EMOTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN *LEIDEN* BY DWI NUR RAHMAWATI: IMPLICATIONS FOR LITERATURE EDUCATION IN THE *MERDEKA* CURRICULUM

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Abstract

This study examines the emotional dynamics of the main character in Dwi Nur Rahmawati's *Leiden* and analyzes how these emotions can inform literature teaching within the Merdeka Curriculum. Employing a descriptive mixed-methods design, the research integrates qualitative literary psychology analysis with quantitative frequency mapping. Data were collected through systematic reading, identification of emotional expressions, structured recording, and coding of 76 emotional quotations from the novel. Analysis followed Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive model to classify emotion types, examine narrative contexts, identify patterns, and interpret pedagogical relevance. The findings revealed three significant patterns. First, sadness emerged as the dominant emotion (18.4%), followed by love and fear (14.5% each) and guilt (11.8%), indicating the protagonist's psychological vulnerability characteristic of adolescent development. Second, nonverbal behavior (39.5%) and author narration (35.5%) appeared more frequently than dialogue (25%), demonstrating a "show, don't tell" characterization strategy requiring inferential reading. Third, complex emotions appeared in 10.5% of instances, exclusively through author narration, reflecting psychological nuance demanding higher-order interpretation. These emotional patterns are pedagogically relevant because they mirror adolescents' socioemotional experiences and provide opportunities for developing empathy, emotional literacy, and analytical reading skills. The findings demonstrate that emotional analysis can serve as a foundation for designing character-oriented literature activities aligned with Phase F learning outcomes in the Merdeka Curriculum. The study contributes empirical support for integrating literary psychology into Indonesian literature classrooms through structured emotional mapping and offers practical guidance for teachers seeking to enhance students' character formation and critical comprehension within curriculum frameworks emphasizing competency-based, analytical, and reflective learning.

Keywords: character characterization, emotion analysis, literary psychology, literature pedagogy, Merdeka curriculum

Introduction

Character education has become a central component of contemporary schooling because it prepares students to navigate moral, emotional, and social challenges in an increasingly complex world. According to Suryaman (2010), literature-based instruction contributes to character formation by enabling students to observe human behavior, evaluate moral choices, and reflect on their own values. This theoretical view aligns with Mar and Oatley's (2008) perspective that narrative texts function as

simulations of social reality, allowing readers to interpret emotions, motivations, and interpersonal dynamics. Building on this cognitive framework, empirical studies reinforce these ideas: Mercer and Gregersen (2023) found that narrative engagement enhances empathy and emotional awareness among learners. Collectively, these theories and findings affirm that literature provides a meaningful foundation for developing students' emotional and moral capacities.

Within this context, character literacy, defined as the ability to recognize emotions, values, and ethical dilemmas in texts, plays a vital role in literature learning. Halimah (2020) notes that narrative fiction promotes reflective thinking because it exposes students to complex emotional and psychological experiences that mirror real-life circumstances. This theoretical claim is supported by recent research showing that emotionally rich stories can strengthen students' interpretative and evaluative abilities (Ramadhani et al., 2024). Thus, both theoretical and empirical evidence emphasize that novels function not only as linguistic materials but also as pedagogical tools that cultivate empathy, emotional reasoning, and moral understanding.

Despite its pedagogical potential, literature-based character education still faces challenges in Indonesian classrooms. Research has shown that students often struggle with varying levels of literacy, limited inferential skills, and difficulty interpreting characters' emotional states (Maureen et al., 2022; Zulkarnain et al., 2024). Hossain (2024) also reports that learners frequently overlook psychological dimensions in narratives, which restricts their ability to derive deeper meaning. These findings indicate the need for instructional approaches that integrate emotional understanding, analytical skills, and accessible scaffolding to support diverse learners.

The Merdeka Curriculum provides a relevant framework for addressing these challenges by promoting competency-based, contextualized, and personalized learning pathways. In this curriculum, Indonesian language learning integrates literacy development, cultural understanding, and character formation as core competencies (Anwas et al., 2022). Literature plays a strategic role in shaping the Pancasila Student Profile, particularly values such as empathy, critical reasoning, independence, and moral integrity (Rokayah et al., 2023). Consequently, novels that portray psychological depth and emotional conflict become essential learning resources within Merdeka Curriculum-based classrooms.

One theoretical approach that strengthens the integration of literature and character formation is literary psychology. Literary psychology examines how narratives depict emotions, motivations, internal conflicts, and psychological development (Hogan, 2011; Minderop, 2013). Through this lens, students can analyze emotional expressions and understand the psychological logic behind characters' actions. Previous studies further indicate that emotional inference enhances students' empathy and reflective engagement (Pulimeno et al., 2020; Şen, 2021; Tsamara & Musthofiyah, 2021). These findings collectively support the use of psychological character analysis as a pedagogical strategy that strengthens emotional understanding, critical thinking, and moral reasoning in literature classrooms.

Research on Indonesian novels demonstrates the pedagogical value of emotionally complex narratives for character-based learning. Novels frequently used in Indonesian classrooms, such as *Si Anak Kuat*, *Si Anak Cahaya*, and *Orang-Orang Biasa* have been shown to help students build reflective and affective competencies. Studies by Dewi and Fauziah (2024), Haryadi et al. (2022), and Hayatunnisa (2022) indicate that emotionally complex characters enable students to relate narrative experiences to their own psychological development. Such evidence confirms that literary texts with strong emotional dimensions are highly suitable for character-based learning aligned with Merdeka Curriculum goals.

Within this broader landscape, the novel *Leiden* by Dwi Nur Rahmawati (2021) offers unique relevance due to its rich portrayal of emotional struggles, including guilt, fear, sadness, self-

punishment, shame, and love. The protagonist's psychological journey reflects challenges experienced by many adolescents, such as identity formation, emotional vulnerability, and trauma processing, making it pedagogically valuable for late-teen learners. An initial textual analysis of *Leiden* identified 76 distinct emotional expressions in the protagonist's characterization, classified according to David Krech's and Minderop's emotion frameworks. These emotional variations provide rich material for developing students' emotional literacy and character reasoning, offering concrete opportunities for classroom-based emotion mapping and interpretive analysis.

However, existing research has not sufficiently integrated emotional analysis of Indonesian novels with the pedagogical requirements of the Merdeka Curriculum. Prior studies have explored character values in literature (Al-afandi, 2024; Mislikhah, 2022) and theoretical concepts in literary psychology (Hogan, 2011; Minderop, 2013), but they rarely connect emotional mapping of a specific novel to curriculum-based instructional design. Empirical work that bridges literary psychology, emotion analysis, and practical teaching strategies within the framework of the Pancasila Student Profile remains limited. This gap indicates the need for research that combines theoretical analysis with curriculum-oriented pedagogical implications.

To address this gap, the present study analyzes the emotional expressions of the main character in *Leiden* and interprets their implications for literature teaching within the Merdeka Curriculum. The study offers two novel contributions. First, it provides a comprehensive empirical analysis that enriches Indonesian literary psychology through detailed emotion mapping, demonstrating how specific emotional patterns in narrative texts can be systematically identified, categorized, and analyzed. Next, it responds to practical challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum by offering evidence-based literature teaching materials grounded in emotional and psychological interpretation, thereby supporting educators in designing character-oriented learning activities that align with Phase F learning outcomes. This dual contribution positions the study as both theoretically relevant and pedagogically applicable, particularly for strengthening students' character formation and critical understanding in literature classrooms.

This study is guided by two research questions: (1) why is the emotional representation of the main character in *Leiden* relevant to character education within the Merdeka Curriculum? and (2) how can insights from the emotional analysis of that main character be applied in literature teaching to enhance students' character development and critical comprehension?

Literature Review

This literature review integrates three interconnected theoretical domains essential to this study: (1) literary psychology and emotion theory, (2) characterization and emotional representation in narrative fiction, and (3) literature learning within the Merdeka Curriculum framework. These areas provide a conceptual foundation for examining how emotional expressions in *Leiden* can inform character-based literature instruction aligned with curriculum goals.

Literary psychology and emotion theory in narrative

Literary psychology offers theoretical tools for examining how narratives represent the psychological dimensions of human experience. Contemporary literary psychology has shifted from classical psychoanalytic traditions toward contextual, cognition-oriented approaches that analyze emotions, motivations, and internal conflicts in fiction (Hogan, 2011; Minderop, 2013). These

perspectives position literary texts not merely as aesthetic artifacts but as psychological models through which readers infer mental states and emotional dynamics. Mar and Oatley (2008) conceptualize narrative reading as a form of "social simulation," wherein readers mentally rehearse emotional responses and social scenarios, thereby developing empathy and theory of mind capacities. This cognitive framework explains why emotionally rich narratives can enhance readers' socioemotional competencies.

A central theoretical framework relevant to this study is the emotion classification developed by David Krech and refined by Minderop (2013), which categorizes emotions such as sadness, fear, love, guilt, anger, hatred, and shame. This taxonomy provides a systematic basis for identifying emotional variations while acknowledging the hybrid, overlapping nature of emotions in narrative contexts. Research supports the pedagogical and analytical value of emotion classification in narrative interpretation. Nurgiyantoro (2019) notes that effective character analysis must examine how emotions are presented whether explicitly through narration or implicitly through gesture, dialogue, and thought. Halimah (2020) similarly argues that analytical-scientific reading models enhance students' interpretive depth by requiring them to identify and justify emotional inferences using textual evidence. Furthermore, Zulkarnain et al. (2024) emphasize that emotion analysis must consider the sociocultural meanings embedded in texts, as culture shapes both emotional expression and reader interpretation.

The integration of emotion theory with literary analysis thus serves dual purposes: it enriches theoretical understanding of how narratives function psychologically, and it provides practical tools for teaching students to recognize, interpret, and reflect on emotional dimensions of character development.

Character presentation techniques and emotion representation

Characterization in narrative operates through techniques that reveal a character's traits, psychological depth, and emotional orientation. Classical distinctions categorize characterization into direct (explicit narrative description) and indirect (inferred through actions, dialogue, thoughts, and behavior) methods (Nurgiyantoro, 2019). These methods determine how transparently or implicitly readers access characters' internal states. Emotion representation is central to characterization because emotions drive narrative action, conflict, and transformation.

Emotional states may be expressed through multiple channels: linguistically through affective vocabulary, metaphor, or evaluative language; behaviorally through nonverbal and physical cues; or through narrative techniques such as focalization and internal monologue that grant varying levels of psychological access (Li, 2022). When authors employ implicit or inferential methods—often summarized as "show, don't tell", readers are encouraged to construct meaning by linking textual cues with their own emotional frameworks. This inferential process is pedagogically significant because it engages readers in active interpretation rather than passive reception.

Empirical studies highlight the interpretive value of implicit emotional representation. Fernandez-Quintanilla (2020) found that inferential emotional cues promote deeper empathetic engagement because they require readers to actively reconstruct characters' mental states. This cognitive activity strengthens theory of mind and empathy, both crucial for socioemotional development. Karnanta (2017) explains that readers' expectations and genre conventions also shape how emotional cues are interpreted, while Siregar (2021) observes that contemporary Indonesian novels increasingly emphasize inferential techniques over expository narration. This stylistic trend

demands higher interpretive involvement from readers and aligns with pedagogical goals that promote empathy, reasoning, and ethical reflection.

Understanding characterization techniques is therefore essential for analyzing the protagonist of *Leiden*, whose emotions are primarily communicated through implicit narration, dialogue, and nonverbal cues, a style consistent with modern Indonesian fiction. This analytical focus connects directly to curriculum-based learning outcomes that require students to identify, interpret, and evaluate intrinsic narrative elements.

Literature learning in the Merdeka Curriculum framework

The Merdeka Curriculum represents a pedagogical shift from content-based instruction to competency-based learning, particularly in literature education. In Phase F of Indonesian language learning, students are expected to analyze intrinsic and extrinsic elements of literary works, including the psychological characteristics of characters (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). This competency requires teaching materials that support analytical, interpretive, and moral reasoning processes. Literature plays a strategic role in cultivating the Pancasila Student Profile, which emphasizes six core values: faith and piety, global diversity, cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, and creativity (Rokayah et al., 2023). Among these, empathy and moral integrity are particularly relevant to character-based literature learning.

However, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum faces challenges related to resource availability and pedagogical alignment. Teachers frequently struggle to identify literary works that effectively integrate emotional, cultural, and character-building dimensions (Doyin, 2024). Without appropriate texts, it becomes difficult to design learning activities that strengthen higher-order thinking and character formation. High-quality literary texts are therefore essential for supporting curriculum goals. Bąk-Średnicka (2025) stresses that novels of strong literary merit function as moral and intellectual models for readers, while Sumiyati et al. (2025) highlight the importance of prophetic literature that embodies transcendental, humanizing, and liberating values. These values align closely with the Pancasila Student Profile.

Additionally, although project-based learning has proven effective for developing 21st-century competencies in literature education, Kokotsaki et al. (2016) note that such approaches must be supported by contemporary literary theory to achieve deeper analytical outcomes. This suggests the need for pedagogical models that integrate emotion analysis, character interpretation, and curriculum-aligned assessment strategies.

Theoretical integration and research gap

The reviewed literature demonstrates that (1) literary psychology offers a robust framework for analyzing emotional representations in narrative, (2) characterization techniques shape how readers interpret emotions and psychological depth, and (3) the Merdeka Curriculum requires literary materials that integrate emotional, analytical, and character-building dimensions. However, existing research has not sufficiently bridged these domains within the Indonesian context.

While studies have examined character values in Indonesian novels (Al-afandi, 2024; Mislikhah, 2022) and theoretical foundations of literary psychology (Hogan, 2011; Minderop, 2013), few have systematically mapped emotional patterns in specific texts and connected those patterns to curriculum-based instructional strategies. Research that integrates detailed emotion analysis with

pedagogical applications aligned with the Pancasila Student Profile remains scarce. This gap indicates the need for empirical studies that combine literary psychological analysis with curriculum-oriented teaching design.

The present study addresses this gap by analyzing emotional expressions in *Leiden* and interpreting their pedagogical implications within the Merdeka Curriculum framework. By integrating emotion mapping with instructional design, the study contributes both to Indonesian literary psychology scholarship and to practical literature pedagogy. This dual focus ensures that the research is theoretically grounded and pedagogically applicable, offering concrete resources for strengthening students' emotional literacy, empathy, and critical thinking in character-based literature learning.

Methodology

Research design and approach

This study employed a descriptive mixed-methods design that integrates qualitative literary analysis with quantitative frequency mapping. According to Creswell (2012), mixed-methods research combines quantitative and qualitative approaches within a single study to achieve a more thorough and comprehensive understanding through the integrated collection, analysis, and interpretation of data from both methods.

The qualitative component applies Minderop's (2013) literary psychology approach to examine the emotional expressions of the main character, Rhea, in Dwi Nur Rahmawati's novel *Leiden*. Qualitative data consist of textual segments, including narrative descriptions, dialogue, and behavioral portrayals that reveal the protagonist's emotional states, their narrative contexts, and the techniques used by the author to present these emotions. These data are analyzed interpretively to understand the psychological depth, emotional dynamics, and pedagogical relevance of the character's emotional journey.

The quantitative component involves systematic coding and frequency calculation of identified emotional expressions to establish patterns and distributions. Quantitative data are derived from counting the occurrences of each emotion type (e.g., sadness, fear, love, guilt) and each presentation technique (e.g., nonverbal behavior, author narration, dialogue) across the entire novel. These numerical data are presented in frequency tables and percentages to provide an empirical overview of the protagonist's emotional profile and the author's characterization strategies.

This descriptive qualitative-dominant design aligns with the study's objectives: to describe and analyze the protagonist's emotional landscape qualitatively and to map its patterns quantitatively, while interpreting the pedagogical relevance for character-based literature education within the Merdeka Curriculum framework.

Data collection

The primary data source for this study was the novel *Leiden* by Dwi Nur Rahmawati, published by Black Swan Books in 2021. The novel tells the story of Rhea Gilda Nagendra, a young woman who grows up in a toxic family and faces numerous painful experiences. The title *Leiden*, meaning "suffering" in Dutch, reflects the narrative's central themes of pain, struggle, and healing. Rhea is portrayed as a character rejected by her family, grieving the loss of her best friend, and hurt by someone she loves. Despite these hardships, she continues to search for self-understanding and inner

strength, making her psychological journey relevant to adolescent readers navigating similar developmental challenges.

This novel was selected based on three criteria: (1) the main character's psychological complexity, which provides rich material for emotional analysis; (2) its representativeness as a contemporary Indonesian literary work that reflects modern narrative styles; and (3) its thematic relevance to the psychosocial development of high school students, particularly regarding identity formation, trauma processing, and emotional resilience. These criteria ensure that the selected text is both analytically suitable and pedagogically applicable within the context of Phase F learning outcomes in the Merdeka Curriculum.

Data collection followed a systematic four-stage process grounded in semiotic and hermeneutic reading strategies (Eco, 1979), yielding both qualitative and quantitative data from the same textual source.

Stage 1: Comprehensive reading, the entire novel *Leiden* (268 pages) was read multiple times to gain a comprehensive understanding of the narrative structure, character development, plot progression, and thematic patterns. This initial immersion established the interpretive foundation necessary for identifying emotional expressions within their narrative contexts and understanding the protagonist's psychological trajectory throughout the story.

Stage 2: Identification of emotional expressions, all textual segments that explicitly or implicitly portrayed the main character's emotional expressions were identified through close reading. This stage generated the **qualitative data corpus** consisting of 76 textual quotations that demonstrate Rhea's emotional states. Each segment was marked with preliminary notes regarding emotional content and narrative context.

Qualitative data sources from this stage included:

1) Narrative descriptions by the author that explicitly or implicitly describe Rhea's emotional states (e.g., "Her heart felt heavy with unspoken grief")
2) Dialogue that reveals emotions through verbal expression (e.g., direct statements of feeling in conversations)
3) Nonverbal behaviors such as gestures, facial expressions, bodily movements, and physical reactions that suggest emotional conditions (e.g., "She clenched her fists, trembling")
4) Internal thoughts or reflections that provide access to the character's psychological processes

Stage 3: Data recording and documentation, relevant emotional data were systematically recorded into a structured data sheet designed to capture both qualitative richness and quantitative coding categories. For each of the 76 identified emotional expressions, the following information was documented:

a) Complete quotation showing the emotional expression (qualitative textual evidence)
b) Page number for reference verification and traceability
c) Preliminary emotion type classification based on Minderop's (2013) framework
d) Presentation technique used by the author (nonverbal behavior, author narration, or dialogue)
e) Narrative context (plot stage, triggering event, relational dynamics)

This documentation process systematically organized qualitative textual evidence while preparing data for quantitative coding.

Stage 4: Coding and quantification, each of the 76 emotional expressions was coded according to two classification systems:

1) Emotion type coding: Each expression was categorized using Minderop's (2013) emotion classification framework, which includes sadness, fear, love, guilt, anger, hatred,

shame, happiness, pain, disgust, and complex/mixed emotions. When a single quotation reflected multiple overlapping emotions, it was coded as "complex emotions" to acknowledge psychological nuance.

2) Presentation technique coding: Each expression was simultaneously coded according to how the author presented the emotion: (1) nonverbal behavior (gestures, physical reactions, body language), (2) author narration (explicit narrative description of emotional states), or (3) dialogue (verbal expression through character speech).

These codes were then tallied to generate quantitative frequency data:

- Frequency count of each emotion type across all 76 quotations
- Frequency count of each presentation technique across all 76 quotations
- Percentage distributions calculated from these frequencies to show relative prominence

This systematic four-stage procedure ensured that all emotional instances were captured consistently and comprehensively, producing both rich qualitative descriptions for interpretive analysis and reliable quantitative patterns for empirical mapping.

Data analysis

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis integrated both qualitative interpretation and quantitative pattern identification through four interconnected analytical steps. Qualitative analysis involved interpretive examination of the 76 textual quotations to understand the psychological and narrative dimensions of emotional expressions. This process included:

1) Deep reading and interpretation: Each quotation was analyzed for its psychological meaning, examining what the emotion reveals about the character's internal state, motivations, conflicts, and coping mechanisms.
2) Contextual analysis: The narrative context surrounding each emotional expression was examined, including triggering events, relational dynamics, plot stage, and consequences of the emotion within the story.
3) Characterization technique analysis: The literary techniques used to convey each emotion were analyzed qualitatively, assessing how nonverbal cues, narrative description, or dialogue contribute to character depth and reader engagement.
4) Thematic synthesis: Emotional expressions were grouped thematically to identify recurring patterns such as vulnerability, trauma response, relational conflict, and resilience, providing a coherent psychological portrait of the protagonist.

Quantitative analysis involved statistical procedures to identify patterns and distributions within the coded data:

1) Frequency calculation: The occurrence of each emotion type was counted across all 76 quotations (e.g., sadness appeared 14 times, fear 11 times). Similarly, the occurrence of each presentation technique was tallied (e.g., nonverbal behavior 30 times, author narration 27 times, dialogue 19 times).
2) Percentage distribution: Percentages were calculated for each category to determine relative prominence (e.g., sadness = 18.4%, nonverbal behavior = 39.5%). These percentages allow comparison of the dominance of different emotions and techniques.

3) Data display: Frequency tables were constructed to present quantitative findings systematically (see Tables 1 and 2 in Results section), enabling visual identification of dominant patterns.
4) Pattern comparison: Quantitative distributions were compared to identify relationships between emotion types and presentation techniques (e.g., which emotions tend to be shown through which techniques).

The four analytical steps integrated both qualitative insights and quantitative patterns. Step 1, Classifying emotion types based on Minderop's (2013) psychological and literary framework, using both qualitative interpretation of emotional meaning and quantitative frequency data to establish the protagonist's emotional profile. Step 2, identifying narrative contexts through qualitative close reading of plot stages, triggering events, and relational dynamics surrounding each emotional expression, while tracking when different emotions appear most frequently across the narrative arc. Step 3, comparing emotional patterns across different narrative stages by synthesizing qualitative interpretation of character development with quantitative frequency comparisons to trace emotional evolution and narrative function. Step 4, interpreting pedagogical implications by connecting qualitative insights about psychological depth and reader engagement with quantitative evidence of emotional complexity and inferential demands, thereby linking findings to Merdeka Curriculum learning outcomes related to empathy development, emotional literacy, and critical character analysis.

To enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of both qualitative interpretation and quantitative coding, two validation strategies were employed triangulation. Findings were systematically contrasted with relevant theories from literary psychology (Hogan, 2011; Minderop, 2013), emotion studies (Krech's emotion taxonomy), and narratology (characterization theory) to ensure theoretical coherence and interpretive validity.

Then peer debriefing was applied. Specialists in literary psychology and experienced literature educators reviewed the coded data, interpretive conclusions, and pedagogical implications to ensure referential adequacy, coding reliability, and interpretive depth, following Endraswara's (2013) recommendations for literary psychology studies. These validation strategies strengthen the study's analytical rigor for both qualitative interpretation and quantitative measurement.

This study deliberately focuses solely on the primary character's emotional expressions to maintain analytical depth and prevent the scope from becoming too broad for a single narrative-based investigation. Supporting characters are excluded from the analysis to ensure coherent focus on the protagonist's psychological journey. Additionally, the emphasis on emotion-presentation strategies omits micro-linguistic features such as diction choices, metaphorical expressions, and syntactic structures. While previous stylistic research (Leech & Short, 2007; Makhloof, 2020) acknowledges that these elements contribute to emotional portrayal, this boundary is set to keep the analysis aligned with the study's primary objectives. These scope limitations ensure methodological clarity and allow the study to offer a focused and coherent emotional mapping that directly addresses the research questions.

Findings

This section presents the findings from the analysis of 76 emotional expressions identified in the novel Leiden. The results are organized into three subsections: (1) the distribution and frequency of emotion types experienced by the protagonist, (2) the presentation techniques used by the author to convey these emotions, and (3) patterns of complex emotional representations. These findings

provide empirical evidence regarding the protagonist's emotional landscape and the narrative strategies employed to depict psychological states.

Main character's emotion profile: a comprehensive mapping

Analysis of 76 emotional quotations reveals that the protagonist's emotional landscape is dominated by sadness (18.4%), followed by love and fear (14.5% each), and guilt (11.8%). Table 1 presents the complete distribution of emotion types identified in the novel.

Table 1. *Distribution of main character's emotion types in novel Leiden*

No.	Emotion Type	Frequency	Percentage	Example Quotation
1.	Sadness	14	18.4%	"He stared at the distant fog, raindrops wiping the window as if wiping away remaining hopes in his chest."
2.	Love	11	14.5%	"In silence, he stored thousands of unsaid words of affection, crystallizing into increasingly heavy burden."
3.	Fear	11	14.5%	"Every phone ring made his heart beat fast, anticipating bad news that might come suddenly."
4.	Guilt	9	11.8%	"That shadow kept haunting him, reminding of wrong choices that had determined his life path."
5.	Anger	7	9.2%	"He bit his lip hard, containing burning anger in his chest."
6.	Hatred	5	6.6%	"His eyes narrowed seeing that photo, his lips curled containing familiar disgust."
7.	Pain	4	5.3%	"The wound in his heart felt more painful than the wound on his hand, both leaving marks."
8.	Happiness	3	3.9%	"A thin smile finally blossomed, warming the room that had felt frozen."
9.	Shame	3	3.9%	"He bowed deeply, hoping the floor would swallow him whole."
10.	Disgust	1	1.3%	"His stomach felt nauseous seeing that naked hypocrisy."
11.	Others	8	10.5%	"Mixed feelings between emotion, disappointment, and little hope."
	Total	**76**	**100%**	

As shown in Table 1, the four most frequent emotions: sadness, love, fear, and guilt, collectively account for 59.2% of all emotional expressions. Sadness appears most frequently (14 instances, 18.4%), suggesting that the protagonist's emotional experience is characterized primarily by loss, disappointment, and melancholy. Love and fear each appear 11 times (14.5%), indicating that the protagonist simultaneously experiences emotional attachment and psychological insecurity. Guilt appears 9 times (11.8%), reflecting ongoing internal conflict regarding past decisions and moral responsibility.

Negative or distressing emotions (sadness, fear, guilt, anger, hatred, pain, shame, disgust) account for 70.4% of all emotional expressions, while positive emotions (love, happiness) represent only 18.4%. This distribution indicates that Rhea inhabits an emotional world marked by vulnerability, insecurity, and longing, psychological states central to adolescent identity formation and trauma processing. Complex or mixed emotions appear in 8 instances (10.5%), representing situations where

the protagonist experiences simultaneous or ambivalent feelings that cannot be classified into a single emotion category. These instances reflect psychological nuance and emotional maturity in the characterization.

Emotion presentation techniques: dominance of indirect strategies

Analysis of presentation strategies reveals the author's preference for indirect emotional portrayal. Table 2 presents the distribution of presentation techniques used to convey the protagonist's emotions.

Table 2. *Main character's emotion presentation techniques*

No.	Presentation Technique	Frequency	Percentage	Main Characteristics
1.	Nonverbal behavior	30	39.5%	Gestures, bodily tension, physical movements
2.	Author narration	27	35.5%	Narrator's explicit emotional description
3.	Dialogue	19	25.0%	Verbal expression through conversation
	Total	**76**	**100%**	

Nonverbal behavior emerged as the most dominant presentation technique with 30 instances (39.5%). This category includes physical gestures, bodily reactions, facial expressions, and somatic responses that indirectly signal emotional states without explicit verbal or narrative labeling. Examples include clenched fists indicating anger, trembling hands suggesting fear, or averted gaze reflecting shame. Author narration appears in 27 instances (35.5%), representing situations where the narrator explicitly describes the protagonist's emotional state or provides psychological commentary. This technique offers direct access to the character's internal experience but varies in the degree of interpretive guidance provided to readers.

Dialogue accounts for 19 instances (25.0%), representing emotions expressed verbally through the protagonist's speech in conversational contexts. This technique requires readers to infer emotional intensity and sincerity from linguistic choices, conversational context, and paralinguistic cues mentioned in surrounding narration. The predominance of nonverbal behavior (39.5%) and author narration (35.5%) over dialogue (25%) indicates a characterization strategy that emphasizes implicit emotional cues requiring active reader interpretation. This distribution reflects a "show, don't tell" approach where emotional states are demonstrated through observable behaviors and selective narrative commentary rather than through explicit verbal declaration.

Patterns in emotion-technique relationships

Cross-analysis of emotion types and presentation techniques reveals several patterns. Sadness, guilt, pain, and shame are predominantly conveyed through nonverbal behavior, suggesting that these emotions involve physical manifestations and social inhibition. Fear appears relatively evenly across all three techniques, indicating its multifaceted expression through bodily reactions, internal awareness, and verbal acknowledgment. Anger and hatred appear more frequently through dialogue

and author narration, suggesting these emotions are more likely to be verbalized or explicitly described. Love is distributed across all techniques, reflecting its complex expression through both subtle gestures and explicit statements. Complex emotions are conveyed exclusively through author narration, as this technique is best suited to describing simultaneous or contradictory emotional states that require interpretive framing.

Complex emotion representation patterns

Eight quotations (10.5%) reflect multilayered emotional states characterized by ambivalence, conflicting desires, or simultaneous contradictory feelings. Examples include frustration mixed with hope, longing combined with resentment, or relief tinged with guilt. These complex representations were expressed entirely through author narration, as this technique provides the narrative space necessary to articulate psychological nuance and emotional contradiction.

The presence of complex emotion categories highlights the protagonist's psychological depth and emotional sophistication. Rather than experiencing emotions in simple, discrete categories, Rhea often navigates overlapping or conflicting feelings that reflect the complexity of human psychological experience, particularly during adolescent development when identity formation involves managing contradictory self-perceptions and relational demands.

The analysis yielded three primary findings: (1) the protagonist's emotional landscape is dominated by negative emotions (70.4%), particularly sadness, fear, and guilt, indicating psychological vulnerability and ongoing internal conflict; (2) the author employs predominantly indirect presentation techniques, with nonverbal behavior (39.5%) and author narration (35.5%) accounting for 75% of emotional portrayals, suggesting a characterization strategy that emphasizes inferential reading; and (3) complex emotions appear in 10.5% of instances, exclusively through author narration, reflecting psychological nuance that requires interpretive engagement from readers.

These patterns demonstrate that the emotional representation in *Leiden* is characterized by psychological depth, narrative sophistication, and interpretive demands that align with pedagogical goals related to emotional literacy, empathetic reasoning, and analytical reading within the Merdeka Curriculum framework.

Discussion

This study examined the emotional expressions of the protagonist in Dwi Nur Rahmawati's novel *Leiden* and interpreted their implications for character-based literature education within the Merdeka Curriculum. The findings reveal three significant patterns: (1) the protagonist's emotional landscape is dominated by negative emotions, particularly sadness, fear, and guilt; (2) the author employs predominantly indirect presentation techniques that require inferential reading; and (3) complex emotions appear frequently, reflecting psychological nuance. This discussion interprets these findings in relation to existing theory and empirical evidence, examines their pedagogical implications, and acknowledges study limitations.

Interpretation of emotional patterns: psychological realism and adolescent development

The findings revealed that the emotional structure of the protagonist in *Leiden* was dominated by sadness (18.4%), followed by fear and love (14.5% each), and guilt (11.8%). Collectively, negative or distressing emotions account for 70.4% of all emotional expressions, while positive emotions represent only 18.4%. This asymmetric distribution reflected a psychological state characterized by vulnerability, internal conflict, and emotional distress, patterns consistent with trauma processing and identity negotiation during adolescence.

These emotions did not appear in isolation; instead, they form a dynamic configuration that reflects Rhea's inner conflicts and struggle for psychological stability. The coexistence of sadness with love demonstrated emotional ambivalence: the protagonist experiences attachment and longing while simultaneously confronting loss and disappointment. Similarly, the prominence of fear alongside guilt indicated ongoing anxiety about consequences and moral responsibility. This emotional complexity aligns with developmental psychology research showing that adolescents frequently experience contradictory emotions as they navigate identity formation, relational uncertainty, and moral conflicts (Steinberg, 2005). Hogan (2011) argues that literary representations of emotional complexity enable readers to recognize and validate their own psychological experiences, thereby fostering emotional literacy and self-understanding.

The prevalence of guilt (11.8%) is particularly significant from a character education perspective. Guilt reflects moral self-evaluation and concern for ethical standards: cognitive-emotional processes central to moral development. When students encounter characters experiencing guilt, they engage with questions about responsibility, consequences, and ethical decision-making. This interpretive work supports the Merdeka Curriculum's emphasis on reflective moral reasoning and the development of moral integrity within the Pancasila Student Profile (Kemendikbudristek, 2022; Rokayah et al., 2023).

The emotional configuration observed in *Leiden* thus demonstrates psychological realism that mirrors developmental challenges faced by adolescents. This alignment strengthens the novel's relevance as a pedagogical resource for character education, as it provides authentic emotional contexts through which students can explore their own psychological experiences and develop empathy for others navigating similar struggles.

Inferential reading demands: "Show, Don't Tell" and active reader engagement

The study revealed that the authors employed predominantly indirect emotional presentation techniques, with nonverbal behavior accounting for 39.5% and author narration for 35.5% of all emotional expressions, while dialogue represents only 25%. This distribution indicated a sophisticated characterization strategy where the author prefers to "show" rather than "tell" character emotional states, requiring readers to actively infer psychological meanings from textual cues.

The dominance of nonverbal behavior as a presentation technique has important pedagogical implications. When emotions are conveyed through gestures, bodily tension, facial expressions, and physical movements, readers must engage in what Mar and Oatley (2008) describe as "social simulation", mentally reconstructing the character's emotional state by linking observable behaviors with internal psychological processes. This cognitive activity strengthens theory of mind capacities

and empathetic reasoning because it replicates the interpretive work required in real-life social interactions (Fernandez-Quintanilla, 2020).

Cross-analysis of emotion types and presentation techniques reveals culturally and psychologically meaningful patterns. Sadness, guilt, pain, and shame are predominantly conveyed through nonverbal behavior, suggesting that these emotions involve social inhibition and internal suppression: patterns consistent with Indonesian cultural norms that emphasize emotional restraint and face-saving in public contexts (Matsumoto, 2009). In contrast, anger and hatred appear more frequently through dialogue and author narration, indicating that these "strong" emotions are more likely to be verbalized or explicitly acknowledged. These patterns reflect culturally shaped emotion display rules that students can analyze as part of sociocultural literacy development.

The inferential demands created by indirect presentation techniques align with pedagogical goals in Phase F of the Merdeka Curriculum, which requires students to analyze intrinsic narrative elements including characterization techniques and psychological depth (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). When students learn to identify how emotions are presented whether through nonverbal cues, narrative description, or dialogue, they develop analytical reading skills that transfer to other literary texts and enhance their interpretive competence. Moreover, inferential reading cultivates emotional sensitivity and empathy because it requires students to actively construct meaning by connecting textual evidence with their own emotional understanding (Halimah, 2020; Pulimeno et al., 2020).

Complex emotions and psychological nuance: enriching character analysis

The presence of complex or mixed emotions in 10.5% of instances, expressed exclusively through author narration, highlights the protagonist's psychological nuance and emotional sophistication. Complex emotions, such as ambivalence, frustration mixed with hope, or simultaneous longing and resentment, reflect the multifaceted nature of human psychological experience, particularly during adolescence when individuals frequently navigate contradictory feelings about self, relationships, and future possibilities.

From a narratological perspective, the use of author narration to convey complex emotions demonstrates the technique's capacity for articulating layered consciousness that cannot be easily expressed through dialogue or nonverbal behavior (Cohn, 2020). This narrative choice requires readers to engage in higher-order interpretation, evaluating how multiple emotional threads coexist and shape the character's decision-making and relational dynamics.

Pedagogically, complex emotions provide rich material for classroom discussions that strengthen critical thinking and ethical reflection. When students analyze ambivalent or contradictory emotional states, they must consider multiple perspectives, evaluate contextual factors, and construct nuanced interpretations—cognitive processes that align with the Merdeka Curriculum's emphasis on critical reasoning and independence (Rokayah et al., 2023). Activities such as emotion mapping, character motivation analysis, and moral dilemma discussions can leverage these complex emotional representations to deepen students' analytical and reflective capacities.

Pedagogical implications for literature education in the merdeka curriculum

The findings offer several concrete implications for designing character-based literature learning activities aligned with Phase F learning outcomes. First, the emotional themes identified—vulnerability, guilt, relational conflict, resilience, can serve as entry points for reflective writing, small-

group discussions, and project-based inquiries. For example, teachers can design activities where students identify instances of guilt in the text, analyze their narrative contexts, and reflect on how characters navigate moral dilemmas. These activities promote self-awareness, ethical reasoning, and empathy - core dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile (Anwas et al., 2022).

Second, the dominance of nonverbal and narrative cues provides a foundation for teaching analytical reading skills through structured emotion-mapping tasks. Students can be trained to locate textual evidence of emotions, classify presentation techniques, and interpret their psychological and narrative significance. This systematic approach develops interpretive competence while reinforcing competencies related to analyzing intrinsic narrative elements.

Next, emotion-mapping frameworks developed in this study can be adapted into assessment instruments that evaluate students' ability to identify emotions accurately, justify interpretations with textual evidence, and explain character motivations coherently. Such assessments align with competency-based evaluation principles in the Merdeka Curriculum, focusing on analytical processes and interpretive reasoning rather than mere content recall.

Finally, the findings support the integration of literary psychology into literature pedagogy as a theoretical lens that enhances both emotional literacy and critical thinking. By applying emotion classification frameworks and characterization analysis systematically, teachers can guide students toward deeper, evidence-based engagement with literary texts, thereby fulfilling curriculum goals related to both intellectual development and character formation.

Theoretical contributions

This study contributes to Indonesian literary scholarship by providing empirical evidence of how contemporary Indonesian novels employ indirect emotional presentation techniques that demand active reader interpretation. The systematic emotion mapping demonstrates that *Leiden* reflects narrative sophistication consistent with global trends toward inferential characterization in modern fiction (Siregar, 2021). Additionally, the study extends literary psychology research in Indonesia by applying Minderop's (2013) emotion classification framework to a contemporary novel, demonstrating its analytical utility and pedagogical applicability.

Limitations and directions for future research

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study focuses exclusively on the protagonist, excluding emotional dynamics involving supporting characters. While this focus ensures analytical depth, it limits understanding of relational emotional patterns and interpersonal dynamics that may contribute additional pedagogical value. Future research could examine emotional interactions among multiple characters to explore how relationships shape emotional expression and character development.

Second, the study does not analyze micro-linguistic features such as metaphorical language, lexical choices, or syntactic structures that contribute to emotional atmosphere. While this boundary maintains focus on emotion types and presentation techniques, stylistic analysis could provide complementary insights into how linguistic choices shape readers' emotional responses. Future studies employing stylistic or corpus linguistic approaches could enrich understanding of emotional representation in Indonesian fiction.

Third, emotion coding involves interpretive judgment despite validation strategies such as theory triangulation and peer debriefing. Different readers may interpret ambiguous emotional cues differently, reflecting individual differences in emotional knowledge and cultural background. Future research could employ reader response methodologies to investigate how diverse readers interpret emotional expressions, thereby exploring the interaction between textual features and reader characteristics.

Fourth, this study examines one novel within a specific cultural and literary context. Comparative research analyzing emotional patterns across multiple Indonesian novels or contrasting Indonesian and international works could establish whether the patterns observed are text-specific, author-specific, or reflect broader trends in contemporary Indonesian literature.

Finally, while this study proposes pedagogical applications, it does not empirically test their effectiveness in classroom settings. Design-based research implementing and evaluating emotion-based literature learning activities would provide evidence regarding their impact on students' emotional literacy, analytical skills, and character development. Such research would bridge the gap between literary analysis and empirical pedagogy, strengthening the evidence base for integrating literary psychology into Indonesian literature education.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the emotional expressions of the main character in Dwi Nur Rahmawati's novel *Leiden* and interpreted their implications for character-based literature education within the Merdeka Curriculum. The analysis of 76 emotional expressions revealed three significant findings. First, the protagonist's emotional landscape is dominated by negative emotions, particularly sadness (18.4%), fear (14.5%), and guilt (11.8%), reflecting psychological vulnerability and internal conflict characteristic of adolescent development. Second, the author employs predominantly indirect presentation techniques, with nonverbal behavior (39.5%) and author narration (35.5%) accounting for 75% of emotional portrayals, indicating a "show, don't tell" characterization strategy that requires inferential reading. Third, complex or mixed emotions appear in 10.5% of instances, exclusively through author narration, demonstrating psychological nuance that demands higher-order interpretation.

These findings demonstrate that the emotional structure of the protagonist in *Leiden* reflects psychological realism that mirrors developmental challenges faced by adolescents, including identity formation, relational uncertainty, and moral conflict. The emotional portrayals are conveyed through narrative and nonverbal cues that require active reader interpretation, offering rich opportunities for analytical engagement. The study establishes that emotional analysis can serve as a foundation for designing character-oriented and analytical literature activities aligned with Phase F learning outcomes in the Merdeka Curriculum, thereby supporting both intellectual development and character formation.

This study contributes to Indonesian literary scholarship by establishing an analytical model that integrates emotion classification frameworks with narratology theory. The systematic emotion mapping demonstrates that contemporary Indonesian novels employ sophisticated indirect presentation techniques, while the findings regarding relationships between emotion types and presentation techniques advance characterization theory by revealing culturally and psychologically meaningful patterns in emotional representation.

The findings offer several practical applications for literature teaching within the Merdeka Curriculum. The emotional patterns identified can be transformed into structured teaching materials that guide students in recognizing and interpreting emotional dynamics. The dominance of nonverbal cues and author narration provides a foundation for designing learning activities that train students to locate textual evidence, classify presentation techniques, and interpret psychological significance. The emotion-mapping framework can serve as the basis for assessment instruments that evaluate students' analytical accuracy and interpretive coherence. Finally, the study highlights the importance of strengthening teachers' competence in literary psychology through professional development programs focused on evidence-based, psychologically informed reading practices.

Several directions for future research emerge from this study. First, design-based research should implement and evaluate the pedagogical applications proposed, particularly regarding their effectiveness in enhancing students' emotional literacy and character development. Second, comparative studies analyzing emotional patterns across multiple Indonesian novels would establish whether the observed patterns reflect broader literary trends. Third, reader response research investigating how diverse students interpret emotional representations would provide insights into the development of the Pancasila Student Profile. Fourth, stylistic analysis examining micro-linguistic features could complement this study's focus on emotion types and presentation techniques. Finally, multi-character analysis exploring emotional dynamics in relationships would provide more comprehensive understanding of how emotions function within narrative systems.

By pursuing these research directions while implementing the practical recommendations, educators and scholars can strengthen the integration of literary psychology into Indonesian literature education, supporting the Merdeka Curriculum's dual goals of analytical competence and character formation.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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