

Compensating for the Zero: An Adlerian Analysis of Inferiority and Moral Construction in Black Clover

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Abstract. This study aims to comprehensively identify the psychological factors driving Asta's struggle to become the Wizard King in the anime Black Clover from an Adlerian perspective, and to interpret how this struggle shapes moral messages based on Nurgiyantoro's metrics. While previous studies have focused on linguistic and semiotic aspects of the series, this study provides the first dedicated psychological framework for understanding its protagonist's developmental arc. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach with content analysis, the research analyzes primary data consisting of scenes and dialogues from the anime. The findings reveal that Asta's psychological journey begins with an absolute inferiority feeling due to being born without magic in a society that idolizes it. He counteracts this limitation by establishing a fictional finalism of becoming the Wizard King and actively striving for superiority through extreme physical training, which is fundamentally guided by a profound social interest. Furthermore, this continuous Adlerian struggle manifests as distinct moral values including extreme mental resilience, a never-give-up spirit, the dignity of hard work, courage, and altruism, transmitted through his attitudes, actions, and consequences. Ultimately, the study concludes that Asta's narrative is a concrete illustration of healthy psychological coping mechanisms and offers significant character-building didactic values, proving the enduring relevance of classical Adlerian theory in contemporary visual media.

Keywords: *Individual Psychology; Moral Values; Struggle; Anime; Black Clover; Alfred Adler*

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi secara komprehensif faktor-faktor psikologis yang mendasari perjuangan Asta untuk menjadi Raja Penyihir dalam anime Black Clover dari perspektif Adlerian, serta menafsirkan bagaimana perjuangan tersebut membentuk pesan-pesan moral berdasarkan metrik Nurgiyantoro. Meskipun penelitian sebelumnya berfokus pada aspek linguistik dan semiotik dari serial ini, penelitian ini menghadirkan kerangka kerja psikologis khusus pertama untuk memahami perjalanan perkembangan tokoh utamanya. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif yang dilengkapi analisis konten, penelitian ini menganalisis data primer berupa adegan dan dialog dari anime tersebut. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa perjalanan psikologis Asta bermula dari perasaan inferioritas absolut akibat dilahirkan tanpa kemampuan sihir di tengah masyarakat yang mengidolakan sihir. Ia mengatasi keterbatasan ini dengan menetapkan tujuan fiktif untuk menjadi Raja Penyihir dan secara aktif berjuang mencapai keunggulan melalui latihan fisik ekstrem, yang pada dasarnya dipandu oleh kepedulian sosial yang mendalam. Selain itu, perjuangan Adlerian yang berkelanjutan ini terwujud dalam nilai-nilai moral yang khas, termasuk ketangguhan mental yang luar biasa, semangat pantang menyerah, martabat kerja keras, keberanian, dan altruisme, yang ditransmisikan melalui sikap, tindakan, dan konsekuensinya. Pada akhirnya, penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa narasi Asta merupakan ilustrasi konkret dari mekanisme koping psikologis yang sehat serta menawarkan nilai-nilai didaktis yang signifikan dalam pembentukan karakter, yang membuktikan relevansi teori Adlerian klasik yang tetap abadi dalam media visual kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: *Psikologi Individual; Nilai Moral; Perjuangan; Anime; Black Clover; Alfred Adler*

INTRODUCTION

Literature, at its core, is not merely a form of escapism or mere entertainment, but a comprehensive reflection that captures human psychology and the surrounding social reality. Through the study of literary works, readers are granted access to delve into the depths of emotion, unravel complex inner conflicts, and understand the fundamental motivations that constantly drive individuals as they navigate the dynamics of real life. This perspective aligns with the statement by Wellek and Warren (2017), who assert that literature functions as a mirror of human life; a medium capable of representing the complexity of thoughts, feelings, and behavior as a complete embodiment of the human existential condition. With the rapid advancement of time and technology, the conventional boundaries of literary works are no longer confined to print media such as novels, poetry, or plays. Modern literature has now expanded significantly into the realm of visual and audiovisual media, where anime (Japanese animation) has emerged as one of the most influential forms of contemporary narrative.

As a form of visual literature, anime offers not only aesthetic appeal or entertainment to fill one's free time, but also presents intense psychological depth in its character development. Condry (2013) conceptualizes anime as a vital cultural and creative product that serves to express ideological values, emotional turmoil, and the psychological complexities of individuals within a societal structure. Furthermore, anime is seen as capable of serving as a vehicle for instilling universal moral values in a global audience. Nurfitri and Rahman (2022) argue that this medium is highly effective in embodying values such as perseverance, optimism, and an indomitable spirit, thereby functioning as a tool for character development. This is particularly prominent in shōnen-genre anime, such as *Naruto*, *My Hero Academia*, and *Black Clover*, which consistently feature protagonists who begin their journeys from positions of great weakness or marginalization. Through a lengthy process, these characters then develop rapidly and prove their worth through strict discipline, relentless hard work, and healthy competition.

As a phenomenal work in the modern anime landscape, *Black Clover* originated as a shōnen manga series written and illustrated by Yūki Tabata, which first began serialization in 2015. The success of this visual narrative subsequently led to its adaptation into a large-scale television anime series produced by Studio Pierrot (one of Japan's leading animation studios) and officially premiered in 2017. Narratively, the anime is set in a fictional universe called the Clover Kingdom, a hierarchical world where its social, political, and military order is absolutely dependent on the mastery of magical energy (mana). The core of the story highlights the lives of two orphans, Asta and Yuno, who were raised together in a small church in a remote village named Hage. The two forge a bond of friendship and eternal rivalry as they vie for the title of Wizard King, the supreme and most powerful leader of the entire Magic Knight Corps in the kingdom. The story's dynamics are built on the characters' stark contrasts: Yuno is a magical genius blessed with extraordinary mana and chosen by an extremely rare four-leaf grimoire, much like a legendary wizard. In contrast, Asta, who possesses absolutely no magical energy, is forced to compensate by training his body to the absolute limit, which at a critical juncture leads him to obtain a tattered five-leaf grimoire believed to be inhabited by a demon and harboring the power of an anti-magic sword. Armed with this magic-destroying weapon, Asta is recruited into the Black Bull Magic Knight Corps, a group filled with eccentric and outcast members, embarking on a long military adventure, uncovering cross-kingdom conspiracies, facing threats from the Elf race and demons, and proving the irony that even someone without magic can change the world.

To unravel the complexity of Asta's inner turmoil and ambitious drives, the Individual Psychology Theory proposed by Alfred Adler serves as a highly relevant analytical framework. According to Adler (1956), the fundamental basis of human behavior is driven by feelings of inferiority, an awareness of one's own shortcomings. However, within the specific context of *Black Clover*, Asta's inferiority functions far beyond a standard physical disability or personal insecurity; it acts as an absolute social determinant within a rigid magical caste system. His complete lack of mana does not merely limit his physical capabilities, but systemically strips him of basic human worth in a society that equates magical prowess with social standing. Consequently, this profound systemic rejection triggers a radical drive to achieve excellence

(striving for superiority). Asta strives to compensate for this socio-biological limitation by weaponizing his pure physical resilience to achieve self-perfection and fulfill his ultimate life's purpose (fictional finalism). His fictional finalism, becoming the Wizard King, is therefore not just a personal dream, but a direct psychological rebellion against the oppressive magical hierarchy. Furthermore, Adler emphasizes that healthy striving must be accompanied by social interest. Asta's psychological evolution remains healthy because his ambition is driven not by a desire for revenge against the discriminatory system, but by an altruistic goal to dismantle the caste system and foster genuine equality within the surrounding community. Parallel to this psychological analysis, the results of this systemic struggle will be evaluated using Burhan Nurgiyantoro's theory of moral messages. Nurgiyantoro (2010) explains that a moral message in literature is the transmission of life values regarding goodness, manifested implicitly and explicitly through a character's attitudes, concrete actions in facing conflict, and the logical consequences of every decision made by that character.

Various previous studies have examined the dynamics of literature, psychology, and intrinsic elements in visual media works, providing a solid foundation for this study. In the realm of linguistic analysis in *Black Clover*, Fahmi (2020) conducted a linguistic study titled "The Function and Meaning of Kandoushi (Interjections) of the Outou Type in Anime *Black Clover* Episodes 73–83 by Yuuki Tabata." The results of this study indicate that verbal expressions in the form of interjections are effectively used to reinforce the emotions and personalities of characters, particularly in expressing an indomitable spirit. In line with this, Purnomo (2019) in his study titled "Analysis of the Use of Japanese Mimesis that Describes Feelings in Yuuki Tabata's *Black Clover* Manga" employed textual analysis to examine the use of language that depicts characters' emotions. The results demonstrate that stylistic devices and mimesis play a crucial role in reinforcing the emotional characterization of the characters within the story. Furthermore, from a sociocultural perspective, Afiluman (2025) applied a semiotic analysis method in his study titled "Semiotic Analysis of the Elf Reincarnation Arc in the *Black Clover* Anime in Support of Human Racial Equality." The results of this study found that the narrative and visual symbols in *Black Clover* deeply convey social messages regarding justice and human racial equality.

On the other hand, numerous studies have examined the concepts of struggle and psychological resilience within the specific context of youth demographics and visual media heroism. In her article titled "Being a Wizard Hero is a Struggle for Life – Natural Selection behind Harry Potter's Survival," Satō Akiko (2013) employs psychological and social approaches to highlight the struggles of the wizard protagonist. Her study links the character's struggle to the concepts of mental resilience and the ability to adapt to environmental pressures. Further contextualizing this within Japanese media, scholars such as Anne Allison (2006) emphasize that the *shōnen* spirit is deeply rooted in narratives of perseverance, where young protagonists must overcome profound vulnerabilities through relentless effort and camaraderie. This is supported by Sharon Kinsella's (2000) examination of manga demographics, which highlights how these media narratives function as a psychological mirror for the youth, validating their internal conflicts and societal alienation. Furthermore, existing literary criticisms have successfully applied psychological frameworks to popular *shōnen* properties to analyze heroism and resilience. For instance, psychological and character analyses examining leadership and heroic drives in *One Piece* often explore how internal trauma and the determination to protect others shape a character's resilience and moral compass. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that the psychological struggles of anime protagonists are not merely fictional tropes, but structured reflections of human resilience, providing a robust academic foundation for applying Adlerian theory to Asta's journey.

Regarding the specific application of the theory, Adlerian Individual Psychology has previously been applied to real-world popular media by Mulyadi (2020) through his study titled "Analyzing the Individual Psychology of Main Characters in the Film *The Pursuit of Happyness*." Using a literary psychology approach based on Alfred Adler's theory, the study yielded findings that provide a detailed explanation of the main characters' internal motivations and survival

strategies in facing the harshness of daily life's difficulties. Although the literature cited above indicates a high level of academic interest in the linguistic aspects of Black Clover as well as the application of resilience concepts and Adlerian theory to other works, a significant research gap is evident. There has been no specific study using Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology analysis method to dissect the anatomy of the psychological struggles of fantasy anime characters like Asta, nor how these struggles produce moral messages based on Nurgiyantoro's metrics.

Although the literature review above indicates a high level of academic interest in the anime Black Clover, a significant research gap is evident. The majority of research on Black Clover to date has focused on linguistic analysis, social symbolism (semiotics), or the characters' past traumas. A specific and in-depth analysis using the framework of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology to dissect the anatomy of the main protagonist's (Asta's) struggle, and how these psychological struggles produce moral messages based on Nurgiyantoro's metrics, has yet to be explored. Therefore, this study aims to comprehensively identify the psychological factors driving Asta's struggle in his quest to become the Wizard King from an Adlerian perspective. Furthermore, this study also aims to interpret how the representation of this psychological struggle contributes to shaping strong moral messages and motivational values for Black Clover anime viewers. By bridging classical psychological theory with contemporary narrative analysis, this study not only deciphers a popular anime but also offers a replicable model for analyzing 'underdog' narratives in modern media.

METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using content analysis and literature review. According to Moleong (2017), qualitative research is a research procedure that generates descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words derived from observed behavior, with the aim of understanding phenomena in a comprehensive and in-depth manner. Therefore, this approach is highly suitable and was chosen because the primary focus of this study is to explore a deep understanding of psychological phenomena, the interpretation of meaning, and the representation of moral values in the character of Asta through her dialogue and actions, aspects that cannot be measured using numbers or statistical instruments. Content analysis was specifically applied to systematically dissect the narrative structure, scenes, and interactions between characters that demonstrate the protagonist's struggle to achieve his dream.

Regarding the data sources analyzed, according to Sugiyono (2018), primary data is a source that directly provides data to the data collector, whereas secondary data is a source that supplements, supports, and does not directly provide data to the researcher. Therefore, the data were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on key narrative arcs where Asta explicitly acknowledges his limitations, faces systemic rejection, or verbally articulates his goals. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from supporting literature such as books on psychological and literary theory, academic journals, and relevant prior research documents. All of this data was collected through observation (comprehensive viewing), documentation (archiving crucial dialogues and scenes), and literature review. The validity of the data was then tested using source triangulation and theoretical triangulation techniques.

Following data collection, a comprehensive thematic and narrative analysis was conducted to interpret the interplay between the anime's visual and textual elements. Rather than merely mapping data onto a predefined theoretical checklist, this analytical procedure examined the dynamic synergy between explicit dialogue and specific visual cues—such as character framing, animation intensity, and expressive body language—to accurately identify psychological markers. First, this study employed Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology as the primary lens to analyze the psychological structure of Asta's character. According to Adler (1956), the dynamics of human personality are driven by feelings of inadequacy (inferiority feeling), which are subsequently addressed through compensatory efforts in the form of a strong drive to achieve excellence (striving for superiority) and life goals, while remaining balanced by concern for the environment (social interest). Second, the narrative outcomes of these psychological struggles were interpreted using Burhan Nurgiyantoro's Theory of Moral Values in Literary Works.

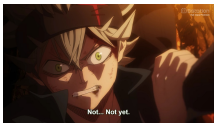
Nurgiyantoro (2010) asserts that life values and behavioral guidelines (such as hard work, courage, and optimism) are embodied by the author through the character's attitudes, concrete actions, and the consequences of their decisions when facing conflict. A systematic integration of these two theories, supported by audiovisual evidence, explains how Asta's inner turmoil organically culminates in the formation of a profound moral message within the anime.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section outlines the findings and discussion regarding the analysis of Asta's character in the anime Black Clover. Based on primary data consisting of dialogues and scenes collected from the anime series, the analysis is divided into two main focuses that align with the research objectives. The first section examines the representation of Asta's psychological struggles using the four pillars of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology Theory: feelings of inferiority, striving for superiority, fictional finalism, and social interest. The second part discusses how these psychological struggles produce moral values transmitted to the audience based on Burhan Nurgiyantoro's perspective.

Table 1. The Representation of Asta's Psychological Factors and Moral Messages

No.	Scene	Description	Psychological Aspects	Moral of The Story	Analysis
1.	Ep. 1 Scene: 04:23  Dialogue: Nash: "It's hard to believe someone your age can't use magic yet. ... Magic is everything in this world".	Nash, another orphan, pointed out Asta's inability to use magic in an environment that idolizes mana.	Inferiority Feeling	Patience and Perseverance	Asta's social environment confirmed her profound vulnerability. This verbal discrimination became the root cause of her psychological crisis
2.	Ep.1 Scene: 11:11 	At the induction ceremony, Asta was the only participant who did not receive a grimoire.	Inferiority Feeling	Self-acceptance	His failure to obtain the Grimoire was empirical proof that he was a magical failure. His feelings of inferiority reached a climax in front of the public, yet he chose not to let that shame destroy him.
3.	Ep. 1 Scene: 12:55 	Asta declared his rivalry with the magical genius Yuno, reaffirming his	Fictional Finalism	Optimism	Amid the anguish caused by feelings of inferiority, Asta envisions an

	Dialogue: Yuno: "I'm going to become the Wizard King" Asta: "Yuno. Just you wait. I'll catch up to you in no time. Because I'm your rival!"	dream even after failing to obtain the grimoire in front of a large crowd			ideal life goal (fictional finalism). This goal provides him with direction and meaning, preventing him from sinking into despair.
3.	Ep. 2 Scene: 02:11  Dialogue: Revchi: "Just give up on everything. You were born loser!" Asta: "No... Not yet."	Asta was beaten to a pulp by a former magic knight, but refused to give up even though he was well aware of the difference in their strength.	Striving for Superiority	Never-Give-Up Spirit	Instead of accepting his fate as the underdog, Asta made up for it with extraordinary mental resilience. His refusal to give up was an early sign of his drive for excellence.
4.	Ep. 4 Scene: 21:43  Dialogue: Sekke: "You don't have to try so hard anymore. Got it, you miserable peasant?" Asta: (Defeated Sekke). "I'm here to work my butt off and become the Wizard King!"	Asta broke through Sekke's pure defensive magic with his physical strength, then shouted out his ambition.	Striving for Superiority & Fictional Finalism	Hardwork and Integrity	Asta proved that the results of his extreme physical training (his primary form of compensation) were capable of overcoming magical barriers. His integrity and hard work succeeded in silencing Sekke's arrogance and discrimination.
5.	Ep. 5 Scene: 15:27  Dialogue: (No groups want to recruit Asta) Yami: "Now that I'm standing	After being rejected by all the groups, Asta was intimidated by Captain Yami's deadly magical aura, but he remained steadfast in his resolve.	The Confrontation of Inferiority and Fictional Finalism	Courage and Optimism	Asta demonstrates mental resilience in the face of authority figures. Her courage proves that her fictional finalism is not just empty talk, but a powerful

	before you, do you still have the nerve to say that you're going to be The Wizard King?" Asta: "No matter how many times I fall or what anyone says to me, I'm still going to become the Wizard King someday"				psychological anchor.
6.	Ep. 9 Scene: 14:04 	Asta leaped forward to break through the deadly ice magic in order to protect the defenseless villagers of Sosshi.	Social Interest	Empathy and Self-Sacrifice	Asta's struggle proved not to be driven by ego or a craving for respect. His actions to protect the common people were a pure manifestation of social interest, which is a prerequisite for a healthy struggle in Adler's theory.
7.	Ep. 49 Scene: 07:06  Dialogue: (Asta strapped his sword to his cursed hand) Vetto: "Why won't you despair?" Asta: "I told you. I don't have time for that"	Both of his arms were cursed by Vetto's attack, but Asta tied his sword to his hand with a rope or string so he could keep fighting.	Extreme Striving for Superiority	Perseverance and Never-Give-Up Spirit	Asta pushes her physical limits beyond what is humanly possible. Her refusal to give in to despair is a form of total rejection of inferiority.
8.	Ep. 54 Scene: 13:12  Dialogue:	Asta was lamenting his fate after being told that his hand was permanently paralyzed,	Striving for Superiority	Extreme Mental Resilience	Faced with a devastating new physical disadvantage, Asta quickly underwent cognitive

	Doctor: “You will never be able to swing your sword again”. Asta: Like hell I’m gonna give up! You just had to mess with me again, didn’t you, fate?! ... I’m gonna find a way to fix these arms, or I’ll find some kind of strength that lets me fight without my arms!	which would prevent him from fighting ever again, but instead, Asta defiantly shouted at fate and continued to search for another way out.	restructuring. He refused to accept defeat at the hands of fate and immediately began planning a new strategy.
9.	Ep. 63 Scene: 05:22  Dialogue: Asta: “Never giving up... is my magic!”	Asta successfully mastered the Black Asta form (demon power) and declared that his never-give-up attitude was his substitute for magic.	The Peak of Self-Striving for Acceptance Superiority Asta has fully come to terms with her weaknesses. She has redefined her sense of inferiority by making her own perseverance her identity and her primary “magic.”
10.	Ep. 119 Scene: 07:58 	Asta, who has finally matched the strength of his rival, Yuno, fights side by side with Yuno, evolving in sync with him to defeat the demon Zagred.	The Peak of Teamwork and Hardwork Asta's personal journey reaches its peak through collaboration. His healthy rivalry with Yuno proves that his drive to excel has a positive effect on those around him.

Table 1 presents a chronological classification of the pivotal moments in Asta's character development throughout the series. The categorization of these primary findings reveals a consistent psychological pattern: whenever Asta is confronted with discriminatory environments, physical limitations, or overwhelming challenges that trigger his inferiority feelings, he systematically responds by striving for superiority rather than succumbing to despair. Furthermore, the data demonstrates that his psychological resilience is heavily anchored by his ultimate life goal (fictional finalism) and is inherently guided by a profound sense of empathy toward others (social interest). Consequently, this continuous Adlerian psychological struggle organically produces strong moral values, such as a never-give-up spirit, extreme mental resilience, and self-sacrifice, which are transmitted to the audience through his actions and

attitudes. A more comprehensive and detailed elaboration of these data, categorized based on the specific research questions, is discussed in the following sub-sections.

The Psychological Factors Driving Asta's Struggle: An Adlerian Perspective

Based on Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology, human behavior and personality development are fundamentally shaped by the dynamic interplay between the awareness of one's limitations and the conscious, relentless effort to overcome them. The analysis of Asta's character in *Black Clover* reveals a profound and continuous psychological journey. Instead of passively accepting his predetermined fate, Asta actively constructs his psychological resilience. To answer the first research question, the psychological factors driving Asta's struggle can be comprehensively dissected through four interconnected Adlerian pillars: Inferiority Feeling, Fictional Finalism, Striving for Superiority, and Social Interest.

According to Adler, every human being experiences a sense of inadequacy or inferiority since childhood, which acts as the primary catalyst for psychological development. However, Asta's inferiority feeling is not merely a subjective perception; it is an absolute, empirical reality validated by his social environment. He lives in the Clover Kingdom, a highly stratified society where social status, military rank, and basic human worth are entirely dictated by the amount of magical energy (mana) a person possesses. From the very beginning, Asta is presented as an anomaly, an individual born completely devoid of magic. This severe limitation is constantly highlighted by his surroundings. As shown in Data 1, even Nash, a fellow orphan from the lowest social class, emphasizes this harsh reality by stating that magic is everything in their world, indirectly pointing out Asta's fundamental defect.

The climax of Asta's inferiority feeling occurs during the Grimoire Acceptance Ceremony (Data 2), a pivotal rite of passage for every fifteen-year-old in the kingdom. While everyone else receives their magical books, Asta is publicly humiliated as the only participant whose grimoire does not descend. In an Adlerian context, this event is the ultimate validation of his powerlessness. It serves as the "zero point" of his psychological state. For a normal individual, such overwhelming public rejection and biological limitation would naturally lead to an inferiority complex, a state of total despair and surrender. However, Asta's psychological uniqueness lies in his response to this trauma. Instead of letting this absolute inferiority destroy his psyche, he utilizes the pain of this rejection as the foundational fuel to trigger a massive compensatory response.

To prevent his mind from collapsing under the weight of his extreme inferiority, Asta constructs an extraordinarily ambitious life goal. Adler defines this mechanism as fictional finalism, an idealized, ultimate goal that an individual strives to achieve, which provides direction and purpose to their daily actions. For Asta, this fictional goal is explicitly declared: he intends to become the Wizard King, the absolute pinnacle of magical and military authority in the Clover Kingdom. To the society around him, a magicless peasant aspiring to become the Wizard King is completely delusional and fictional. Yet, psychologically, this goal is exactly what Asta needs to survive.

This mechanism is vividly demonstrated in Data 3, where immediately after failing to receive a grimoire, Asta boldly declares to Yuno (a recognized magical genius) that he will catch up to him because they are rivals. This declaration is not an act of arrogance, but a psychological survival tactic. By positioning himself as a rival to a genius and setting his sights on the highest possible position, Asta gives his life a trajectory. Furthermore, as depicted in Data 6, even when heavily intimidated by the terrifying magical aura of Captain Yami, Asta remains steadfast in his declaration to become the Wizard King. This fictional finalism functions as an unbreakable psychological anchor; it dictates his lifestyle, disciplines his mind, and ensures that every hardship he endures has a meaningful purpose.

The most dominant psychological factor driving Asta's struggle is his continuous striving for superiority. Adler explains that humans naturally attempt to compensate for their weaknesses by developing other strengths. Since Asta cannot generate magic, his compensation mechanism is extreme physical training and impenetrable mental fortitude. This is the tangible manifestation

of his struggle. In Data 4, when he is beaten down and mocked as a "born loser" by Revchi, Asta explicitly refuses to give up. His refusal to yield to a superior magical opponent marks the beginning of his active striving.

This striving is further validated during the Magic Knights entrance exam (Data 5). When Sekke tries to bully Asta using advanced defensive magic, Asta obliterates the defense using pure physical speed and strength, loudly proclaiming his intention to work relentlessly to achieve his dream. Here, Asta proves that his physical compensation can effectively neutralize the magical superiority of others. However, his striving is not without severe obstacles. The depth of his psychological resilience is truly tested in Data 8 and Data 9. During the battle with Vetto, even after both of his arms are cursed and broken, Asta physically ties his sword to his shattered arms just to continue fighting. Later, when a doctor diagnoses that his arms are permanently paralyzed, Asta does not mourn; instead, he runs to a hill and angrily challenges fate, swearing to find another way to fight. This represents an extreme level of cognitive restructuring and striving for superiority. He outright refuses to be defined by a new physical limitation. Ultimately, this constant striving leads to true self-acceptance, as seen in Data 10, where Asta masters the demonic Black Asta form and proudly declares that "never giving up is his magic". He transforms his greatest psychological burden (the lack of magic) into his core identity and primary weapon.

A crucial distinction in Adlerian theory is that striving for superiority must be accompanied by social interest to be considered psychologically healthy. If an individual strives for power solely to dominate others or feed their ego, it leads to a destructive superiority complex. Asta's psychological development is profoundly healthy because his massive ambition is deeply intertwined with empathy and a desire to protect others. His goal of becoming the Wizard King is not driven by narcissism or a thirst for revenge against the society that mocked him. Instead, he seeks power to dismantle the kingdom's discriminatory caste system and protect the vulnerable.

This healthy psychological trait is evident in Data 7, where Asta recklessly throws himself into the path of deadly ice magic to protect the defenseless villagers of Sosshi. He continuously risks his life for people who offer him no political or social advantage. Moreover, his striving for superiority positively impacts those around him, as demonstrated in Data 11. Rather than becoming bitter toward Yuno's innate talent, Asta uses their rivalry constructively, allowing both of them to evolve rapidly and fight side-by-side against the demon Zagred. Therefore, Asta's psychological struggle is not an isolated, selfish endeavor; it is a manifestation of profound social interest that elevates not only himself but the entire society he interacts with.

Moral and Motivational Messages Derived from Asta's Struggle: Nurgiyantoro's Perspective

While Alfred Adler's theory provides the internal psychological mechanics of Asta's character, Burhan Nurgiyantoro's theory of moral values should not be viewed as a separate analytical lens, but rather as the ethical outcome of these psychological processes. In this context, Adlerian mechanisms, particularly social interest and striving for superiority, act as the direct generators of Nurgiyantoro's moral values. According to Nurgiyantoro (2010), moral messages are transmitted through a character's attitudes, concrete actions, and the consequences of their decisions. By integrating these two frameworks, it becomes evident that Asta's moral virtues are not random heroic traits, but organic behavioral manifestations of his psychological survival.

The most prominent moral message delivered in Black Clover is the extreme resilience and "never-give-up" spirit manifested through Asta's unwavering attitude. Rather than treating this as a standalone shōnen personality trait, this resilience is the direct ethical output of his Adlerian striving for superiority in overcoming absolute inferiority. Nurgiyantoro emphasizes that a character's attitude during a crisis reflects moral teaching. For instance, when Asta is diagnosed with permanent paralysis in both arms (Data 8 and 9), his active rejection of despair is his psychological compensation mechanism at work. For the audience, this translates into a powerful motivational value: mental resilience (striving) can conquer circumstantial limitations (inferiority). Ultimately, he turns his psychological perseverance into his literal identity, claiming that "never giving up is his magic."

Asta's concrete actions throughout the series communicate the moral values of hard work and integrity. These moral values are generated directly by his specific Adlerian compensation mechanism. In a world where magical talent is innate, Asta lacks mana, prompting him to compensate through extreme physical training. As demonstrated in Data 5, when Asta shatters Sekke's magic using pure physical strength, Nurgiyantoro's framework highlights this action as a physical manifestation of integrity. The anime motivates its viewers by framing his compensatory hard work as an ethical triumph over the lazy arrogance of the privileged magical class, proving that true strength is earned, not merely inherited.

Another critical moral message extracted from Asta's struggle is his unwavering courage and optimism. Asta's courage in the face of authority is not merely a personality trait, but a behavioral manifestation of his high social interest and his steadfast fictional finalism (his dream of becoming the Wizard King). As Adler posits, high social interest combined with a strong life goal is the benchmark of mental health. Consequently, when Asta challenges Captain Yami (Data 6) or defends his dream against societal scrutiny, Nurgiyantoro's framework reveals that the anime frames his seemingly reckless bravery not as stupidity or arrogance, but as ethical superiority. It teaches the audience the moral value of self-advocacy driven by a healthy, pro-social ambition.

Finally, Adler's concept of social interest serves as the core mechanism that generates the ultimate moral consequences in Nurgiyantoro's theory. If Asta's striving for superiority were solely for personal glory, the moral consequence would simply be selfish ambition. However, because his psychological development is deeply rooted in social interest, the consequences of his actions are inherently altruistic. As seen in Data 7, the immediate consequence of Asta throwing himself in front of deadly ice magic is the survival of the defenseless Sosshi villagers. This action delivers a strong moral message regarding empathy and self-sacrifice. Furthermore, by fighting alongside Yuno (Data 11), Asta proves that healthy Adlerian striving fosters teamwork rather than toxic rivalry. Thus, Asta's psychological completeness generates a holistic moral doctrine: true strength is validated only when it is utilized to serve the greater good.

CONCLUSION

Based on the integration of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology and Burhan Nurgiyantoro's theory of moral values, this study concludes that Asta's journey in *Black Clover* extends far beyond the conventional tropes of a fictional heroic narrative. Rather than merely summarizing his psychological coping mechanisms, the findings reveal a profound theoretical and societal implication: the anime functions as a modern, socio-psychological allegory for the clash between meritocracy and aristocracy.

Viewed through a psychological lens, the Clover Kingdom's rigid magical hierarchy represents an oppressive aristocratic system where human worth and social mobility are entirely dictated by inherited biological traits (mana). Asta, born completely devoid of magic, embodies the marginalized working class who are systematically conditioned by their environment to internalize absolute inferiority. However, his radical striving for superiority, manifested through extreme physical training and unbreakable mental resilience, stands as the ultimate symbol of meritocracy. His character argues psychologically that deliberate effort, integrity, and discipline can shatter the invisible barriers erected by a privileged aristocracy.

Furthermore, the moral values generated from Asta's psychological evolution specifically his altruism and courage, elevate this struggle from a personal survival tactic to a broader ethical crusade. Because his ambition is deeply anchored in social interest, his pursuit to become the Wizard King is not a selfish quest to dominate the nobles, but a meritocratic drive to dismantle systemic discrimination and establish genuine equality. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that *Black Clover* effectively utilizes the psychological mechanisms of its protagonist to deliver a powerful cultural critique. It provides contemporary audiences with a vital didactic message: while aristocratic structures or societal biases may impose severe psychological burdens, the meritocratic virtues of courage, relentless hard work, and profound social empathy possess the transformative power to rewrite one's destiny and reform society.

To expand upon these findings, it is highly recommended that future research apply this same Adlerian framework to the antagonists of Black Clover, particularly factions such as the Eye of the Midnight Sun. Analyzing these villains would provide a compelling comparative study, illustrating how maladaptive striving for superiority, driven by unresolved trauma and an utter lack of social interest, leads to destructive psychological outcomes. Such an exploration would highlight the stark contrast with Asta's healthy, pro-social striving, thereby enriching the broader academic discourse on the psychological complexities of character motivations in contemporary visual media.

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