

# Marginalized People Self-Actualization in the Short Story “*Anak Ini Mau Mengencingi Jakarta?*” by Ahmad Tohari

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**Abstract.** This paper describes the actualization of marginalized people in the capital city of Jakarta based on the theory of humanistic personality perceived by Abraham Maslow. The stressing on the marginalized people in this paper becomes important since the self-actualization of these people is extremely different from the self-actualization of other ordinary people. Maslow's humanistic personality theory views individuals or societies' personalities, including the personality of marginalized people. Maslow mentioned that humanistic personality contains multilevel needs arranged from the needs of physiological, security, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. The approach used in this research is psychological literature. The data used is a short story entitled “*Anak Ini Mau Mengencingi Jakarta?*” (This Child Wants to Urinate Jakarta?) by Ahmad Tohari. The result of the discussion shows that marginalized people could actualize themselves in their own freedom portion after fulfilling their needs of physiological, security, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. They always become part of a social life that exhibits self-actualization in their own way.

**Keywords:** *self-actualization, marginalized people, humanistic personality, short story*

## INTRODUCTION

One of the connections between literature and psychology is the types and patterns of psychology applied in literary works. Another connection is the psychological study of a writer as an individual, creative process, and the literature impacts on readers, known as readers' psychology [1]. Firstly, psychological literature talked about the writer's biography by remarking on their creative processes. Literary work is considered as the result of the writer's activity frequently related to psychiatric phenomena, such as obsession, contemplation, compensation, sublimation, and even neurosis. Thus, literary work is a psychological phenomenon. Psychological literature also penetrates to

characterization aspect providing propensity to the emersion of new schools like romanticism, expressionism, absurdity, etc. Humanistic psychology is one of the psychology fields, besides contemporary psychology (Mead, Cooly, Lewin), social psychology (Skinner), and determinism psychology (Freud) [2].

Marginalized groups are groups underrepresented nominally, substantively, and symbolically in given socio-political mainstream [3]. These community groups are expected to get an access opportunity to equalizing themselves in the job fields, education, and health service [4]. Such community groups often come from low economic groups. Marginalized groups may also come from particular minority groups [5]. These minority groups could be certain religious sects, women, and LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex) [6]. These conditions impact on the subjects' psychological elements.

The short story entitled “*Anak Kecil Ini Mau Mengencingi Jakarta?*” (AKIMMJ) (This Child Wants to Urinate Jakarta?) by Ahmad Tohari tells about a family consisting of a father, a mother, and a child living in the slum area near Pasar Senin station railroads. Their life is so simple, modest, and plain. It makes them marginalized. They undergo simple and marginalized life full of responsibility and confidence. The father is responsible for his son and wife's life sustainability. He teaches his son about responsibility and confidence. The son must be responsible for sharing a pack instant noodle breakfast with his father and mother, although his mother only gets gravy leftovers. His son's confidence is built by his father by saying that the child may urinate all over Jakarta. Despite their shortcomings, they remain happy, satisfied, and feel free with their life.

Humanistic psychology relates to all human being experiences. Humanistic psychology develops systematic and thorough methods to the human being studied, and fragmented characters from contemporary psychology through more comprehensive and integrative approaches. Humanistic psychology is particularly sensitive to

unique humanity dimensions, like creativity, transcendence experiences, and human welfare [7].

Abraham Maslow assumes that human is a good creature, so they have the right to realize their identity to reach self-actualization. A human tries to fulfill and express their potential and talent frequently hampered by community condition neglecting them. Human behavior is mostly determined by the individual tendency to reach a happier and more satisfying life. To support his notion, Maslow proposes an insight named hierarchy needs consisting of physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization needs [8]. As a humanistic psychological expert, Maslow believes that everyone has a strong desire to realize their potential to reach the "self-actualization" level [9].

Physiological needs are the most basic need for us to survive. These needs are the strongest from all needs, e.g., hunger, thirst, air, food, clothing, and shelter, sex and reproduction, warmth, and sleep [8] [9], [10]. Safety needs are the needs of supporting individuals to obtain serenity, assurance [11], security, stability [8], protection from various conditions, and freedom from fear [10]. Love and belonging needs are the need related to affective relation or emotional bond with other individuals [11], e.g., affection, identification [8], friendship, intimacy, belief, and the feeling of becoming part of group or community (family, friend, work) [10]. Esteem needs are divided into external and internal esteem, e.g., prestige, self-respect, appropriateness, personal value, social recognition, and achievement. Esteem helps someone feel more confident [9].

The need for self-actualization is at the top hierarchy. It relates to realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, and searching for personal development and peak experiences. Maslow addresses it with a desire to become everything [10], e.g., all humans' potential accomplishment: inherent needs, capacity, and potential development. Self-actualization is being self-aware, more concerned with the personal than others' opinions, and interested in fulfilling one's potential [8], [9].

#### **METHOD**

This research uses theoretical and methodological approaches. The theoretical approach uses psychological literature with Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychological theory by focusing on needs hierarchy towards the characters in the short story "*Anak Ini Mau Mengencingi Jakarta?*" by Ahmad Tohari. This research, methodologically, uses a qualitative descriptive approach. Sugiyono [12] argues that describing research must be perspective emic. The meaning of obtained data is not "should be" or

based on what the researcher thinks but based on "what is" experienced, felt, and thought by the data source. Bogdan and Taylor [13] describe qualitative research as a research procedure producing descriptive data in the form of written or oral words about observed people.

The method used in this research is descriptive-analytic, both clarifying and analyzing the character's self-actualization matter within data [2]. Data were collected using the hermeneutic reading technique, which, according to Teeuw [14], is a technique to understand literary works and language expression in the broader meaning than what should be. The data were analyzed using an objective approach [2], focusing attention solely on intrinsic aspects. The understanding is focused on the analysis of inner elements by appraising the connection between elements and the whole element.

#### **RESULT & DISCUSSION**

This part presents discussion results about the hierarchy needs elements consisting of physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization needs in relation to the short story "*Anak Kecil Ini Mau Mengencingi Jakarta?*" by Ahmad Tohari.

The characters in this short story can fulfill their physiological needs despite a very modest condition. To fulfill their breakfast, they must share a pack of instant noodles. They also cook it modestly. Instant noodle's pack is opened by tearing it out and poured with hot water. They bought it for a thousand rupiahs from a plain stall nearby. This cooked noodle must be shared for three people. The father and the son get the noodle, and the mother gets the noodle gravy. Mawere [9] said that shelter and reproduction are part of physiological needs. They are, actually, also able to fulfill their shelter needs. Indeed, shelter fulfillment is also very modest. Shelter here is just like a place to cover them from the heat and rain, or at least it can be utilized to sleep in the night. The presence of a five-year-old child, who wants to urinate Jakarta, is also the proof of physiological needs fulfillment in terms of reproduction.

The characters; safety needs fulfillment is carried out by giving a sense of internal security to themselves, besides making good relations with their surroundings. They can feel the security since they do not feel any threat from outside. Despite their shortcomings, they always feel stable in their life. McLeod [10] states that protection from any condition, free from fear, law order, and stability are also part of safety needs. Therefore, the father dares to say to his son:

*"Nah, dengar ini! Kamu boleh kencing di mana pun di seluruh Jakarta; di Menteng, di pinggir Jalan*

*Thamrin, di lapangan belakang Stasiun Gambir, di sepanjang gili-gili Kebayoran Baru, juga boleh kencing di Senayan. Dengar itu?" (AKIMMJ)*

With what they feel and do along this time, these father and son possess a sense of security and stability that do not worry them. Life goes well, although with the modest condition.

They also have fulfilled their love and belonging needs. The similar view towards their fate and condition make them relieved and happy, no complain, makes tighter bond among the members of this small family. Affection and identification [8] become a strong asset for love, and belonging needs fulfillment. Affection and closeness between the father and son are shown from how the father is so patient and persevering when feeding his son instant noodle but leaving the gravy for the mother. It is a powerful but modest affection dimension of this family. Identification is also part of love and belonging needs. These characters identify themselves as an entity of marginalized lower-class people. However, they have their own power to support themselves. They are free to act as what they want. They do not depend on anyone else to fulfill their needs. They are independent characters.

Maslow [8], [10] divides esteem into two: external esteem coming from someone else and internal esteem coming from oneself. In this short story, the characters give themselves internal appreciation. They believe in themselves and feel secure. They feel valuable, adequate, and harmonious. They do not feel a lack of esteem, inferior, discouraged, or powerless to face life. Therefore, under the father's command, the three characters in the short story highly uphold their esteem by not concerning what someone else says or opinion from others. They are responsible for their own life. They are so confident in living their life. Esteem helps someone be more confident. Failure brings them to inferiority [9]. The father's statement that his son can urinate anywhere all over Jakarta means that he has sufficient confidence to conquer Jakarta. In a broader meaning, he has the confidence to fulfill his esteem need. The characters in the short story, especially the father, imply Maslow's theory [10] about esteem needs, especially in terms of esteem for oneself, including dignity, achievement, authorization, and freedom. The father's statement that his son may urinate Jakarta implies that the father wants to build his son's high confidence. Urinating Jakarta means reigning, even conquering the city, although, in reality, they only become the complement of urban life.

Maslow believes that the peak experience concept can show self-actualization [10]. The father, son, and mother in this short story realize

that the peak experience they have is a piece of the heartbreaking story as a community group living on railroads. However, they live their life joyfully. This peak experience results in satisfaction as they hope [11]. It is noticeable from their complete life as a small family. They fulfill their elementary needs despite sharing a pack of instant noodles, cooked with a thousand rupiah hot water, for three people. They also feel secure and comfortable with the life they live. Love and belonging among the family members are so tight and firm. It makes them confident. With all shortcomings and limitedness, they still can fulfill their needs, as mentioned in the hierarchy needs theory in the Maslow's humanistic psychology framework.

These characters do not care about other people's viewpoints toward what they do. The more important self-actualization for them is doing the best than thinking about what others think. Life is their possession. Mawere et al. [9] argued that self-actualization is self-aware, more concerned with one's personal growth than to someone else's opinion, and interested in fulfilling one's potential. If noticing someone's viewpoint and how difficult they live their lives as a marginalized group, people do not seem to have a positive view. If it becomes their attention, self-actualization they do will face serious obstacles.

Maslow states that a healthy personality is where individuals are free from the environmental impact, especially if the environment influences their personal development. One of the aspects supporting personal growth and self-identification is culture [15]. The child lives in the environment around railroads with a plain condition. His parents can only give very little. Each of them grows in plain and modest condition, but they feel comfortable with all they have. The condition of such a community group becomes a healthy personality, free from outside environmental influence.

*...kehidupan orang-orang pinggir rel.  
Kehidupan yang sungguh merdeka  
dan berdaulat, sedang bergerak  
(AKIMMJ).*

Psychologically, the characters in this short story are healthy figures, like Schultz [8] argues. They can fulfill the lowest needs (physiology), safety, physical and emotional, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization so well, with all conditions they have. Living as part of a marginalized community does not discourage them in their self-actuation.

This small, modest, marginalized family can self-actualize themselves in the middle of life complexity. They live their life lightly and peacefully. Life burden does not get rid of their opportunity to do self-actualization properly. Joy and freedom are two things supporting their self-

actualization.

*“Tadi selagi saya masih tidur kalian bicara apa? Anak ini mau mengencingi Jakarta?” tanya si perempuan. Si ayah dan si anak berpandangan, tersenyum lalu tertawa lebih lepas. Benar, tiga warga pinggir rel itu menikmati hidup yang gembira dan merdeka (AKIMMJ).*

Nothing can hinder three of them to actualize themselves. They do it wholeheartedly. It is a form of joy and freedom. They self-actualize openly, not under isolation. They also have the motivation to make a good relationship with the environment. It corresponds to Maslow’s adaptation towards Golstein’s three self-actualization axioms. One of them is an organism-environment relationship where the meaning of behavior, pathology, motivation, emotion, etc. is understandable [16].

### CONCLUSION

Self-actualization from this marginalized group is showed from the ability to manage all the minimum condition they have. Despite having a pack of instant noodle shared for three (physiological need), they feel secure and comfortable (safety needs) with what they experience. Sincere love and affection among the three family members (love and belonging needs) give them high confidence (esteem needs). Nothing makes them surrender to show their existence. Happiness, satisfaction, and freedom become peak performance for them. This is where their self-actualization is evident.

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