

EMOTIONAL TRANSFORMATION IN "A MAN CALLED OVE"

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the emotional transformation of the main character, Ove, in *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman through a literary psychology approach. The purpose of this research is to explore how Ove's emotional journey—from being stubborn, isolated, and pessimistic to finding renewed meaning in life—is influenced by his relationships and experiences. Using a qualitative descriptive method with documentation techniques for data collection, this study analyzes key interactions, particularly with his neighbor Parvaneh and symbolic elements such as a shabby cat, as well as the impact of his past, including the loss of his wife. The findings reveal that love, social relationships, and solidarity are crucial factors in emotional healing and personal growth. This research highlights the significance of human connection in overcoming isolation and loneliness, offering valuable insights for literary studies, education, and the development of inclusive communities.

Keywords: *A Man Called Ove Novel, Emotional Transformation, The Meaning of Life.*

INTRODUCTION

A literary work is one of the works of a person in which there are several arts, so a literary work is an image or shadow of a person or of a society (Fazalani, 2021). Not only as a shadow literary work is a portrait in relation to a social, natural and so on, after the precipitation that occurs by an

author, then a life that is born from the social experience formed in a literary work occurs. According to Harefa (2020) literature is a writing or essay that contains good values written in beautiful language. There are many different kinds of literature, including drama, poetry, novella, novel, end others (Kurniati et al., 2023).



The novel is a form of realistic literary work that emerges from its surrounding environment, evolving from non-fictional narrative forms and emphasizing the importance of mimetic details (Wati et al., 2021). It is a lengthy literary work that chronicles a person's life, with some novels focusing on childhood events and others recounting painful or significant life experiences. A novel captures the depth of human emotions, as authors infuse their experiences, thoughts, and desires into a prose narrative (Kurniati et al., 2024).

The structure of a novel, along with everything it conveys, is carefully shaped by the author's language manipulation. To enhance the effectiveness of expression, literary language is deliberately refined, altered, and utilized to create a distinct style, differentiating it from non-literary language (Yakob, 2018). This stylistic approach allows novels to evoke deep emotional responses in readers, immersing them in the story and its imagined world. Life's complexities and universal human struggles often serve as central themes in novels, reflecting the diverse challenges faced by individuals. In the study of literary psychology, literature plays a crucial role in helping individuals explore the meaning of life and uncover deeper truths about human existence.

According to Sidiq & Manaf (2020), the main character is the character whose storytelling is prioritized in the novel in question. The main character is always present as a perpetrator or who is subject to incidents and conflicts. In the novel *A Man Called Ove*, the main character is Ove. This character is most present from the beginning of the story to the end of the story. The main character in this novel changes character because every character

of a person can change, because the character can be influenced by the surrounding environment or the circumstances experienced by the character. The character is very different from the character. The character cannot change while the character can change with the development of time and the character's circumstances. The main character's character can be seen through self-expression in the form of behaviour in the story (Prawira, 2018).

Character is one of the deepest and very important parts of a literary work, especially in a novel, a character is created by an author to convey a person's ideas and feelings that occur in this world through a character in a literary work, for example in novels, short stories and so on (Delvi et al., 2023). A character has its own power in a story as a whole in a literary work. An author is able to carry the character through a problem in different situations. According to Musyarofah (2020), characterization is a unique feature of fictional forms such as short stories, novels, dramas, and narrative poetry.

When a reader reads a literary work, such as a novel, a feeling will emerge and see a story about the life of each character in the novel. An author composes a novel not to cause a feeling of joy to be peruser but pass on a message approximately the occasions and activities of the characters within the novel. The creator depict that everybody has contrasts in character, such as, temperamental, feeling of belonging, being excluded, never giving up, being strong or a sense of humour.

Fredrik Backman's *novel A Man Called Ove* is one of the contemporary literary works that has received wide attention since its publication. The novel was first published in 2012 in Sweden and

has been translated into various languages, including English, where it was well received by international readers. The story centres on the character of Ove, an elderly man who is known for being stubborn, outspoken, but has a touching humanist side. With a simple setting of daily life, Backman manages to present a deep story that evokes the emotions of readers.

This study chose *A Man Called Ove* as the object of study because of the complexity of its main character which is interesting to analyze through the perspective of literary psychology. The character of Ove not only represents a unique individual figure, but also reflects rich psychological dynamics, ranging from a sense of loss, past trauma, to the need for social relationships. This choice is also driven by the universal appeal of the themes raised in the novel, such as loneliness, love, and the importance of meaning in life.

One approach that can be used to study literary works is literary psychology. Literary psychology is a literary study that is believed to reflect psychological processes and activities (Minderop, 2010).

Literary works associated with psychology are important for research, because it is believed that psychology helps in gathering researchers' sensitivity to reality, sharpens their abilities (Wellek & Werren, 1990), observes, and provides opportunities to study previously untouched patterns (Wellek & Werren, 1990). As a psychological symptom, psychology in literature contains phenomena that appear through the behaviour of the characters. Without the presence of literary psychology with various psychological references, the possibility of literary understanding will be uneven. At least the other side of literature will be understood proportionately with the study of literary psychology.

The study is significant since it investigates how social connection, community involvement, loss, and emotional change—driven by these factors—helps one to discover purpose in life. Examining the main character, Ove, the study emphasizes the critical part human connection, love, and solidarity have in overcoming emotional scars and solitude. The study underlines the need of relationships in emotional healing and offers understanding of how literature could mirror psychological processes. Moreover, it provides a basis for grasping character development in literary studies and a tool for learning, therefore supporting the instruction of social interactions and human values.

This encourages researchers to study more deeply about the characters and changes in the main character in the novel *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrin Backman. The objectives of this study are to: (1) Find the background of emotional transformation in the main character of the novel *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrin Backman.

METHOD

The method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative. According to Setyaningrum et al. (2023) the descriptive method, it can be interpreted as a problem-solving procedure that is investigated by describing or describing the current state of the subject or object of research based on apparent facts, or as they are.

The form of research used is qualitative research, which is research intended to understand phenomena about what is experienced by the research subject such as the various characters possessed by the main character, according to qualitative research is more concerned with the process

than the results. This is because the relationships between the parts being studied will be much clearer when observed in the process (Destiana, 2023).

The approach utilized in this think about is the approach of scholarly brain research as a way of investigation based on a mental point of see, a point of see that's opposite to the presumption that scholarly works continuously talk about human life occasions which are the radiance of the heart to live and respond to life.

The data source used by the researcher is a novel entitled *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman. The novel consists of 384 pages, which was published by Atria Books, New York in 2012. The data collection technique in this study is in the form of a documentary study technique. According to the documentation technique, it is a technique that collects data in the form of writings, drawings, or monumental works of a person. The documentation technique used by the researcher is useful for taking data in the form of writing that provides information for the researcher. The documentary study technique is carried out by examining literary works that are the source of data in the research. Therefore, the author uses the novel *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrin Backman as a source of data. The data collection technique is carried out in the following way. (a), carefully read the novel *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrin Backman (b), identify the various internal and external characters contained in the novel *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrin Backman (c), Group the characters that have been obtained (d), test the validity of the data using diligence observation and the

sufficiency of references. (Suggestion, 2010)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The main character in the novel *A Man Called Ove*, Ove, is portrayed as a 59-year-old man who is stubborn, disciplined, and very principled. His life is structured and full of rules, reflecting his conservative personality. Ove tends to be aloof and has limited social relationships due to his difficult nature and dislike of modern things, such as technology. However, behind his stern and often rude attitude, there is a deep affection, although it is rarely shown in person. The values of honesty, responsibility, and order became Ove's life guide, which he held fast even when it caused conflict with those around him.

Changes in Ove's emotions occur as the story progresses, triggered by various experiences and interactions. The presence of new neighbours, especially Parvaneh and his family, opened the door for Ove to start looking at life from a broader perspective. The loss of his wife, Sonja, left a deep wound that left him without a purpose in life. However, the interactions with the feral cats he encounters, as well as his re-involvement in the community, become a turning point in Ove's life. Through this experience, Ove slowly learned to open his heart, show empathy, and rediscover the meaning of his life. His father's influence, which instilled the values of honesty and responsibility, also remains a moral foundation for Ove throughout the story. For more clarity, you can see the table below.



Table 1. Emotional Changes in the Main Character of Ove

No.	Aspects	The Beginning of the Story	Changes During the Story	End of Story
1.	Social relationships	Isolated, unwilling to interact with neighbours	Started a relationship with Parvaneh and his family	Become an important figure in the community, helping neighbours with their problems
2.	Views on Life	Pessimistic, feeling that life is meaningless	Start finding purpose through helping others	Optimistic, accepting a new life that is more meaningful
3.	Expression of Emotions	Introverted, difficult to show feelings, angry at changes around him	Start to open up to others, learn to convey empathy and love	Be gentler, caring, and open to love and friendship
4.	Self-Acceptance	Feeling a failure after losing his wife, trapped in memories of the past	Learn to accept help and love from others	Accepting yourself as someone who can still give meaning to others

Employing a literary psychology method, the book "Emotional Transformation in the Novel A Man Called Ove" presents a deep literary analysis exploring the psychological and emotional journey of the main character, Ove. Emphasizing the link between emotional recovery and outside influences such social connection, love, and solidarity, the study shows how literary works could mirror human psychological processes. The book offers a profound investigation of the complexity of the human experience, where the change of the character reflects universal themes of loss, resiliency, and rediscovery of life's purpose.

The study shows the power of human connection and the part significant relationships play in overcoming loneliness and despair by looking at Ove's change from isolation and pessimism to community inclusion and optimism. Ove's emotional growth is set in the framework of his sadness at losing his wife, Sonja, and his originally strict, rule-oriented perspective on life, which is softened by the kindness and trust of his neighbors, particularly Parvaneh and her family. Offering readers a

disciplined knowledge of how literature captures and communicates psychological development, the study efficiently tracks this shift across several dimensions—social interactions, worldview, emotional expression, and self-acceptance.

Furthermore, the analysis underlines the symbolic components within the narrative, such as the shabby cat and Ove's connections with his community, which expand the character's emotional depth and depict the themes of love, solidarity, and rejuvenation. By offering a detailed psychological perspective on Ove's journey, the study contributes to the greater discourse on literary psychology, portraying literature as a reflecting medium for understanding human emotions and actions. This research is significant not only for literary scholars and educators but also for everyone interested in researching the junction of psychology and literature, bringing practical insights into the necessity of establishing inclusive and supportive communities in real life.



DISSCUSSION

Fredrik Backman through *A Man Called Ove* presents a touching story about how loss and love can affect a person's life journey. Ove, the main character, is portrayed as an old man who is stubborn and alienated from society. However, through relationships with the surrounding community, he rediscovered the meaning of his life. This emotional transformation not only showcases Ove's personal development, but also teaches readers about the power of love, solidarity, and community.

Literary psychology and the sciences of human behavior facilitate emotional transformation in *A Man Called Ove*. Literature frequently mirrors the complexities of human emotions, experiences, and interactions, as demonstrated in prior study. Weltek and Werren (1990) assert that literature portrays psychological truths in both accessible and imaginative manners, while psychology offers insights into human behavior that aid literary characters in their self-understanding. This aligns with the study's application of Ove to examine loss, healing, and self-acceptance.

At the beginning of the story, Ove is described as a figure who lives a life with a very structured routine. Waking up at five in the morning, he began an environmental inspection to make sure that everything was going according to the rules. "Ove is the sort of man who checks the status of all things by giving them a good kick," the narrator writes, reflecting Ove's practical and rigid approach to life.

Ove's isolated life was largely affected by the loss of his wife, Sonja, who became his emotional center. Sonja is the opposite of Ove—colourful, love, and optimism. This loss left Ove trapped in deep

grief and felt that his life no longer had a purpose. In one of the reflective moments, the narrator describes Ove's feelings: "Life was never meant to turn into this". Losing Sonja becomes an emotional wound that creates a great void in Ove's life.

In addition to losing Sonja, forced retirement from his job further exacerbates Ove's sense of uselessness. As someone who devotes his life to hard work, losing his job makes him feel like he has lost his identity. This is evident in how he talks about the younger generation he considers irresponsible and lazy: "A shed-load of men with elaborate beards, changing jobs and changing wives and changing their car makes". This view shows Ove's disappointment with the change in societal values that he considers to be the cause of chaos.

Ove is a representation of the older generation who struggled to adapt to the changing times. His view of the modern world reflects frustration with the loss of traditional values, such as responsibility, hard work, and respect for rules. An example can be seen in the scene when Ove tries to buy an iPad. He couldn't understand the device and ended up leaving the store frustrated: "Where does the keyboard pull out?".

This frustration is also seen in Ove's attitude towards technology and the habits of modern society. He rejected automatic cars, considering them "Japanese robots" that were not worthy of being called cars. His distrust of the Internet is also a symbol of his sceptical view of a world that is increasingly reliant on technology. In one scene, he refused to install Internet-based surveillance cameras in his neighbourhood for fear that the technology would snoop on his privacy.



Ove's emotional transformation begins when Parvaneh and his family move into the neighbourhood where he lives. Their relationship begins with conflict when Patrick, Parvaneh's husband, accidentally damages Ove's property while trying to park a trailer. However, Parvaneh, with her bold and confident personality, continued to approach Ove without hesitation. In one scene, Parvaneh says, "You're the only one I trust with this", a statement that forces Ove to get further involved in their lives.

Parvaneh is a character who brings new energy into Ove's life. He is an optimistic figure who is not afraid to challenge Ove when he becomes too rigid or rude. By asking Ove for help to take care of his children, Parvaneh shows trust that makes Ove feel needed again. Their relationship slowly became the foundation for Ove's transformation, as Parvaneh indirectly forced Ove to re-interact with the world around him.

In addition to Parvaneh, Ove begins to build relationships with his other neighbours, each of whom plays an important role in his emotional journey such as, (1) Shabby Cat, Shabby Cat is one of the most iconic characters in the novel. Initially, Ove saw the cat as a nuisance and violently chased it away. However, over time, this cat became a loyal friend who lived with Ove. The presence of this cat symbolizes the ability of the Ove to receive and give affection, even in a simple form. (2) Jimmy, Jimmy is Ove's neighbour who has a large body and is often considered insignificant by Ove. However, Jimmy is a kind and caring figure, which shows that kindness can be found in many forms. Ove's relationship with Jimmy shows that accepting others without prejudice is an important step in opening up the heart. (3)

Rune, Rune is Ove's old neighbour and used to be his close friend. However, their relationship deteriorated due to differences of opinion. When Rune falls ill, Ove decides to protect her from banishment to a nursing home. This action shows that, although Ove seems harsh, he has a deep sense of loyalty and responsibility towards the people he cares about. (4) Adrian, Adrian is a young courier who finds a special place in Ove's heart. In one scene, Ove helps Adrian face off against his ruthless boss, an act that shows Ove's protective side. When Adrian says, "Thank you for believing in me," Ove feels that his life has meaning again.

The peak of Ove's transformation occurred when he began to realize that his existence had a positive impact on the people around him. Ove's relationship with the Parvaneh family is central to this transformation. When Parvaneh revealed that she was pregnant with her third child, Ove was overjoyed. The birth of this child became a symbol of the rebirth of hope in Ove's life.

In addition, small actions such as helping neighbours fix their belongings or protecting them from external threats give Ove a new sense of satisfaction and purpose. In one scene, the narrator describes this change: "Ove realized that living for others might just be the only thing worth living for".

The novel is filled with symbolism that reinforces its main themes. The Shabby Cat symbolizes the affection that grows in Ove's heart. Patrick's trailer, which is difficult to park, becomes a symbol of the complexity of life that requires cooperation to solve. In addition, Ove's relationship with his community symbolizes the importance of human connection in healing emotional wounds.

This research supports Sidiq and Manaf's (2020) analysis of literary protagonists, revealing that character interactions reflect psychological and societal truths. The examination of Ove's metamorphosis illustrates how individual bereavement and external influences, such as communal support, can impact emotional recuperation. Fazalani (2021) discovered that social ties influence character development in literature. Minderop (2010) underscores the significance of examining emotional and psychological subtleties in literature, especially how characters' behaviors and responses reveal underlying psychological issues and their remedies.

Fredrik Backman through *A Man Called Ove* manages to present a touching and inspiring story about a person's emotional transformation. From loneliness and anger to rediscovering the meaning of life, Ove's journey is a reminder that love and human relationships are essential elements in life. With strong supporting characters, deep symbolism, and universal themes, the novel offers lessons about the importance of acceptance, compassion, and the courage to change. Ove taught that even in loss, life can still be meaningful if we open our hearts to love and community.

CONCLUSION

Based on an analysis of Fredrik Backman's novel *A Man Called Ove*, this study concludes that the emotional transformation of the main character, Ove, is influenced by the experience of loss, involvement in the community, and relationships with the people around him. Initially, Ove was described as a stubborn, alienated, and pessimistic figure. However, through interactions with neighbours like Parvaneh and his family, as well as a symbolic presence like a shabby cat, Ove gradually

opens up, shows empathy, and rediscovers the meaning of life. This transformation underscores the importance of love, solidarity, and human relationships in emotional healing and the search for meaning in life.

For the general reader, this story teaches the importance of building social relationships and opening up to others as a way to deal with loneliness and loss. Writers and literary researchers are advised to use this analysis as a reference to create complex characters and explore other universal themes in literary works. Additionally, communities and social organizations can leverage these findings to encourage the creation of an inclusive and supportive environment, especially for individuals who feel isolated. In the world of education, this novel can be used as a teaching material to teach human values, morality, and the importance of social relationships to students. Thus, literary works such as *A Man Called Ove* can contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of human life and provide positive inspiration for various circles.

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