

Feelings of Inferiority in Adolescents and Implications for Guidance and Counseling Services: A Literature Review

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Article Information	Abstract
Keywords Inferiority Feelings; Self-Esteem; Adolescents; Students; Guidance and Counseling.	Objective: The study was conducted by the author to investigate inferiority feelings in adolescents and their implications for guidance and counseling. Method: In this research, the author employed a literature review method using various written sources such as books, articles, journals, and documents relevant to the study. Results: The findings indicate that inferiority feelings among adolescents in Indonesia are still relatively high. Inferiority feelings significantly influence individual personality development. Although inferiority feelings can motivate behavior towards superiority, they often lead to maladaptive behavior. Therefore, it is crucial to address these feelings promptly to prevent disruption in adolescent development. Conclusion: Inferiority feelings are a sense of inadequacy or low self-esteem present in every individual, and they are relatively more common during adolescence. Many factors contribute to the emergence of inferiority feelings. Consequently, it is essential to provide treatment through guidance and counseling services. Guidance and counseling serve as educational tools that help shape students' orientation away from the negative ideas instilled by their environment. School counselors are required to assist students in achieving ideal development. Implications: This research is expected to provide information about the dynamics of inferiority feelings in adolescents and serve as a basis for further studies and development.
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Growth and development during adolescence are not always managed effectively. During this period, adolescents face numerous problems due to the complexity of the issues they encounter, which present many challenges and obstacles. When adolescents are in situations where they must relate to others, they tend to evaluate themselves and compare themselves to their peers. Adolescents with negative self-concepts are likely to develop negative attitudes about themselves, such as feelings of inadequacy, doubt, low self-confidence, and inferiority feelings (Suminar, 2015).

Inferiority feelings are a sense of inadequacy or low self-esteem present in every individual because, fundamentally, humans are created or born in a state of weakness and helplessness (Adler, 1927). Jalaludin in (Nourmalita, 2015) argues that inferiority feelings are a form of negative feelings towards oneself. On the other hand, (Nopiyanti et al., 2021) explain that inferiority feelings arise from feelings of worthlessness or inability in daily life.

The phenomenon of inferiority feelings among adolescents is increasingly concerning. Adolescence is a critical period burdened with feelings of inferiority. Inferiority feelings are a sense of inadequacy or low self-esteem present in every individual because humans are fundamentally created or born in a state of weakness and helplessness. Inferiority feelings arise from feelings of worthlessness or inadequacy in daily life (Nopiyanti et al., 2021). Inferiority feelings are a normal condition in all individuals, serving as a source of human effort and a force determining behavior (Yusuf, 2016). Inferiority feelings are the source of all human strength to motivate behavior. All individuals process, grow, and develop as a result of efforts to compensate for their inferiority feelings. In essence, inferiority feelings are a motivation for behavior (processing, growing, and developing) towards feelings of superiority (Adler, 1989).

Despite their role in individual development and their potential to motivate, inferiority feelings can often become maladaptive due to negative early life experiences, such as being born with certain defects or experiencing neglect, abuse, and/or poor parenting and dysfunctional family dynamics (Vaughan, 1927). While there is potential to develop motivation to achieve extraordinary success in overcoming these



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feelings, individuals with high levels of inferiority feelings experience dissatisfaction in their lives, including in their work, friendships, and love (Tümlü & Şimşek, 2021). Consequently, heightened inferiority feelings increase the likelihood of suffering from depression, poor interpersonal relationships, and low life satisfaction. Inferiority feelings prompt individuals to improve their behavior, acting as a driving force and motivation to achieve success and perfection. However, excessive inferiority feelings lead to a neurotic, rigid lifestyle characterized by an inability to adapt and find new ways of reacting to their environment (Kartika, 2016).

Inferiority feelings significantly impact individual development, particularly in personality formation. Tripathy (2018) explains that feelings of inadequacy and inferiority can become dimensions of personality at every stage of individual development. In line with this, Wil & Othman (2021) explain that personality formation factors stem from upbringing and family groups; extreme inferiority feelings and lack of social interest have been causes of adolescent involvement in criminal cases. Inferiority feelings are a type of psychological barrier typically occurring during puberty, with complex reasons and negative, dangerous effects (Lin & Kung, 2002). Correspondingly, Feldman in Marta et al., (2018) explains that if adolescents fail to navigate this period, they may feel overwhelmed by inferiority feelings, negatively affecting subsequent periods.

Individuals with high levels of inferiority feelings are more likely to experience dissatisfaction in their lives, including in work, friendships, and love. Inferiority feelings are perceived and evaluated negatively by others and oneself, making adolescents more vulnerable to poor psychological conditions and emotional threats when facing life events that can be detrimental. Some studies also mention that inferiority feelings are key predictors and strong influences on insecurity, negative social comparisons, inability, loneliness, aggression, shyness, hesitation, pessimism, depression, hostility, emotional tendencies, and usually weak interpersonal relationship management, leading to social withdrawal (Akdoğan, 2017; Appel et al., 2015; Hirao, 2014; Musawwir et al., 2021; Noviekayati et al., 2021). Adler further emphasizes that high levels of inferiority feelings, accompanied by distrust in others, make individuals reluctant to believe that others can love and respect them; individuals with strong inferiority feelings tend to view others as competitors. Inferiority feelings affect emotions, relationship engagement, individual success, and correlate with life and future outcomes (Tümlü & Şimşek, 2021).

Analyzing inferiority feelings reveals they fall under emotional health and distrust; thus, students experiencing such feelings should receive assistance from counselors. Quality school guidance and counseling services can help meet students' mental health needs (Arfasa & Weldmeskel, 2020). Adolescents often experience alienation, a syndrome comprising distrust, anxiety, pessimism, egocentrism, meaninglessness, normlessness, and helplessness. Therefore, guidance and counseling are needed during adolescence to help them understand their developmental stage and adapt to school and life (Anyi, 2017).

Based on these findings, this study presents a literature review on inferiority feelings in adolescents and their implications for guidance and counseling. The results of this study are expected to provide information and references for further research and assist teachers, especially guidance and counseling teachers, in understanding and helping their students towards ideal development.

METODE

Research Design

The research design employed in this study is the literature review method. Creswell, as cited in Habsy (2017), states that a literature review is a written summary of articles from journals, books, and other documents that describe theory and information from both past and present, organizing the literature into topics and required documents.

Materials and Equipment

Literature for the study can be sourced from various resources. The sources used include a range of books, articles, journals, both domestic and international, as well as relevant documents.

Research Procedure

The research procedure involves the following stages: 1) Data Collection, This involves searching, reading, and comprehending various sources used to identify inferiority feelings in adolescents; 2) Data Processing,

The collected data from these sources are gathered and processed by re-examining the data, especially in terms of completeness, clarity of meaning, and consistency of meaning among sources; 3) Once the data is complete, the next stage can be carried out; 4) Data Analysis: The collected data are analyzed by describing the facts followed by analysis, not merely explaining but also providing sufficient understanding and explanation. 5) Conclusion Drawing, This stage involves drawing conclusions based on the analyzed data.

Data Analysis Technique

The data utilized originate from books, journals, scientific articles, and relevant documents that contain the concepts under investigation. According to Darmadi, as cited in Kartiningrum (2015), a literature review begins with research materials that are sequentially considered from the most relevant, relevant, to sufficiently relevant. Additionally, it involves reviewing research years, starting from the most recent and gradually moving to earlier years. Abstracts of each research are read first to assess whether the issues discussed align with the problems to be solved in the study. Important and relevant parts to the research problems are noted. To avoid plagiarism, the sources of information are recorded and listed in the bibliography.

RESULT

Inferiority feelings is a theory proposed by Alfred Adler, a scientist and founder of individual psychology. This theory originated from the concept of the inferiority organ, which refers to the imperfections or deficiencies in specific organs or body parts, either congenital or due to developmental anomalies. These inferior organs require compensation through exercises to strengthen them. Inferiority feelings are feelings of inadequacy or low self-esteem inherent in every individual, as humans are fundamentally created or born in a state of weakness and helplessness (Adler, 1927). Inferiority feelings are one of the main concepts used by Adler in his efforts to conceptualize the dynamics of human behavior. Lin & Kung (2002) explain several factors causing adolescents to experience inferiority feelings, including:

- a. Parental Attitude: Opinions and social evaluations regarding the behavior and weaknesses of adolescents under six years of age significantly shape their attitudes later in life. When adolescents are socially labeled, this persists into adulthood, leading to feelings of low self-esteem and lack of confidence, especially in social interactions, as their self-concept has been shaped by their parents.
- b. Physical Defects: Conditions such as limping, disproportional facial features, speech or vision impairments trigger emotional reactions linked to previous unpleasant experiences.
- c. Mental Limitations: Inferiority feelings commonly arise when comparing oneself to others with higher achievements. Adolescents expected to perform perfectly in competitions may struggle to understand the rules of the contest.
- d. Social Disadvantage: This often stems from family status, race, gender, or social standing. Adolescents may develop inferiority feelings when they feel hurt by comparisons to others.

Lyu (2022) elaborates on the factors contributing to inferiority feelings in adolescents. The first factor is family background, detailed as follows:

- a. Family Structure and Parenting Patterns: Since family and relatives are often the primary communities adolescents interact with, inferiority frequently originates from the family. Different family structures result in varying levels of inferiority. Influencing factors include remarried families, families with low educational backgrounds, stepfamilies, and living with extended family members. Children from divorced and remarried families or stepfamilies are generally more problematic compared to those from intact families.
- b. Child-Rearing Practices: American psychologists have distinguished two aspects of child-rearing—innate and adaptive. Parenting styles are categorized into authoritative, autocratic, indulgent, and neglectful. Neglectful parents often fail to meet their children's needs beyond basic physiological ones, leading to difficulties in environmental adaptation and self-discipline, fostering habits or characteristics that result in inferiority.

The second factor is economic background. Community and learning environments also contribute to inferiority, primarily due to interpersonal relationships. Economic status influences the current vague

hierarchy, impacting individuals, particularly those from low-income families, who are less able to experience or develop their potential due to financial constraints.

The third factor is individual characteristics, including:

- a. **Personality and Inherent Traits:** Inferiority is often linked to inherent personality traits, influenced by family and relatives, including social skills, appearance, physical strength, and learning abilities. The Big Five personality traits—extroversion, neuroticism, and openness—are closely related to inferiority. Studies Carlson & Wang (2007) indicate a positive relationship between extroversion and openness with inferiority, while neuroticism is negatively related.
- b. **Gender Differences:** Social media conveys numerous messages about body shape and facial appearance, affecting females more significantly during early adolescence (Brewis & Bruening, 2018). Adolescents, still finding their place in the community, are easily influenced by media. As they enter puberty, physical and gender characteristics develop rapidly, with females often feeling discomfort and inferiority during this period.
- c. **Socialization and Self-Control:** Two main factors impacting the emergence of emotions, including inferiority in adolescents, are socialization and self-control. As individuals age, they must learn to adapt to society, with strategies for accommodating adolescent emotions becoming more refined.

Fleming & Courtney (1984) detail inferiority feelings using the Feeling of Inadequacy Scale, indicating inferiority in five aspects:

- a. **Social Confidence:** Feelings of uncertainty, unreliability, and lack of confidence in social situations, influenced by age and experience.
- b. **School Abilities:** Feelings of inability or helplessness regarding academic tasks.
- c. **Self-Regard:** Low self-respect or lack of consideration for personal interests and needs.
- d. **Physical Appearance:** Individuals with inferiority feelings are highly conscious of their appearance, often compensating for these feelings by focusing on physical appearance.
- e. **Physical Abilities:** Feelings of physical weakness and lack of potential compared to peers.

Inferiority Feelings in Adolescents and Their Implications for Guidance and Counseling

One of the phases in an individual's life span is adolescence. This phase is an important life segment in the individual development cycle and is a transition period that can be directed towards the development of a healthy adulthood (Jannah, 2017). Hurlock in (Hidayati & Farid, 2016) divides the adolescent phase into early adolescence with ages between 13-17 years and late adolescence between 17-18 years. Which if in Indonesia, these ages are included in the age of junior high school (SMP) and senior high school (SMA) students. In the world of education, it is not uncommon for students to experience feelings of inferiority during the teaching and learning process, namely: not participating in questions and answers, being alone, quiet and showing a sense of not wanting to get along (Ahmad & Karunia, 2017).

Students who have feelings of low self-esteem caused by beliefs, thoughts and also negative perceptions of individuals who then experience failure in creating a healthy personality and in optimizing intelligence and self-adjustment to their environment. Feelings of inferiority are one of the indicators of the causes of loneliness experienced by secondary and university students. The impact of inferiority can make a student doubt his or her abilities and avoid social interaction (Musawwir et al., 2021).

In addition to the factors that cause inferiority feelings or feelings of inferiority that have been described previously, Smith (2016) explains that the causes of students' feelings of inferiority are grouped into 5, namely: 1) physical; 2) social; 3) ability; 4) economic; 5) shame. The social environment is also important to consider which is one of the factors. Feelings of low self-esteem, as feelings can result from negative social comparisons (Appel et al., 2015). Individuals realize from a young age their own shortcomings and dependence on others (Barton-bellnessa et al., 2019). This recognition leads to the need to "strive" for superiority," where individuals create ambitions for themselves that when unfulfilled may give rise to feelings of inferiority (Abramson & Abramson, 2018).

Research conducted by Marta et al., (2018) shows about individual inferiority conditions accurately. The results showed that feelings of inferiority in Islamic junior high school students were in the moderate category with a presentation of 50%. Then conducted research on 56 adolescents aged 13-18 years. The contribution of inferiority feelings to aggressiveness is 17.7% and the remaining 82.3% is influenced by other factors not revealed in this study. The results showed that there is a positive relationship between

inferiority feelings and aggressiveness in delinquent adolescents. This means that adolescents who have high inferiority feelings have high aggressiveness as well.

The results of research conducted Noviekayati et al., (Noviekayati et al., 2021) explain the impact of feelings of inferiority or low self-esteem on adolescents in orphanages, namely apathy, withdrawal, hopelessness, fear and anxiety. The next impact experienced by adolescents is difficulty in establishing social relationships with others. In his journal Wil & Othman (2021) shows statistical data from the 2017 National Health and Mobility Survey (NHMS) that adolescents aged 13 to 17 years are estimated to suffer from depression, 39.7% suffer from anxiety and 9.67% face stress. Individuals who feel low or negative will feel reluctant to socialize in their environment because the individual evaluates himself as someone who is worthless, tends to hold back on the surrounding environment.

Hurlock explains that adolescents who have low self-esteem will easily experience loneliness, because they always compare themselves with other people who seem smarter, more charming and more attractive. Adolescents feel they have many shortcomings and conclude that they are worthless or unlovable. Adolescents who have feelings of inferiority tend to be hesitant and find it difficult to open up to start a friendly relationship. Feelings of low self-esteem in individuals can interfere with their development (Sari & Hidayati, 2015). Therefore, it is important to provide treatment through guidance and counseling services. Guidance and counseling as an educational tool that contributes to shaping students' orientation from negative ideas instilled by their environment (Marta et al., 2018). It is necessary for schools to have counselors to assist students in shaping their future through counseling therapy. School counselors are required to help students towards ideal development. School counselors are seen as role models and are highly respected by students. Counselors are expected to befriend students, listen to students complain and provide guidance to students in an effort to shape the child the right part to take in their life pursuits (Anyi, 2017).

Lyu (2022) mentions the solution for students to overcome the sense of inferiority, namely services or therapies that can be used for counseling. The first is rational emotion therapy, rational emotion therapy (REBT) is a well-known therapy with applications in the treatment of mental health problems. This therapy uses various techniques to encourage the use of cognitive mediation strategies to guide individual behavior. The essence of the therapy is to address the underlying causes of emotional disturbance, rather than the event itself. False perceptions lead to irrational thinking as they are antiempirical, illogical, and self-defeating, which ultimately triggers emotional disturbance. With a large number of results from Gonzalez et al., (2004) metaanalysis, the results represent a high relevance force with the influence of study characteristics on the effectiveness of REBT treatment for children and adolescents.

The second, Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). Cognitive therapy techniques include self-monitoring of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and cognitive restructuring (Sauter et al., 2009). It supports adolescents struggling with low self-esteem to conquer negative thought patterns, low self-worth, and high self-image. The third is group counseling. Counseling aims to create a good relationship between group members, and encourages patients to discover their perspectives to see themselves appropriately and increase the ability to make changes. The effectiveness of group counseling depends on the interaction between the counselor and the group, and the counselor's way, concept, and effectiveness in leading the group are all closely related to the counselor's personality and behavioral characteristics (Lyu, 2022).

The fourth, Adlerian Play Therapy. Adlerian Play Therapy (AdPT) as an individual psychology therapeutic intervention for children treats inferiority at its essence. AdPT combines directive and nondirective play techniques to help children and adolescents to gain a deeper understanding of how they perceive themselves, others, and the world, and facilitates the rehearsal of their changing perceptions (Akay & Bratton, 2017). Therapists use Adlerian therapy to treat children while changing parenting behaviors, preventing mental illness from poor parenting. Early support for Ashby et al. AdPT can have a positive impact on adolescents coming from parent and teacher accounts. Despite the fact that the child's self-report evaluation did not show improvement in the target behavior as a result of AdPT, parents' and teachers' comments suggest that practitioners should consider using AdPT with children who have negative mental disorders similar to inferiority.

In addition, there are several guidance and counseling service techniques that have proven effective in reducing inferiority feelings or feelings of inferiority in students. Such as research conducted by in his

research using reframing strategies to reduce feelings of inferiority in students of class VII-H SMPN 1 Jogorogo Ngawi. The results of his research show that reframing strategy counseling can reduce students' low self-esteem. So it can be concluded that there is a decrease in students' low self-esteem scores after being given treatment using reframing strategies. Then Rahima et al., (2015) which examines the application of Adlerian group counseling to reduce the low self-esteem of obese students. The results showed that there was a significant difference between the condition of low self-esteem of obese students before and after being given Adlerian group counseling. The decline occurred after the research subjects participated in 16 times of Adlerian group counseling activities, this means that they managed to overcome low self-esteem with the help of changing perceptions and appreciation of the condition of obesity.

Furthermore Ahmad & Kurnia (2017) in his research used biblio-educational techniques to reduce low self-esteem in class XI students at SMAN 8 Mataram. The results showed that the effect of biblio education on students' low self-esteem was significant. in his research using the application of rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) to overcome the low self-esteem of female santri at SMP Darul Amin Sampit. The results showed that individual counseling with the application of REBT can be used to overcome students' low self-esteem. in his research, he provided group counseling implementation services using sociodrama techniques to reduce low self-esteem in victims of bullying in class VII-C SMPN 33 Surabaya. The results of the study are recommended to counselors / counseling teachers to use group counseling services with sociodrama techniques to reduce low self-esteem in students who are victims of bullying because it provides several important benefits for students including, students are more positive, know better how to solve problems without hurting others, and are much more enthusiastic.

CONCLUSIONS

Generally, every individual must have felt feelings of inferiority. Feelings of inferiority are basically not a sign of weakness. The feeling of inferiority can act as a strength to motivate behavior. However, inferiority feelings that cannot be controlled will lead to negative behavior for the perpetrator. Inferiority is a type of negative emotion that can be a derivative of low self-esteem, inaccurate self-worth, and other severe mental disorders. It is relatively more common during the adolescent stage. Many domestic and foreign studies have been conducted and most of the findings are that the level of inferiority feelings in adolescents is high. The high level of inferiority feelings is quite important to get correction or help considering that adolescents still have a long life and also for the good of their future.

Many causes contribute to feelings of inferiority, including physical defects, spiritual defects, wrong education, parental structure, upbringing and attitudes, mental limitations, social deficiencies, economic background, personality and individual characteristics, including the social environment. This is likely to have an impact on adolescent behavior and make adolescents display behaviors that show their shortcomings. Adolescents will show self-confidence, inability, anxiety, pessimism, egocentrism, meaninglessness, normlessness, and helplessness. If this happens, the adolescent will choose to withdraw from the surrounding environment or behave aggressively to compensate for feelings of inferiority.

Since most adolescents are secondary school students. So guidance and counseling as a means of education that contributes to shaping students. Counselors or counseling teachers are required to help their students towards ideal development. The main mission of the school counseling program is to provide a broad spectrum of personal services for students. In providing services, counseling teachers must understand what problems their students feel or experience so that they are not wrong in providing services. In the case of students who experience inferiority feelings, several techniques have been presented that are suitable for use in overcoming inferiority problems. Counselors or counseling teachers can provide services using REBT, CBT, group counseling, Adlerian Play Therapy (AdPT), biblio techniques, sociodrama, and reframing strategies.

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