

**CHILDREN’S EMPOWERMENT IN THE LITTLE PRINCE: A
LITERARY ANALYSIS BASED ON ANSHORI’S FRAMEWORK**

Presented to the Department of English Language Education as Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements to Obtain the Sarjana Pendidikan Degree in English
Language Education



By

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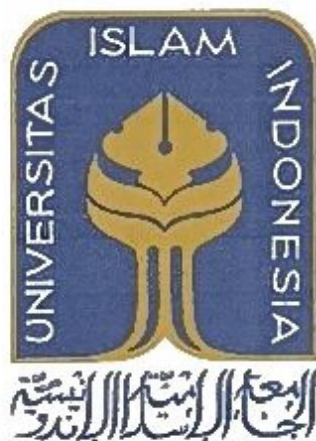
APPROVAL SHEET

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STATEMENT OF WORK'S ORIGINALITY

I honestly confirm that this thesis was originally written by me. This thesis does not contain any work from others except those cited in quotation and references, as a scientific paper should.

Yogyakarta, 9 July 2026



Ning Difani Wulan

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MOTTO

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدًّا فَمُلِقِيهِ

"O humanity! Indeed, you are laboring tirelessly toward your Lord, and you will meet Him." (Al-Insyiqaq, 84:6)

"Beauty lies in the journey itself, where we discover new things, learn from our mistakes, and rise again from our failures. It is through these moments that we move forward and grow into better versions of ourselves."

DEDICATION

I offer this thesis with gratitude to my beloved parents, who consistently offer support, love, and prayer. To all my beloved person who always accompanies and supports without limit, and to myself for my perseverance and hard work in the face of every challenge. I hope this effort brings us all great pride and serve as inspiration.

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CHILDREN'S EMPOWERMENT IN *THE LITTLE PRINCE*: A LITERARY ANALYSIS BASED ON ANSHORI'S FRAMEWORK

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Abstract

Previous studies on Antoine de Saint Exupéry's *The Little Prince* have predominantly focused on its symbolism and philosophical meanings, leaving the dimensions of children's empowerment underexplored. Therefore, this study aims to examine how empowerment dimensions are depicted in *The Little Prince*, as the main character, through a multidimensional perspective. Employing a qualitative textual analysis design, this study adopts Anshori's (2016) conceptualization of children's empowerment focuses on the children's thoughts, actions, and emotional experiences. The primary data source is the novella, focusing on narrative events and character interactions that illustrate empowerment. Within the literary analysis framework, the researcher served as the primary instrument. The findings show the character embodies existential empowerment beyond conventional child agency. The Little Prince demonstrates intellectual independence, responsibility, and emotional sensitivity, which collectively shape a multidimensional conception of empowerment. Furthermore, this study of children's literature challenges the view that children are passive figures and highlights the text's critique of adult rationalism and materialism. In doing so, it highlights the pedagogical significance of literary texts in fostering reflective, ethically grounded individuals.

Keywords: *children's empowerment; children's literature; literary analysis; The Little Prince.*

1. Introduction

Children's literature plays a significant role in education and development, functioning as both enjoyment and a medium for meaning making. Through narrative engagement, children construct connections between fictional events and real-life experiences, helping them interpret and make sense of those experiences (Leland et al., 2022). In this process, literature broadens children's perspectives, stimulates imagination, and cultivates critical capacities such as curiosity and problem-solving. It also represents human behavior, including moral values and empathy. Through these depictions, children learn interpersonal relationships and the universality of emotional experience (Johnson, 2023). Consequently, literature equips children with both cognitive and affective resources to navigate the complexities of their social worlds.

Children's literature has evolved into a powerful educational medium, shaping behavior, psychological well-being, cultural awareness, and cognitive growth (Ismail, 2023). As edutainment, it integrates instruction with engagement, enabling children to internalize

values meaningfully. This integrative function positions literature as a significant tool for fostering children to internalize moral values more effectively through engaging and meaningful experiences (Pulimeno et al., 2020). In this sense, children's literature can be understood as a site of empowerment, where young readers are encouraged to actively interpret and respond to their experiences.

Beyond its focus on empowerment, children's literature has often been shaped by adult-centric perspectives, positioning children as passive recipients (Nodelman, 1992; Gulfusarak, 2014; Kurnia et al., 2024). Works like *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* illustrate how children's voices are marginalized, illustrating the persistence of hierarchical power relations between adults and children (Kurnia et al., 2024). Such portrayals reinforce the construction of childhood as inferior and dependent. This condition is shaped by the significant involvement of adults in the authorship, review, and circulation of literary works, which reinforces unequal power relations between children and adult stakeholders (Sarland, 1999).

In recent children's literature development, representations of children more emphasize agency and autonomy rather than passivity and dependence. (Limantara & Soelistyo, 2025; Mathis, 2015). Anshori (2016) defines empowerment as granting authority, power, or ability to individuals. In the context of children's literature, this change portrays children as active sociological agents and they are capable of understanding, making decisions, and determining their own life choices. This perspective is relevant in works like *The Little Prince*, which challenge conventional views of childhood. As a unique and philosophical work that can be appreciated across different age groups, the novella portrayed a child figure who perceives the world through the heart, in contrast to the rigid and unimaginative outlook of adults (Hale & Fox, 2013).

Previous studies on *The Little Prince* have largely concentrated on its symbolism, moral values, ecological concerns, and philosophical themes. Despite the richness of these scholarly contributions, the portrayal of the child protagonist as an empowered agent remains underexplored, particularly through an integrated framework that examines cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions of empowerment. Such an investigation is important because it reveals how literary texts construct children's capacity for independent thinking, meaningful action, and emotional understanding. Therefore, this study aims to examine the representation of empowerment in *The Little Prince* through the protagonist's thoughts, actions, and feelings. In doing so, it contributes to children's literature studies by advancing a multidimensional perspective on child empowerment and agency, thereby moving beyond traditional symbolic and philosophical interpretations. Specifically, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How is cognitive empowerment represented through the thoughts of the Little Prince?
2. How is behavioral empowerment represented through the actions of the Little Prince?
3. How is affective empowerment represented through the feelings and emotional experiences of the Little Prince?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Children's Literature

As argued by Hunt (1998), children's literature cannot be viewed merely as a form of entertainment, as it plays a crucial role in shaping social, cultural, and ideological perspectives. However, the figure of the child represented in such texts is not neutral, but rather a cultural construct shaped by adult assumptions and interests (Lesnik-Oberstein, 1998). This dynamic leads to what Nodelman (1992) describes as the "colonization" of childhood, in which adult authors position child characters within specific subject roles to

encourage the acceptance of values aligned with adult ideologies. From this perspective, empowerment in *The Little Prince* can be understood as Saint-Exupéry's attempt to offer an alternative subject position—one that challenges superficial adult perspectives while still operating within the linguistic and structural constraints of adult authorship, which remain intelligible across diverse age groups.

This ideological dimension of children's literature has important pedagogical implications, particularly in relation to how meaning is constructed and internalized by young readers. As a pedagogical medium, the quality of children's literature becomes a critical consideration. According to Johnson (2023), narrative elements such as language style, setting, characterization, plot, and theme play a central role in shaping how meaning is produced and received. Among these, characterization is especially influential, as children tend to engage deeply with literary figures and model their understanding of values and behaviours accordingly (Lukens, 1990). The portrayal of characters as brave, reflective, and independent can thus function as a mechanism to reinforce certain ideologies.

Consequently, the selection of children's texts requires critical attention to avoid reproducing stereotypes about unequal power relations (Ismail, 2023), especially given the historical tendency of some narratives to position children as subordinate figures rather than as empowered subjects.

2.2 Children's Empowerment

A growing body of research has demonstrated the applicability of empowerment theory based on Anshori's (2016) concept. Across diverse texts, child characters are consistently represented as active agents who confront family, social, and moral conflicts through various forms of engagement, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, ethical reflection, and interpersonal care (Anshori, 2016; Suryadi & Dariyana, 2022; Anshori & Khoiriyah, 2018; Kurnia et al., 2024). Collectively, these studies affirm that children in literary texts can be represented as active agents capable of moral reasoning, decision-making, and social engagement.

These studies provide comprehensive insights; they predominantly frame empowerment as combination of cognitive, behavior, and affective dimensions. This perspective can be explained more clearly by the concept of the *Cognitive Triangle*, which conceptualizes thoughts, emotions, and actions as mutually influential components of human experience (Beck, 2011). Within this framework, what children do, how they think, and how they feel are deeply interconnected, as decisions emerge from interpretation, and interpretation is shaped by emotional engagement. Without considering these internal dimensions, empowerment risks being reduced to mere agency, rather than a multidimensional process of subject formation.

In this regard, empowerment must be distinguished from agency. According to Drydyk (2013), agency refers to state of affairs, specifically, the extent to which a person is involved in an action or has the scope to achieve goals they value. On the other hand, empowerment is a process of change that can produce results, and that change will improve their lives. Thus, empowerment is not limited to what children do but extends to how they understand themselves and their lives.

The Little Prince offers a distinctively philosophical articulation of empowerment. This novella constructs empowerment through introspection, emotional depth, and existential reflection. The child protagonist embodies a form of childlike consciousness that resists negative social conditioning and instead prioritizes meaning making through affective and

relational understanding. Susilo (2025) notes that the main character engages with existential questions affectively, privileging the heart over rational logic. Furthermore, the enduring significance of the text lies in its dual audience, as it integrates visual creativity and philosophical complexity, allowing it to resonate with both children and adults.

2.3 *The Little Prince*

The Little Prince (*Le Petit Prince*) by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry is a French children's novella first published in 1943 and subsequently translated into more than 250 languages (Hasanah & Manugeran, 2025). The work is widely recognized for its distinctive narrative, which conveys enduring moral themes such as responsibility, empathy, and human relationships. In addition to its thematic depth, the novella has achieved remarkable global recognition, ranking among the best-selling books worldwide alongside works such as *The Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Raihani & Sutrisno, 2025). Beyond its narrative appeal, the text is deeply informed by the author's lived experiences as a pilot and his reflective engagement with human nature (Hasanah & Manugeran, 2025). Written during wartime, Saint Exupéry infused the novella with existential reflection, portraying the Prince as a symbol of authenticity and childlike consciousness (Pratama & Sugandi, 2025).

Given its enduring popularity and thematic richness, scholarly engagement with *The Little Prince* spans a wide range of analytical perspectives. Previous studies have explored symbolic representations—such as the rose, the fox, and various adult characters—as vehicles of moral and philosophical meaning (Raihani & Sutrisno, 2025), alongside ecological readings (Mutmainnah & Qadriani, 2025), linguistic analyses (Azizah et al., 2025), and historically informed interpretations, including postcolonial perspectives (Nabipour, 2023). While these approaches provide valuable insights into the text's symbolic, environmental, and linguistic dimensions, relatively limited attention has been given to how the narrative constructs the child protagonist as an empowered agent. In particular, the role of the text in fostering agency, self-awareness, and personal growth in the child character remains underexplored.

Addressing this gap, the present study adopts a children's empowerment framework to re-examine *The Little Prince* beyond its commonly discussed moral and symbolic dimensions. This study applies empowerment theory, thought, action, and emotional awareness to show how the Prince is constructed as an active agent. By analyzing the Prince's interactions and decisions, this study aims to demonstrate how the text constructs a child figure who is capable of understanding complex relationships and navigating existential challenges, often with greater insight than adult characters. Therefore, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of children's literature as a site where empowerment is not only represented but also narratively enacted.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

This study employed qualitative textual analysis to examine representations of children's empowerment in *The Little Prince*. Textual analysis is defined as an approach aimed at examining how individuals interpret and construct meaning from the world around them (McKee, 2003). In this context, this strategy was applied to explore and interpret the character's thoughts, actions, and feelings as reflected in the narrative. This method emphasizes process, holistic interpretation, and meaning rather than quantifiable measures.

It is grounded in a holistic mode of interpretation that seeks to understand phenomena in their contextual and integrated complexity.

3.2 Research Instrument and Data Collections

Anshori's (2016) empowerment framework served as the primary analytical lens, guiding interpretation of thought, action, and feeling. Guided by this framework, the research focuses on examining how these dimensions are represented. The framework functions as the primary analytical instrument, enabling a systematic interpretation of the character's cognitive, behavioral, and affective expressions.

Data were collected through iterative close reading, note-taking, and identification of excerpts aligned with empowerment dimensions. Excerpts were coded in a classification table, categorizing quotations under cognitive, behavioral, or affective dimensions. To enhance analytical rigor, the text was read repeatedly, allowing for the refinement of categories and the consistent alignment of data with the research focus.

3.3 Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis followed Miles et al.'s (2014) interactive model: collection, condensation, display, and conclusion verification. Data collection involved systematic identification and selection of relevant textual excerpts from *The Little Prince*. This was followed by data condensation, a process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming the data in accordance with the three dimensions of Children's Empowerment. In this stage, data were refined to ensure consistent alignment with the empowerment framework. Subsequently, the data were organized and presented in a structured tabular format to facilitate systematic comparison and interpretation. The final stage involved drawing and verifying conclusions, in which the researcher interpreted the data and continuously refined the findings to ensure consistency and analytical coherence. In addition, to ensure the credibility of the data, the interpretive process was achieved. This process was supported through peer debriefing, involving regular consultation with a lecturer in English Language Department of UII, which allowed for critical reflection, validation of interpretations, and minimization of subjective bias.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Thought Empowerment

4.1.1 Thought Empowerment through Knowledge and Ideas

When *The Little Prince* manages to grasp an abstract concept that adults cannot understand, this shows that the response is an exercise of adult authority to dominate and reshape childhood. While adults see only what is obvious, the Little Prince immediately recognizes the narrator's childhood drawing for what it truly is.

The Little Prince's ability to express his own opinions without following the dictates of adults demonstrates intellectual independence. This intellectual independence shows that The Little Prince is capable of observing his surroundings through the background knowledge and imagination he possesses. In contrast where adults focus solely on logical matters, The Little Prince does not judge things spontaneously; he sees with his heart.

"What is essential is invisible to the eye" (Saint Exupery: 48)

This statement challenges empiricist adult logic by privileging emotional and intuitive knowledge over rational perception. This rigid form of adult rationality ultimately compels the narrator to relinquish his childhood potential (Raihani & Sutrisno, 2025).

Continuing the discussion on adult behavior, the encounters across planets function as a critique of adult rationality, where authority, materialism, and ego are exposed as socially constructed absurdities. Every time he visits them, he always thinks that these adults are illogical.

"The grown-ups are very strange" (*Saint Exupery*: 26)

The Little Prince forms unique opinions and conceptions that criticize power, arrogance, and materialism through his independent observation (Azzahra & Ningtyas, 2024). This kind of criticism actually represents Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's anxiety about World War II in 1943 that conveys a sense of alienation and inner silence. The book's dedication to Léon Werth, who is described as suffering from cold and hunger in France, shows that the serious adults of that era were often caught up in things like politics rather than caring about basic human values. In the narrative, adults are depicted as experiencing adult centric, where they only assign value to things that make them feel comfortable and ignore the emotional truths that children understand more honestly. Referring to the concept of the colonization of children's literature proposed by Nodelman (1992), the criticism presented here serves as a counter-critique directed at adults. Therefore, the actions of adults in the story—or the idea that adults are strange—reverse the social stigma associated with the perception of children's inferiority.

4.1.2 Thought Empowerment through Understanding Other's Feeling

When the pilot is in a bad mood due to his engine failure, a "*matter of life or death*" to his adult logic, the Little Prince ignores the mechanical crisis to focus on the narrator's creative spirit. He senses that drawing the sheep is a more vital act of connection than fixing the plane. This suggests that what adults perceive as urgent may not necessarily reflect deeper human needs.

"When a mystery is too overpowering, one dare not disobey. Absurd as it might seem to me, a thousand miles from any human habitation and in danger of death, I took out of my pocket a sheet of paper and my fountain-pen" (*Saint Exupery*: 7)

Adults often assume that children are incapable of understanding their feelings. However, the Little Prince understands that in isolation, far from human settlements, emotional needs are more urgent than mere mechanical repairs. A similar finding in *The Railway Children* by Anshori (2016), Bobbie, as a child, is capable of recognizing emotional distress and responding in ways that prioritize emotional relief. In certain situations, this enables individuals not only to focus on giving solutions, but also to engage in emotional regulation, thereby allowing them to find an effective resolution.

This perspective can be further illuminated by Raza (2023), whose research highlights the psychological distinctions between adults and children in constructing and prioritizing meaning. Adult cognition, often shaped by materialistic and utilitarian logic, tends to overlook or inadequately address the intrinsic human need for emotional connection. Consequently, values centered on affect, intimacy, and togetherness are frequently marginalized within adult rational frameworks, revealing a fundamental mismatch between emotional needs and rationalist paradigms.

Furthermore, by recognizing the Pilot's distress and demanding a sheep, the Prince challenges the concept of adult-centered assumption that children are powerless and

incapable of managing their life. Shier (2012) argues that society tends to have inaccurate belief that adults are superior, whereas children are positioned as inferior, dependent, and powerless. However, when the Prince ignores the adult logic of the engine failure, he effectively refuses adult dominance by rejecting the Pilot's perspective of what is actually important. Instead of being steered to adult expectations of seriousness, the Prince establishes his own creative priority.

4.2 Action Empowerment

4.2.1 Action Empowerment through Doing Favor

Within the shared social environment of adults and children, agency is not exclusive to adults; children also play a meaningful role in contributing and maintaining their immediate surroundings. In *The Little Prince*, the child protagonist demonstrates a high degree of self-regulation, particularly through his understanding of discipline and responsibility. His care for the rose and removal of baobabs for saving his planet illustrate responsibility and foresight, aligning with Anshori's (2016) action empowerment.

"And when he watered the flower for the last time, and prepared to place her under the shelter of her glass globe, he realized that he was very close to tears" (Saint-Exupéry - p.22)

This episode illustrates his proactive agency that reinforces the representation of the child as capable of responsibility, foresight, and purposeful action. He also waters his Rose, places a screen to protect her from the wind, or puts her under a glass globe, he is providing physical assistance.

These actions extend beyond routine activities and instead reflect a sustained sense of self-awareness in managing daily obligations. This aligns with the concept of action empowerment proposed by Anshori (2016) also Drydyk (2013), which emphasizes the cultivation of responsible habits as a foundation for undertaking more complex roles in the future. By framing his duties as matters of discipline and care, the protagonist demonstrates a heightened level of agency, which is comparable to the empowered child figures in *The Railway Children*, where Bobbie, Peter, and Phyllis actively perform daily tasks to ease their parents' burdens.

Furthermore, the protagonist's ability to distinguish between beneficial and harmful elements in his planet reflects cognitive independence and forms an integral part of his empowerment. He develops and applies his own interpretive framework to manage his place, without reliance on adult instruction or external authority. This individual autonomy is not only cognitive but also ethical, as it shapes how he relates to his environment. From an ecological perspective, this particular situation also resonates how *The Little Prince* offers an implicit critique of human-centered worldviews by positioning the child as a caretaker of the natural world (Mutmainnah & Qadriani, 2025). Rather than endorsing human dominance over nature, the narrative emphasizes interdependence, care, and responsibility as central ethical principles. Although the protagonist appears to assume a protective role, the text ultimately resists celebrating control or domination, instead emphasizing relational ethics between humans and the environment.

4.2.2 Action Empowerment through Bravery

According to Anshori (2016), bravery is not solely reflected in the capacity to perform actions, but also in the willingness to accept consequences. The Prince's acceptance of the

snake's bite symbolizes his existential courage and conscious choice to return to his planet. Recognizing his physical issue, The Little Prince consciously accepts this act because he wants to do what he thinks is right for the rose. The Little Prince feels a duty, towards the rose.

*"You know—my flower. I am responsible for her. And she is so weak!"
(Saint-Exupéry - p.60)*

This decision reflects a deliberate and value-driven form of empowerment, in which the character prioritizes love and responsibility over self-preservation. Rather than being a passive resignation, the act represents an existentially informed choice that demonstrates moral courage in confronting an irreversible consequence for the sake of a deeply held commitment.

The child protagonist's decision to return to his home planet, despite the inherent risks involved, reflects a profound form of emotional responsibility and a deliberate resolution of existential conflict. This act demonstrates that The Little Prince exercises meaningful authority over his own life choices, positioning him as an agentive subject rather than a passive character within the narrative. Consequently, these findings affirm that caring for the Rose constitutes an expression of active involvement, where children are represented as sociological actors capable of using intelligence and courage in maintaining meaningful relational bonds.

Furthermore, within the framework of Anshori (2016), bravery in *The Little Prince* extends beyond conventional notions of fearlessness to encompass the acceptance of ultimate consequences, including death, as a conscious and value-driven choice. This form of existential courage operates at a deeper level than the forms of bravery depicted in *The Railway Children*, where Peter's confession reflects moral accountability, or in narratives such as Tania's courage in confronting fear of supernatural threats. In contrast, the Little Prince's decision to embrace death in order to return to his Rose signifies a comprehensive sense of autonomy and existential power, underscoring his complete authority over the direction of his life choices.

4.3 Feeling Empowerment

4.3.1 Feeling Empowerment through Empathy

Empathy refers to the capacity to understand, share, and emotionally engage with the feelings, thoughts, and conditions of others. In *The Little Prince*, this dimension of feeling empowerment is evident in the protagonist's interaction with the narrator during the episode in which he requests a drawing of a sheep.

"No! This sheep is already very sickly. Make me another" (Saint-Exupéry – p.7)

His rejection of the image, based on the perception that the sheep appears weak or suffering, reflects a heightened affective sensitivity and interpretive awareness. Collectively, these instances illustrate that empathy in the narrative is not passive emotional resonance, but an active form of relational awareness that informs ethical judgment and action.

This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Anshori and Khoiriyah (2018) on Kanika G.'s *Tania's Monsoon Adventure*, which demonstrates that the child protagonist exhibits heightened emotional sensitivity toward the suffering of other living beings. In that study, Tania believes causing harm to animals is ethically inappropriate, as animals, like

humans, possess intrinsic life value. Collectively, these findings indicate that empathy in child characters is consistently represented through affective responses and moral concern for the well-being of others. Similarly, in *The Little Prince*, empathy is articulated through emotional attunement and ethical awareness, reinforcing the broader representation of children as morally conscious and relationally sensitive beings within literary narratives.

4.3.2 Feeling Empowerment through Unselfishness

In the narrative progression of *The Little Prince*, the child protagonist's journey across various asteroids introduces him to a range of adult figures, including a king and a businessman, each of whom embodies distinct manifestations of adult rationality oriented toward control, possession, and authority. These encounters illustrate adult obsessions with power and possession, contrasting with the Prince's care for the Rose.

"But the little prince was wondering . . . The planet was tiny. Over what could this king really rule?" (Saint-Exupéry – p.24)

"This man," the little prince said to himself, "reasons a little like my poor tippler . . ." (Saint-Exupéry – p.31)

This paradoxical condition exposes the emptiness of authority that is detached from relational and social responsibility. The Little Prince's reaction to this encounter reflects critical awareness, as he questions the legitimacy and meaning of power that is not grounded in responsibility or interpersonal connection. In this sense, the episode functions as a narrative critique of adult-centric conceptions of authority, while simultaneously reinforcing the protagonist's developing capacity for reflective judgment and ethical inquiry.

In contrast to the adult characters encountered throughout the narrative, the Little Prince's relationship with his Rose is characterized by selfless care rather than possessive ownership. He does not perceive the Rose as an object to be controlled, but as a living being that requires attention, protection, and emotional investment. His actions—watering the Rose, shielding her from the wind, and offering reassurance and affection—illustrate that the value of a relationship is grounded not in possession, but in responsibility, care, and emotional commitment. This relational orientation demonstrates a high degree of empathy and ethical sensitivity, which stands in sharp contrast to the adult characters in the story, who are predominantly driven by material possession and the pursuit of power.

Across the three dimensions of empowerment, the child protagonist of *The Little Prince* consistently embodies a child figure with significant autonomy and moral agency in thought, action, and feeling. Through his interactions with the narrator and the various experiences he undergoes during his interplanetary journey, the narrative constructs a representation of childhood that, while appearing innocent, is imbued with a form of wisdom that often exceeds that of adults. The child's mode of understanding is grounded in affective and relational perception, whereas the adult characters tend to privilege rigid rationality and material logic. This contrast is further reinforced through the depiction of adult figures who are portrayed as materialistic, arrogant, and self-centered. However, rather than being presented didactically, these traits are subtly critiqued through The Little Prince's simple yet incisive reflections and his actions as the caretaker of his planet, which expose the limitations and contradictions in adult worldviews.

Compared to prior studies on children's empowerment, this analysis extends the discussion into a more existential dimension. Whereas earlier research typically frames

empowerment in terms of everyday experiences, the present study shows that empowerment in *The Little Prince* operates at a deeper philosophical level. The protagonist is not only autonomous in his decisions but also bears profound responsibility. Moreover, he actively interrogates and critiques adult behavior, thereby positioning childhood as a site of ethical reflection rather than mere developmental immaturity.

Thus, child empowerment in this narrative functions not only as a counter-discourse to adult centrism but also as a broader critique of adult existence itself. By prioritizing fundamental human values such as care, responsibility, and emotional awareness, the novella transcends age-based categorization, making it meaningful for both children and adults. In line with this perspective, children's literature is often conceptualized as a "window of knowledge" that enables young readers to understand life through characters, illustrations, and narrative situations (Kurnia et al., 2024). Within this framework, *The Little Prince* is particularly significant, as it offers foundational ethical and emotional values that are essential for readers prior to adulthood, while simultaneously inviting adult readers to re-examine their own perspectives.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the child protagonist in *The Little Prince* can be conceptualized as an empowered child figure, whose empowerment is articulated through three interrelated dimensions: thought, action, and feeling. Here we can see that children are not merely innocent beings or passive participants in society. Rather, children are portrayed as individuals who possess intellectual agency, moral clarity, and relational awareness.

The findings contribute to children's literature studies by challenging adult-centered interpretive frameworks that often position children as incomplete beings. Instead, this study foregrounds childhood as a site of critical consciousness, thereby aligning with broader discourses on child agency and empowerment. Furthermore, the text's implicit critique of adult rationalism and materialism reveals an ideological tension in which adult-centered values are destabilized through the child's perspective.

However, this study is limited in its exclusive focus on the child protagonist, without a systematic analysis of adult characters. Consequently, the critique of adulthood embedded in the narrative remains under-explored. Future research is therefore encouraged to examine both child and adult representations using alternative theoretical frameworks to provide a more comprehensive interpretation of the text. Given that *The Little Prince* is a cross-age literary work that uses childhood perspectives to reflect on adult existence, further analysis of adult characterization may enrich understanding of its ideological complexity and contribute more broadly to children's literature studies.

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