi et al., 2023), (Novikova, 2013) and (Vianinsia & Pusposari, 2023) applied psychological perspectives to female characters, identifying the ways in which social contexts, identity struggles, and relational tensions shape character construction. Collectively, these studies underscore the relevance of psychological theories for interpreting Indonesian literature, while also affirming the potential of literary texts to contribute to broader discussions of personality, identity, and adaptation.

Despite this scholarly attention, there remains a lack of studies applying Allport's trait theory to contemporary popular novels that resonate strongly with young adult audiences. Much of the existing research has focused either on canonical or thematically "serious" works, often leaving out novels that represent modern, colloquial, and youth-centered narratives (Mar, 2018; Mumper & Gerrig, 2019; Walkington et al., 2020) . Novikova (2013) argue, popular literature deserves equal critical attention because it not only reflects evolving cultural values but also shapes readers' perceptions of identity, emotion, and social interaction. Tenderlova's *Meant 2 Be* exemplifies this type of text, embedding psychological and emotional struggles in a love story that mirrors the uncertainties and aspirations of contemporary Indonesian youth. The character of Lestari, in particular, offers a compelling case of personality transformation: initially insecure, introverted, and sarcastic, she undergoes gradual change through her interactions with Adinata, which highlights how relational dynamics function as catalysts for personality development.

The present study fills a critical gap in literary scholarship by systematically applying Allport's trait theory to analyze the character of Lestari in Tenderlova's *Meant 2 Be*. Unlike previous studies that have primarily examined personality using Freudian psychoanalysis, Adlerian perspectives, or behaviorist frameworks, this research employs a trait-based approach that enables a more structured categorization of personality attributes. Moreover, whereas earlier works have often concentrated on male protagonists or canonical literary texts, this study addresses a contemporary female character in a widely read youth novel, thus broadening the

scope of literary psychology in Indonesia. Therefore, the purpose of this research is twofold: first, to analyze the application of Allport's trait theory in describing Lestari's personality traits, attitudes, and intentions; and second, to examine the trajectory of her personality change as influenced by environmental and relational contexts within the narrative. In doing so, this study contributes to both literary studies and psychology by demonstrating how personality development in popular fiction reflects broader cultural discourses on identity, adaptation, and emotional resilience.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design with a library research approach, which is particularly appropriate for examining literary texts that require contextual and interpretive analysis rather than numerical measurement. As emphasized by Cresswell (2014) and Lim, (2025) qualitative descriptive research allows the researcher to explore meanings, patterns, and symbolic structures embedded within texts by engaging deeply with language, narrative, and character construction. The primary data source of this research was Tenderlova's novel *Meant 2 Be*, while secondary data were drawn from books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and other relevant scholarly works addressing personality psychology and literary analysis. Data collection was carried out through careful reading and systematic note-taking of textual evidence in the novel, particularly dialogues, narrative descriptions, and character interactions that reflect the traits, attitudes, and intentions of the protagonists.

The analytical procedure followed Hanyu et al (2007) qualitative framework of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. First, the textual data were condensed by selecting passages that illustrate the psychological dimensions of the characters. Second, the data were organized into thematic displays aligned with Allport's personality theory traits, attitudes, and intentions. Third, conclusions were drawn through interpretive analysis that linked textual findings with theoretical constructs, ensuring that character attributes were not merely described but critically interpreted within a psychological framework. To strengthen the credibility and dependability of the study, triangulation was conducted by cross-referencing interpretations with prior studies in literary psychology (Bans-Akutey & Tiimub, 2021).Researcher reflexivity was also maintained to minimize bias by acknowledging interpretive subjectivity as an inherent aspect of qualitative inquiry (Cresswell, 2014) .

Through this methodological design, the study ensured that the analysis was systematic, rigorous, and replicable, thereby providing valid insights into the personality construction of Lestari and Adinata in *Meant 2 Be*. The use of a qualitative descriptive library research method not only allowed for an in-depth interpretation of the characters' psychological development but also provided a solid foundation for theoretical discussion that connects Indonesian literary works with global perspectives on personality studies.

Results and Discussion

Personality Traits of Lestari

The analysis of Lestari's character reveals a complex interplay of insecurity, introversion, sarcasm, and compassion. Table 1 presents selected excerpts that illustrate her personality traits. Lestari is described as insecure and withdrawn, often avoiding mirrors and social gatherings,

which signifies low self-esteem and social inhibition. At the same time, she demonstrates kindness, particularly in her concern for others' wellbeing, as reflected in her compassion toward a driver in a rainstorm. This combination of sarcasm and empathy illustrates the multidimensionality of her personality, consistent with Allport's proposition that traits are enduring yet situationally expressed.

Table 1. Personality Traits of Lestari

No	Evidence	Trait
1	"Every time Lestari looked in the mirror, insecurities overwhelmed her, which is why she owned no mirror at home." (*Meant 2 Be*, p. 49)	Insecure, withdrawn
2	"Even with her best friend, she remained closed off and rarely shared her problems." (*Meant 2 Be*, p. 59)	Introverted, secretive
3	"She responded sharply and sarcastically when teased by Adinata." (*Meant 2 Be*, p. 19)	Sarcastic, irritable
4	"She avoided letting the driver get soaked in the rain, showing empathy." (*Meant 2 Be*, p. 28)	Kind-hearted, compassionate

Personality Traits of Adinata

Adinata, in contrast, is portrayed as optimistic, creative, and affectionate, though occasionally reckless. As shown in Table 2, his perseverance in pursuing Lestari's affection demonstrates determination, while his humor and playfulness reinforce his extroverted nature. However, he is also characterized as impulsive in decision-making, particularly in emotional situations. Such traits align with adolescence as a developmental stage where impulsivity and experimentation coexist with creativity and resilience.

Table 2. Personality Traits of Adinata

No	Evidence	Trait
1	"He always took one step ahead when Lestari hesitated." (*Meant 2 Be*, p. 94)	Determined, perseverant
2	"He acted rashly in approaching Lestari, reflecting impulsiveness." (*Meant 2 Be*, p. 92)	Impulsive
3	"He often joked to lighten the atmosphere with Lestari." (*Meant 2 Be*, p. 20)	Humorous, playful
4	"He actively created sales ideas during organizational fundraisers." (*Meant 2 Be*, p. 210)	Creative
5	"He tenderly touched Lestari's face with affection." (*Meant 2 Be*, p. 251)	Romantic, caring

Attitudes of Lestari and Dinata

Beyond traits, the protagonists' attitudes reveal how they perceive and interact with their environment. Lestari often expressed sarcasm toward Adinata but also demonstrated openness in acknowledging her emotional struggles, suggesting a gradual shift toward self-acceptance. Meanwhile, Adinata showed consistent responsibility as a leader and protective concern for Lestari, reinforcing his caring persona.

Table 3. Attitudes of The Protagonis

Character	Evidence	Attitude
Lestari	"She sarcastically responded to Adinata's jokes." (*Meant 2 Be*, p. 20)	Sarcastic
Lestari	"She accepted her emotional scars after reading Adinata's writings." (*Meant 2 Be*, p. IV)	Self-acceptance
Lestari	"She worried about how Adinata coped with his struggles." (*Meant 2 Be*, p. V)	Caring
Adinata	"He gave Lestari a hair clip as a thoughtful gift." (*Meant 2 Be*, p. 23)	Attentive
Adinata	"He mediated conflicts within his organization." (*Meant 2 Be*, p. 5)	Responsible
Adinata	"He worried about online bullying directed at Lestari." (*Meant 2 Be*, p. 208)	Protective

Intentions of Lestari and Adinata

Intentions highlight the characters' forward-looking motivations. Lestari initially desired closeness with Adinata but hesitated when that desire became reality, reflecting her ambivalence. Conversely, Adinata displayed strong intentions to maintain the relationship and provide emotional stability. These findings reinforce Allport's (1961) assertion that intentions shape not only present behavior but also long-term character development.

Table 4. Intentions of the Protagonists

Character	Evidence	Intention
Lestari	"She recalled motivational words to control her desire for Adinata." (*Meant 2 Be*, p. 1)	Restraining desire
Lestari	"She wished to be loved but feared emotional pain." (*Meant 2 Be*, p. 40)	Ambivalent longing
Adinata	"He asked Lestari never to give up on their relationship." (*Meant 2 Be*, p. 252)	Commitment
Adinata	"He expressed a desire to always love Lestari deeply." (*Meant 2 Be*, p. 273)	Enduring affection

Personality Development Across the Narrative

The trajectory of both characters shows a positive evolution. Lestari, initially insecure and emotionally fragile, becomes more open, resilient, and emotionally fulfilled through her relationship with Adinata. Adinata, once impulsive and melancholic, matures into a more stable and affectionate figure, demonstrating emotional recovery and greater social responsibility. Their growth underscores Allport's notion that personality is not static but evolves through interactions with relational and environmental factors.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the personalities of Lestari and Adinata in Tenderlova's *Meant 2 Be* evolve dynamically through traits, attitudes, and intentions that respond to their relational and social environments. This result aligns with Mashuri (2014) analysis of *Negeri 5*

Menara, which emphasized how character education values are reflected through the protagonists' perseverance, discipline, and optimism in pursuing their dreams. Similar to the character development portrayed in Fuadi's novel, Lestari's journey illustrates how challenges and supportive environments contribute to the strengthening of personal resilience and adaptive growth, reinforcing the principle that personality development is deeply intertwined with character formation and contextual influences. Margianti et al (2021), who examined *Malik dan Elsa*, also highlighted the coexistence of multiple psychological dimensions id, ego, and superego within characters. The present study extends this argument by showing how multidimensional traits, such as sarcasm and compassion, can coexist within one character, illustrating complexity beyond binary categorizations.

Further comparison can be made with Firismanda & Maghfiro (2024) study of *Tempat Paling Sunyi*, which identified six internal conflicts rooted in Adlerian psychology. While their study emphasized conflict resolution, the current research underscores relational transformation, showing that personality growth may emerge less from intrapersonal struggle than from interpersonal interactions. Likewise, Anggraini et al., (2024), who analyzed the protagonist in *Hati Suhita*, demonstrated that behaviorist approaches could explain the shaping of characters through reinforcement and external stimuli. In contrast, this study adopts a trait-based framework that foregrounds enduring qualities while acknowledging situational influences, offering a more balanced account of consistency and change. Moreover, (Vianinsia & Pusposari, 2023), in their analysis of *Minoel*, revealed that characters embody cultural identity and resilience in facing adversity. Parallel to their findings, Lestari's development shows how cultural expectations of femininity, resilience, and emotional negotiation are represented in contemporary youth literature.

The novelty of this research lies in its systematic application of Allport's trait theory to a contemporary Indonesian popular novel that resonates with young adult readers. Whereas much prior scholarship has relied on psychoanalysis, behaviorism, or humanistic psychology to analyze canonical works, this study demonstrates the explanatory power of trait theory in uncovering the layered personalities of characters in popular fiction. By focusing on Lestari's ambivalence and Adinata's impulsivity alongside their gradual transformation, the research contributes to literary psychology by highlighting how popular literature can embody psychological depth equal to more established texts. This novelty not only enriches the methodological diversity of literary analysis but also broadens the scope of Indonesian literary studies to include youth-centered narratives that are often dismissed as merely commercial or superficial.

The implications of this study are both theoretical and pedagogical. Theoretically, it reinforces Allport's proposition that personality is neither static nor deterministic but evolves through ongoing interaction between individual dispositions and social contexts. Pedagogically, the study suggests that integrating personality psychology into literature teaching can encourage students to engage with texts more critically, appreciating not only aesthetic qualities but also psychological depth. By analyzing characters through trait theory, students may cultivate empathy, critical reasoning, and cultural awareness skills essential in twenty-first century education. Additionally, the research offers implications for cultural studies, illustrating how Indonesian popular fiction reflects broader discourses of identity, adaptation, and emotional resilience among contemporary youth.

Nevertheless, this study has certain limitations that warrant acknowledgment. The analysis is confined to a single novel, which restricts the generalizability of its conclusions to a broader corpus of Indonesian or international literature. The reliance on library research without field validation also limits the empirical dimension of the findings, making them dependent on interpretive subjectivity. Furthermore, while Allport's framework provides a useful categorization of traits, attitudes, and intentions, it may oversimplify the complexity of character construction when compared with integrative or mixed theoretical approaches. Future research could address these limitations by employing comparative analysis across multiple novels, incorporating mixed methods such as reader reception studies, or combining trait theory with other psychological models to provide a more comprehensive perspective.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the personalities of Lestari and Adinata in Tenderlova's *Meant 2 Be* are constructed and transformed through traits, attitudes, and intentions that reflect the dynamic interaction between individual dispositions and relational contexts. Lestari, who initially embodies insecurity, introversion, and sarcasm, gradually develops into a more open and resilient character through her relationship with Adinata, while Adinata, originally impulsive and emotionally fragile, matures into a caring, creative, and affectionate figure. These findings reinforce Allport's theoretical proposition that personality is not static but evolves through continuous engagement with social and emotional environments. The novelty of this study lies in applying trait theory to a contemporary Indonesian popular novel, demonstrating that even youth-oriented fiction can contain profound psychological dimensions often overlooked in literary scholarship. Theoretically, this research expands the scope of literary psychology by validating the use of trait-based analysis for modern narratives, while practically, it offers pedagogical implications for integrating personality psychology into literature teaching to foster empathy, critical reflection, and cultural awareness among students. However, the findings remain limited by their focus on a single novel and the interpretive nature of textual analysis, suggesting the need for future studies to employ comparative or mixed-method approaches across broader literary corpora to enhance generalizability and depth of insight.

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