

**Inferiority Complex the Hurdle in the Progress of an Adolescent****Dr. Mrs. Manik Shantinath Patil**Associate Professor,  
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*Inferiority complex* is a psychological term. It is state of mind that makes someone feel inferior to all. In this state the people get lack of confidence to face anything and anyone. It makes the adolescent to feel himself not capable of having the required standard. Various reasons are responsible to develop inferiority complex- childhood experiences, mental health that carries negative attitude, physical deficits, socio-economic status, over strict parents, extreme peer pressure, teasing, sibling rivalry, and other experiences in childhood that can cause a young person to feel weak, helpless, and insufficient. With the help of self- confidence, self-esteem and self-love the adolescents can free themselves from the complex. Then the whole world becomes favorable. It enhances the capacities of the adolescent and advances him to lead successful life.

Key words: **Inferiority complex**, confidence, self esteem, self love, adolescent

**I**nferiority complex is a psychological term. It is state of mind that makes someone feel inferior to all. In this state the people get lack of confidence to face anything and anyone; they dislike to mix in the society and prefer loneliness. Alfred Adler, the Australian psychologist first described inferiority complex in the early 1900s. A renowned psychiatrist Nereida Gonzalez- Berrios explains in an article, What Does It Really Mean To Have An "Inferiority Complex"?, "An inferiority complex is an intense feeling of personal inadequacy that stems from a belief that the person is deficient or has certain limitations as compared to others," (<https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/inferiority-complex>) Sometimes the victim is aware of his problem. Present research article is an attempt to evaluate the inferiority complex as the hurdle in the progress of an adolescent. Considering the limited

scope of the study the evaluation is done only with the help of one select novel of Sarah Dessen, Keeping the Moon.

An inferiority complex is a multi-layered disorder that generally has more than one cause. Various reasons are responsible to develop inferiority complex- childhood experiences, mental health that carries negative attitude, physical deficits, socio-economic status, over strict parents, extreme peer pressure, teasing, sibling rivalry, and other experiences in childhood that can cause a young person to feel weak, helpless, and insufficient.

The select author Sarah Dessen, New York Time's Best Selling Author is one of the most prolific Young Adult novelist. The select novel, Keeping the Moon (1999), is a picture of psychological journey of Colie, an adolescent girl of fifteen years. She suffers from inferiority complex caused by initially heavy weight and then because of the rumors of promiscuousness about her. That makes her to lose her self-respect and confidence

and gets frustration. She prefers to live lonely life considering that she deserves the insults and comments from everywhere. She comes out of this psychological trauma with the help of her parents, peer and friends. It is honored with An ALA Best Book for Young Adults and Quick Pick, A School Library Journal Best Book of the Year, New York Library Book for the Teen Age, 2000, International Reading Association Young Adult Choice, 2001.

Inferiority complex is always followed by the lack of self-esteem that leads young people to negative, risk seeking behaviors as Colie leads towards the negative behavior accepting the ill comments. Her approach to look at her own becomes negative and unknowingly she applies the dark and unattractive clothes, lip ring and clumsy hairstyle. Inappropriate to her age, she lives with no use of cosmetics and applies no beauty tips. She feels envious to see beautiful and slim girls around her and wishes to look beautiful. Colie's character has close resemblance with the writer. Sarah Dessen always used to compare her look with other beautiful girls in the school and used to feel nervous.

One of the reasons behind this complex is superiority complex of the surrounding people. It is always waiting for a chance to satisfy the complex then there may be insult of other. Saif Farooq states, as it is quoted by Alfred Adler in his article Life and Psychology: Inferiority and Inferiority Complex, "...the feeling of inferiority develops due to the innate human tendency of striving for superiority..."(www.lifeandpsychology.com/2009/02/inferiority-andinferiority-complex.html?=&= 1 ). Other side of superiority complex is that it makes the man uncomfortable of losing the value. So he applies the best way to overcome this inferiority complex by making others feel inferior and thus

become superior. Carolina Dawes, classmate of Colie offends Colie in Colby by spreading the rumor about her being slut. Colie gets constant disregard to her existence by Isabel never misses a chance to torture Colie. But Colie doesn't bother of it.

Present study shows one of the reasons of inferiority complex as willing surrender to the assumption. Colie keeps a strong belief that others will not accept her as normal. Wendy J. Glenn calls it as her "self-fulfilling prophecy". While narrating the impact of inferiority complex Dessen narrates the enduring habit of the victims. In the words of Colie, "It was like I wore a permanent "Kick Me" sign, not only at home and school but out in the rest of the world, too" (Keeping the Moon 26). Colie continues to keep a belief in her mind that she deserves for the being outcast. **She gets comments from surrounding as "hole-in-one" and having loose character. She gets her lip pierced, cuts her hair with nail scissors and dyes it red. She stops dancing, rejects to apply makeup, stops mixing with other friends and thus loses her confidence which she seems impossible to gain back. In her words,**

*"I had cheekbones, muscles, a flat stomach, clear skin, just like my mother. But something was missing, something that made us different. I could build muscle, but not confidence. There was no exercise for that" (Keeping the Moon 6).*

Inferiority complex is much harmful for everyone, especially adolescents. One has to strive hard to remove this complex. It is not an easy task. Several factors collectively take efforts to release someone from this complex. One of the significant reasons behind inferiority complex in the adolescents is the friends or relatives or people who



disgrace them; who constantly discourage them and criticize them. According to Peter Wallace, a counselor for mental health awareness, says in an article 'How to Overcome Inferiority Complex: 5 Simple Ways, "Look for people who are positive, who uplift you and who bring out the better version of yourself. Take efforts to develop a relationship with them." (<https://www.psychreg.org/inferiority-complex/>) In the process of removal of inferiority complex, Dessen provides various people to help Colie. Colie's mother, Kiki Sparks, her aunt, Mira, Isabel and her teacher are the significant forces to relieve her from the complex. Initially a disdainer, Isabel, later becomes a sincere friend of Colie to gain the confidence. Isabel teaches her to face the humiliating situation boldly and react it harshly with full confidence. She makes her aware of the self-respect. She directs Colie, "Self-respect, Colie. If you don't have it, the world will walk all over you ... believe in yourself up her and it will make you stronger than you could ever imagine" (Keeping the Moon 88). She applies certain beauty tips on Colie and helps her to gain her confidence. But then thereafter she begins to lead her life with self-respect and confidence. In the Chick Party Isabel guides her to keep her self-respect by saying, "Walk with your head up high, shoulders back. Don't smile. And don't look at anyone" (Keeping the Moon 154). It is the creation of self-respect that is essential step in removing the inferiority complex. As Colie follows it she begins to get freedom of inferiority complex.

Moreover self-love is important way to remove inferiority complex. Peter Wallace suggests, "There is absolutely no need to be harsh on yourself. Practice self care. Love yourself. Be kind to yourself." ([https://www.psychreg.org/inferiority-](https://www.psychreg.org/inferiority-complex/)

complex/) Isabel guides Colie to, "Believe in yourself up here and it will make you stronger than you could ever imagine" (160). According to the suggestion of Isabel, Colie becomes ready for her first date with Norman where she finds her own portrait reflecting a beautiful girl. This portrait melts all the bias from her mind about her ugliness and she becomes the completely confident girl. Wendy J. Glenn supports to the same through following words,

*"What we believe about ourselves weighs more heavily than an external reality or the views of others. When we are confident and trust in whom we are, this power of perception allows us to be strong even when others see us as weak." (Keeping the Moon 59).*

Present study suggests to look at the similar sufferer. The similar sufferers severally prove as the strength of each other. Aunt Mira, an overweight, like a friend, contributes in solving the riddle of Colie with the high tone but with quite strange way. Though Colie and Mira both suffer the comments of people, both have different attitudes to handle the situations. Colie loses her confidence whereas Mira neglects towards it. Mira presents the repair metaphor that helps Colie realize that standardized perfection is too much to expect from anything or anyone. Her example is the lesson to all adolescents to compromise in life. Mira guides Colie that she must do the compromises with her self-image and accept the fact and instead of feeling hurt she must accept it heartily. Once the complex is removed the adolescent not only feels relaxed and fresh but he feels enlightened to help others. The confident Colie now is ready to make others happy, especially the victims of situation. Colie enlightens the life of Mira, her aunt. The study enforces the strength of the

adolescents that works like virus. Colie's removal of inferiority complex not only makes her happy but also to Mira and also Norman. Norman wishes to prove himself as an artist but unfortunately his father doesn't believe in his strength. Colie by sharing his grief relieves him from the heavy load of grief. The present research article puts forth the conclusion that by accepting ourselves and keeping self confidence, self esteem and self love the adolescents can free themselves from the complex. Then the whole world becomes favorable. It enhances their capacities and advances them to lead them successfully on the path of life.

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