

## A STUDY OF OLIVER TWIST INFERIORITY ON CHARLES DICKENS'S *OLIVER TWIST*

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### ABSTRACT

This study focuses on Oliver Twist inferiority feeling during his childhood life. Oliver Twist as the main character of the novel experienced several miserable treatments from people around him. Along with the inferiority feeling, unfortunately it brings some effects towards him. This is the reason of why this study created by describing the inferiority feelings together with the impact qualitatively. Since the study is in literature matter, psychological and sociological approaches were applied to elaborate the inferior feeling experienced by the main character. There were five settings where Oliver Twist got bad treatment done by several supporting figures and made him become an innocent, rebel and courageous boy as the effects of those inferiority in this study.

**Keywords: Characterization, Inferiority, Psychological approach, Sociological approach**

### INTRODUCTION

Literature is an art of human expressing feelings in the form of aesthetic writing like prose. The prose includes short story and novel. In relation to novel, some authors try to make their novel emotional. Their novels are awash in sentiment; they want us to feel deeply and sometimes to do something about the situations that evoke feelings in us, as in the case of reform fiction such as Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*.

This novel explores Oliver Twist as the main character, a young boy living with poverty and without parents. His journey started when he was abandoned and trapped in workhouse. He got abuse here until he escaped from that place and was caught by Mr. Sowerberry. Unfortunately, he was suffered inferior feeling towards Noah, one of the undertakers at Mr. Sowerberry's house. Oliver got mad and attacked Noah. That accident made him ran away to London and he experienced the worst

inferiority by Fagin's gang. Oliver was accused as a thief until he met with Mr. Brownlow who finally adopted Oliver and also met with his aunt, Rose.

Oliver Twist inferiority is very interesting to discuss. It is a fabulous novel written by Charles Dickens. It is the first English novel using children character. It is also an expression of Dickens' burning indignation. Charles Dickens Oliver Twist consists of satires, social, and psychological conflicts. Last but not least, Oliver Twist has given inspirations for film production. That is why this study is created to analyze the inferiority experienced by Oliver Twist and the effects of inferiority toward him as a child.

## DATA SOURCE

The data which will be studied textually here are collected and selected from the novel as the source of data. The initial data collection are reading a novel, doing research in the library and browsing in the internet, reviewing the related studies to govern the conceptual models, and using the conceptual models. It means that the data can be collected and selected according to the need of the study later to be analyzed as supporting evidence, but they are not corrupted in order to suit the purpose. The data are all the words, phrase, clauses, and further discourse that contain inferiority in the novel entitled *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens and published by Collins London and Glasgow.

## METHODS

This study used two kinds of approaches, psychological and sociological approach. Hardjana (1983: 60) in his book *Kritik Sastra: Suatu Pengantar* says that psychological approach can be seen from many points: a. the discussion about the process of creating a work of art and about the writer, b. the discussion about the teaching or norms of psychology which can be obtained a literary work, c. the influence of literary work of art to the reader or audience. Thus this approach is used by the writer to get fixed analysis and accurate data. Further, according to Guerin (1979: 272) in *A Handbook of Critical Approach to Literature* states that "The sociological approach to literature is an approach in which work of art is studied in its social milieu". This approach has relation with the social condition. Because inferiority is the basic problem of this research that is Oliver Twist inferiority is the product system of a social system which has produced and fostered innumerable other inequalities, discriminations, inferiorities, and degradations. To analyse the data, this study applied descriptive-qualitative method on the bases of psychological approach, sociological approach, and the conceptual models of some theories, such inferiority. After that, presenting the analysis is by dividing into two great divisions according to the objective of the research; those are the description of Oliver Twist inferiority experiences and conveyance of the inferiority effects toward Oliver Twist. Finally, concluding the analysis of the research is qualified; the research of analysis is only applicable to the subject analyzed.

## THEORETICAL REVIEW

This study used the concept of characterization from Holman and Harmon (1986) and inferiority by Huffman, et al (1987). Characterization concept is used to support the analysis of characters in the novel; meanwhile the inferiority is the main focus of this study analysis.

## Characterization

Characterization is the characteristic of the character in a story. Characterization explains the image of a character in a story. Holman and Harmon (1986: 81) stated the creation of this imaginary person so that they exist for the reader as lifelike is called Characterization. Furthermore, they serve three fundamental methods of characterization in fiction as follows (1) The explicit presentation by the author of the character through direct exposition, either in an introductory block or more often piecemeal throughout the work, illustrated by action; (2) The presentation of the character in action, with little or no explicit comment by the author, in the expectation that the reader will be able to deduce the attributes of the actor from the action and (3) The representation from within a character, without comment on the character's inner self, with the expectation that the reader will come to clear understanding of the attributes of the character. Jones (1968:33) in *Outlines of Literature* says in the following (1) Dramatic method, in the dramatic method we form our opinions of the character from what they do and say their environment and from what other characters think of them. (2) Analytic method, in the analytic method the author comments upon the characters, explaining their motives, their appearances and their thoughts. Based on both characterization methods, the characterization of the characters can be seen from their work, their environments, and their opinions and from the author's comments upon them. Thus, through both the theories, *Oliver Twist's* character can be applied in this writing as well as possible. The character is not only taken from dramatic method but also taken from the analytic method as Jones said above.

## Inferiority

Everyone believes that God creates a wide range of things and thoughts, including male and female, young and old, poor and rich, true and false, honest and dishonest. These are broad statements. It could be used as either the subject or the object. A common thought is whether one has a high or low status. Being a superior or even an inferior is a fate. All of this is a part of our lives as humans.

According to Hendarsyah (2020:30), emotions are an important aspect of life. Inferiority is a part of emotion which is a feeling worst, feeling that somebody else is worst than others. It is also the condition or state of feeling insufficient or inferior, particularly in comparison to one's peers or others in a comparable situation. Huffman, et al (1987: 486) in *Psychology in Action* noted Alder's idea about inferiority; they stated that feelings of inferiority develop from early childhood experiences of helplessness and incompetence. Inferiority exists because the existences of the other things or the other people that have better condition and have higher domination.

Feelings of inferiority are all too common in our society. Inferiority can result in negative behaviours such as aggression or envy of others. Inferiority can manifest itself in a variety of ways, as Bride explains, as the following how and when people feel inferior will be determined by their guiding fiction. A person whose ideal is wealth will feel inferior in the presence of a person of reputed wealth, but superior in the company of others who are not as wealthy as himself; similarly, a person who values learning will feel inferior in the presence of a reputed scholar. Brandon (1967: 67) in his *Outwitting Your Inferiority Complex* stated that the individual who sets a high value upon social position will feel inferior in the presence of a person of rank or society. Inferiority is concerned with society, with what values becomes the norm of life. If wealth is the standard, people who lack wealth will feel inferior. This emotion can be expressed through withdrawal from social contacts, excessive

seeking of attention, criticism of others, overly dutiful obedience, and worry. The mental existence is ruled by a sense of inferiority, which can be seen in the sensation of incompleteness and unrequited affection, as well as in the constant struggle of both individuals and human existence.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Inferiority experienced by Oliver Twist**

Oliver Twist is a portrayal of everyday life that incorporates the child's problem, which is inferiority, as seen through the child's eyes. Dickens' main character, Oliver Twist, ponders the nature of inferiority. Poor husbands and wives were separated to prevent them from having children and extending the lower class because it was believed that certain vices were inherent in the impoverished and those poor families promoted rather than prevented such vices.

### **Inferiority in workhouse**

Throughout the story, the workhouse represents the moral duplicity of the working class. The Victorian middle class saw cleanliness as a moral value, and the workhouse was designed to save the poor from the immoral state of dirt. The workhouse in Dickens' story, on the other hand, is filthy. Workhouses were intended to protect the poor from famine, illness, and filth, but instead end up inflicting such horrors on the poor. The middle-class characters' belief that the lower classes are inherently base, criminal, and filthy serves to maintain their view of themselves as a clean and morally upright social group. The gentlemen on the workhouse board refer to Oliver as a "savage" who will be punished. Following Oliver's ridiculous desire for more food, the board devises a plan to apprentice him to a harsh master in the hopes that he will die soon. Even when the upper classes claim to be alleviating the lower classes' plight, they end up exacerbating it. Furthermore, Mr. Bumble's actions highlight middle-class hypocrisy, particularly when he blames Oliver for not graciously accepting his bad luck, as shown below:

‘Please, sir, I want some more.’

The master was a fat, healthy man; but he returned very pale.

‘What!’ said the master at length, in a faint voice.

‘Please, sir,’ replied Oliver, ‘I want some more.’

The mater aimed a blow at Oliver’s head with the ladle; pinioned him in his arms; and shrieked aloud for the beadle.

The board was sitting in solemn conclave, when Mr. Bumble rushed into the room in great excitement, and addressing the gentleman in the high chair, said, ‘Mr. Limbkins, I beg your pardon, sir! Oliver Twist has asked me for some more!’

There was a general start. Horror was depicted on every countenance.

‘For more!’ said Mr. Limbkins. ‘Compose yourself, Bumble, and answer me distinctly. Do I understand that he asked for more, after he had eaten the supper allotted by the dietary?’

‘He did, sir, replied Bumble.

‘That boy will be hung,’ said the gentleman in the white waistcoat. ‘I know that boy will be hung.’ (Dickens, 1838: 15)

To save Oliver from what they believe is his certain fate as a criminal; the board basically guarantees his early death by apprenticing him to a cruel employer. The workhouse perpetuates the vices that it is supposed to eradicate. In a joke, one workhouse kid with a "mad hungry" expression threatens to eat another boy. The workhouse is similar to the slave system in that inmates are fed and clothed as little as possible and are expected to work at duties prescribed by the board, and they are expected to put on a cheerful, thankful acceptance of the horrible conditions that have been imposed on them. When Oliver does not, he is sold rather than sent away freely and he is sent to the prison as in the following:

“For a week after the commission of the impious and profane offence of asking for more, Oliver remained a close prisoner in the dark and solitary room to which he had been consigned by the wisdom and mercy of the board.” (Dickens, 1838: 16)

### **Inferiority in Mr. Sowerberry house**

The relationship between Noah Claypole and Oliver exemplifies Victorian England's preoccupation with class divisions. Noah, the son of impoverished parents, is used to people who are better off than him mocking him. As a result, he is relieved to have Oliver around, because Oliver, as an orphan, is in much worse shape than he is. Oliver's attack on Noah marks a watershed moment in his character's development. In this scenario, Noah is jealous of Oliver's rapid development. One day, he criticizes Oliver's late mother. Oliver confronts him in a rage. Charlotte and Mrs. Sowerberry come to Noah's aid, and the three of them beat and lock Oliver in the cellar as follows:

‘Work us,’ said Noah, ‘how’s your mother?’

‘She’s dead,’ replied Oliver; ‘don’t you say anything about her to me!’

‘What did she die of, Work us?’ said Noah.

‘Of a broken heart, some of our old nurses told me,’ replied Oliver: more as if he was talking to himself than answering Noah. ‘I think I know what it must be to die of that!’

‘Tol de rol lol lol, right fol lairy, Work us,’ said Noah, as a tear rolled down Oliver’s check.

‘What’s set you a snivelling now?’

‘Not you,’ replied Olive, hastily brushing the tear away.

‘Don’t think it.’

‘Oh not me, eh!’ sneered Noah.

‘No, not you,’ replied Oliver, sharply. ‘There; that’s enough. Don’t say anything more to me about her: you’d better not!’

‘Better not!’ exclaimed Noah. ‘Well! Better not! Work us, don’t be impudent. Your mother, too! She was a nice ‘un, she was. Oh, Lord!’ And here, Noah nodded his head expressively; and curled up as much of his small red nose as muscular action could collect together, for the occasion.

‘You know, Work us,’ continued Noah, emboldened by Oliver’s silence, and speaking in a jeering tone of affected pity: of all toes the most annoying: ‘You know, Work us, it can’t be helped now; and of course you couldn’t help it then; and I’m very sorry for it ; and I’m sure we all are, and pity you very much. But you must know, Work us, your mother was a regular right-down bad ‘un.’

‘What did you say?’ inquired Oliver, looking up very quickly.

‘A regular right-down bad ‘un, Work us,’ replied Noah, coolly. ‘And it’s a great deal better, Work us, that she died when she did, or else she’d have been hard labouring in Bride well, or transported, or hung: which is more likely than either, isn’t it?’ (Dickens, 1838: 51)

### **Inferiority in courtroom**

Oliver's legal experience exemplifies the poor's precarious legal position. Mr. Fang is a logically named representative of the English legal system. The law is armed with razor-sharp teeth, ready to devour any unfortunate pauper brought before "justice." Despite the lack of strong evidence or witnesses, and despite Brownlow's testimony that he does not believe Oliver is the thief, Mr. Fang condemns Oliver and sentences him to three months of hard labour. As seen below, the sentence is effectively a death sentence in Oliver's debilitated state:

“A nice person to prefer a charge against a poor boy!” said fang, with a comical effort to look humane. ‘I consider, sir that you have obtained possession of that book, under very suspicious and disreputable circumstances; and you may think yourself very fortunate that the owner of the property declines to prosecute. Let this be a lesson to you, my man, or the law will overtake you yet. The boy is discharged. Clear the office.’ (Dickens, 1838: 91)

Oliver's inability to speak at his trial due to exhaustion and illness serves as a metaphor for the lower class's lack of political power and ability to address its own issues in public. The ability to vote in 1830s England was based on money, so the poor had no say in legislation. Furthermore, the upper classes project their own ideas about the poor onto them, to the point where impoverished people's identities are casually rewritten with little regard for reality. Oliver is unable to speak his own name due to exhaustion and anxiety, so a court official assigns him the fictitious identity "Tom White". Throughout the hearing, Oliver is incorrectly referred to as a "young vagrant" and a "hardened scoundrel" before being declared "guilty." Mr. Bumble creates the name "Oliver Twist" after Oliver is born, making it no longer legal. As these examples demonstrate, Oliver's identity has been shaped throughout his life by more powerful individuals.

### **Inferiority in Fagin’s gang**

Dickens' portrayal of Fagin through Jewish prejudices is one of the more unsettling aspects of *Oliver Twist* today. Dickens characterizes Fagin as a "very elderly shrivelled Jew" with a "villainous-looking and ugly visage." Victorians saw Jews as avaricious gold worshippers and Fagin's eyes “glisten when he pulls out a "magnificent gold watch, glittering with gems" and watches. Oliver is staring at him when he notices him. Fagin grabs a bread knife and inquires about Oliver's whereabouts an hour ago. According to Oliver, he was not as follows:

‘What’s that?’ said the Jew. ‘What do you watch me for? Why are you awake? What have you seen? Speak out, boy! Quick-quick! For your life!’

‘I was not able to sleep any longer, sir,’ replied Oliver, meekly. “I am very sorry if I have disturbed you, sir.’

‘You were not awake an hour ago?’ said the Jew, scowling fiercely on the boy.

‘No! No, indeed!’ replied Oliver.

‘Are you sure?’ cried the Jew: with a still fiercer look than before: and a threatening attitude.

‘Upon my word I was not, sir,’ replied Oliver, earnestly.

‘I was not, indeed, sir.’

‘Tush, tush, my dear!’ said the Jew, abruptly resuming his old manner, and playing with the knife a little, before he laid it down; as if to induce the belief that he had caught it up, in mere sport. (Dickens, 1838: 73)

Oliver's home relationship with Fagin and his gang adds to the novel's premise that upbringing has a greater influence on one's character than biological nature. Dickens believes that the desire for friendship drives people to join the group that welcomes them back. With the implementation of the harsh Poor Law, it is unsurprising that destitute, friendless children will embrace as family anyone who is generous to them and quickly accept that person's ideals. Oliver is also portrayed negatively by Sikes. He threatens Fagin with murder if Oliver hesitates during the robbery. Take the following as an example:

‘Frighten him’ echoed Sikes. ‘It’ll be no sham frightening, mind you. If there’s anything queer about him when we once get into the work, in for a penny, in for a pound. You won’t see him alive again, Fagin. Think of that, before you send him.’ (Dickens, 1838: 171)

As Oliver finds laughter and delight in the company of criminals, it becomes clear how easily Fagin can corrupt him. Dickens criticizes the Victorian portrayal of the poor as naturally immoral, criminal, and filthy.

### **Inferiority in Robbery Mission**

Fagin rushes into the Three Cripples tavern, looking for a man named Monks. He rushes to Sikes' house after failing to locate him. When he arrives at Sikes' house, he finds Nancy, who informs him, in a drunken haze that Sikes is hiding. Fagin tells Nancy about Oliver's plight, and Nancy sobs that she wishes Oliver had died because life with Fagin is worse than death. Fagin responds by stating that Oliver is worth hundreds of pounds to him. When he arrives at his residence, he is greeted by Monks. Monks is perplexed as to why Fagin chose to send Oliver on such a dangerous mission rather than simply turning him into a thief. Monks clearly cares about Oliver. Monks was on the hunt for Oliver and spotted him the day he was imprisoned. Furthermore, Fagin observes that Monks wishes to harden Oliver into a thief, as in:

‘Why, do you mean to say you couldn’t have done it, if you had chosen?’ demanded Monks, sternly. ‘Haven’t you done it, with other boys, scores of times? If you had had patience for a twelvemonth, at most, couldn’t you have got him convicted, and sent safely out of the kingdom; perhaps for life?’

‘Whose turn would that has served, my dear?’ inquired the Jew humbly.

‘Mine,’ replied Monks.

‘But not mine,’ said the Jew, submissively. ‘He might have become of use to me. When there are two parties to a bargain, it is only reasonable that the interests of both should be consulted; is it, my good friend?’

‘What then?’ demanded Monks.

‘I saw it was not easy to train him to the business,’ replied the Jew; ‘he was not like other boys in the same circumstances.’ (Dickens, 1838: 231-232)

The night after the failed heist, Oliver awakens disoriented. He gets up and walks over to the house Sikes tried to convince him to rob. Mr. Giles and Mr. Brittles, two servants, regale the other servants with accounts of the night's events, portraying themselves as valiant heroes. Oliver's shaky knock on the door frightens everyone. Brittle opens the door and sees Oliver standing on the stoop. They accuse Oliver of stealing and drag him inside. The niece of the rich mistress of the mansion calls downstairs to see if the unfortunate critter is truly injured. She sends Brittles to get a doctor and a cop, while Giles carefully guides Oliver upstairs as follows:

“These precautions having been taken, Mr. Giles held on fast by the tinker’s arm (to prevent his running away, as he pleasantly said), and gave the word of command to open the door. Brittles obeyed; the group, peeping timorously over each other’s shoulders, beheld no more formidable object than poor little Oliver Twist, speechless and exhausted, which raised his heavy eyes, and mutely solicited their compassion.

‘A boy!’ exclaimed Mr. Giles, valiantly pushing the tinker into the background. ‘What’s the matter with the-eh?- Why Brittles look here, don’t you know?’

Brittles, which had got behind the door to open it, no sooner saw Oliver, than he uttered a loud cry. Mr. Giles, seizing the boy by one leg and one arm (fortunately not the broken limb) lugged him straight into the hall, and deposited him at full length on the floor thereof.

‘Here he is!’ bawled Giles, calling, in a state of great excitement, up the stair\case; ‘here’s one of the thieves, ma’am! Here’s a thief, miss! Wounded, miss! I shot him, miss; and brittles held the light.’ (Dickens, 1838: 252)

### **The effects of inferiority toward Oliver Twist**

Inadequacy has a strong impact on our lives because it is so prevalent. Inferiority can lead to negative behaviours such as aggression or envy of others. Inferiority can take many forms. Oliver Twist, the main character in Charles Dickens' story, frequently feels inadequate. It affects him as well. Both inside and outside influences have an impact.

### **Becoming an innocent boy**

In his protest of the parish's treatment of Oliver, Dickens criticizes the Victorian portrayal of the poor as innately immoral, criminal, and filthy. After all, Oliver, his main character, is pure, decent, and innocent. Although we might expect a critique of common conceptions of the lower classes to describe many fundamentally good lower-class people, this is not the case. Part of Dickens' goal in writing *Oliver Twist* was to highlight the horrifying conditions in which the lower classes were forced to live, and as a result, the majority of the narrative focuses on the sensationally filthy surroundings in which the impoverished spend their lives, such as in the following:

“Oliver stared innocently in Mr. Bumble’s face at this somewhat contradictory style of address; but that gentleman preventing his offering any remark thereupon, by leading him at once into an adjoining room, with a great window.” (Dickens, 1838: 23)

Oliver, Leeford's love child, is a noble and pure young man. Oliver is simply a victim of The Poor of Law's exploitation at the time. In reality, children have suffered the most as a result of the new Poor Law. They were likely to grow up surly and stupid at best, violent and depraved at worst,



having been malnourished, deprived of any parental affection and supervision, given little or no education, and apprenticed at the earliest possible age to get them off the rates.

### **Becoming a rebel boy**

Someone who is constantly subjected to inferiority becomes bored and irritated. Someone in inferiority may become enraged for a variety of reasons, such as being insulted by someone, and may revolt to protect his or her ideals or dignity. In the workhouse, Noah humiliates Oliver Twist regarding his mother. Oliver Twist is broken by Noah's words. Oliver Twist eventually loses control after a long argument, as the following occurs:

“Crimson with fury, Oliver Twist started up, overthrew the chair and table; seized Noah by the throat; shook him, in the violence of his rage, till his teeth chattered his head; and, collecting his whole force into one heavy bow, felled him to the ground.” (Dickens, 1838: 51)

Oliver is irritated because Noah made a negative remark about his mother. He becomes enraged as a result of his battle and punches Noah. Oliver Twist's character develops. His attack on Noah Claypole demonstrates his vivacious courage, and his defiance of Bumble and determination to pursue his wealth somewhere far away inspire both sorrow and admiration.

### **Becoming a courageous boy**

*Oliver Twist's story is rife with misplaced, assumed, and altered identities. Oliver appears as yet another character in his final home scene. When his true identity is revealed, he swaps it for another, becoming Brownlow's adoptive son. It's strange that after all the hoopla and convoluted plots to keep Oliver's identity hidden, he gives it up almost as soon as he learns it.*

The novel's final chapters provide the long-awaited justice. Fagin dies by hanging. Sikes hangs himself inadvertently, as if fate or a higher power is attempting to take his life. Mr. and Mrs. Bumble have lost their right to run for public office. They become impoverished and are subjected to the same hardships as paupers. Monks never reform, and life never treats them kindly. He continues his slacker, wicked ways and dies in an American jail, true to Brownlow's portrayal of him as a monster from birth. He can't be saved. He, like Noah, functions as a counterpoint, a character whose traits contrast with and thus highlight those of another to Oliver's character. He is every bit as evil, twisted, and cruel as Oliver is good, virtuous, and compassionate. Of course, Oliver and his pals have a happy, fairy-tale ending. Everyone moves into the same neighbourhood and lives together as one big, happy family.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This study discusses inferiority that happens in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*. The objectives of the research are (1) to emphasize the inferiority experiences of Oliver Twist and (2) to share the effects of the inferiority toward Oliver Twist. Library research including internet browsing is employed to find out the relevant theories, to form conceptual models used to find the data. The data corpus of this research are all of the phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and even discourses related to inferiority in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*. Psychological and sociological approach is used to analyze the data.

The story of *Oliver Twist* is a scathing indictment of Victorian society's treatment of the underprivileged. The workhouses, which are prominently featured in the novel's first few chapters, were institutions established by the Victorian middle class to care for orphaned children. When he requests more food, *Oliver Twist* is made to feel inferior. As a slave, he is not permitted to beg for more, and if he does, he will be sentenced to death by hanging. *Oliver Twist* is ashamed of her mother because she is the child of unknown parents. *Oliver's* courtroom experience exemplifies the poor's precarious legal standing. *Oliver's* inability to speak during his trial due to exhaustion and illness is a metaphor for the lower class's lack of political clout and ability to address its own issues in public. *Oliver* suffers a great deal of inferiority in Fagin's group, such as becoming a victim of Fagin's willingness to murder him, and he becomes a victim in a heist expedition that Fagin had planned. Apart from that, *Oliver* is shot during the robbery expedition, and the slaves, Brittles, suspect him of being a criminal.

Because of *Oliver Twist's* inadequacy, the results are obtained. Because of his unknown parentage and slavery, *Oliver Twist* becomes an innocent child who is unaware that he is being abused by the authorities. He also becomes a rebel boy after his mother is improperly humiliated, and finally he becomes a courageous boy after all of the inferior feelings he has experienced, he is raised with a new hope that his life has only just begun. His newfound desire to start a family materializes.

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