Conflict as A Trigger for The Development of Self-Actualization in The Character Bambang in The Novel Sendiri by Tere Liye: A Humanistic Psychoanalytic Study

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze conflict as a trigger for the development of self-actualization in Bambang's character in the novel Sendiri by Tere Liye using Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory which states that human needs are stratified. The research was conducted with qualitative descriptive method through data analysis that connects Maslow's five needs: physiological, security, love and existence, appreciation, and self-actualization. The results showed that Bambang's character successfully developed the fulfillment of basic needs through conflicts that occurred in the plot and achieved self-actualization in Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Keywords: self-actualization, humanistic, novel

1. Introduction

Literary works are a form of creative expression that use language to convey experiences, ideas, or emotions. Literature reflects human life and offers aesthetic as well as moral values rooted in social contexts. Among various literary forms, the novel stands out for its ability to depict life values and deliver educational messages. Novels rely heavily on characters, who function as representations of human experiences and psychological traits. This makes characters a central focus in psychological literary analysis. One such approach is humanistic psychology, particularly Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which explains human motivation based on progressive fulfillment of five basic needs.

Tere Liye's Sendiri (2024) presents the inner journey of its protagonist, Bambang, following the death of his wife. The story highlights his emotional struggles and gradual movement toward self-actualization, making it a relevant subject for humanistic psychological analysis. This study seeks to answer: how does narrative conflict trigger the development of self-actualization, and what psychological aspects based on humanistic theory are reflected in Bambang's character?

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Materials

In this study, the data source used is the novel Sendiri by Tere Liye, published by PT Sabak Grip Nusantara, Depok, West Java, in 2024, consisting of 318 pages. The data collection process was carried out through in-depth analysis and examination of the literary work, which served as the primary source for this study.

3.2 Methods

In this case, the research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive method. Qualitative descriptive research is an approach that aims to describe the research results based on data obtained in narrative form. As reflected in its name, the main objective of descriptive research is to provide descriptions, explanations, and validation related to the phenomenon being studied. The data analysis technique involved intensive reading of the source material, followed by identifying relevant data from the novel and connecting it with Abraham Maslow's theory. The data considered part of the research object was then noted and classified using a comparative technique. After that, the data were presented in narrative form.

4. Results and Discussion

The novel *Sendiri* by Tere Liye as the data source of this study, the conflict of the story that can trigger the development of self-actualization and the psychological aspects of Bambang's character will be analyzed based on the 5 hierarchical levels of basic needs in Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology consisting of (1) physiological needs, (2) safety needs, (3) belongingness and love needs, (4) esteem needs, (5) self-actualization needs.

4.1 Physiological Needs

Physiological needs are essential biological needs necessary for a person's survival, such as air, food, drink, shelter, clothing, warmth, sexual relations, and sleep. These basic needs form the primary foundation that motivates human behavior, as they are directly related to physical survival. Physiological needs have the strongest influence compared to other needs, because they must be fulfilled first before other needs can be considered. According to Maslow, physiological needs are regarded as the top priority, while the other needs are secondary until these are met (Richards, et al., 2023).

In the novel *Sendiri* by Tere Liye, the first conflict arises from the unfulfilled physiological needs of Bambang. This is indicated in the following excerpt:

1) The old man shook his head and said quietly, "I can't sleep, Son."
2) The old man shook his head again, "I can't eat, Son." He looked over at Mrs. Susi's face. "I... I don't even know what to do now." (Liye, 2024, p. 25)
3) In Chapter 1, the introduction of the story, we do not yet see Bambang's basic physiological needs being met, because the story begins at zero—at the lowest point in the character's life—so much so that he cannot even eat. This moment becomes the beginning of conflict and the trigger for subsequent conflicts. The development of his physiological needs only starts to be seen after Bambang reflects and his children persuade him to eat.
4) "Don't worry, Dad is much better than two weeks ago. His eating has improved. Maybe he's just daydreaming. The doctor said it's not serious, Dad is just adjusting…." (Liye, 2024, p. 47)
5) Ayu smiled as she looked at the empty plate. Even though the portion was deliberately small so nothing would go to waste—something her mother had always disliked, wasting food. Two weeks since her mother's passing, her father's appetite seemed to be gradually returning. (Liye, 2024)
6) This development was the result of the supporting characters (his children) who patiently cared for Bambang while he was at his lowest point. For example, they would join him during meals while chatting casually to distract him from his grief, prepare his favorite foods, and even his grandchildren contributed to helping him fulfill his basic physiological needs. This shows that mealtimes were not only about satisfying physical hunger but also creating a warm atmosphere and strengthening relationships between the characters. The care and attention from his children were triggered by the initial conflict—the death of his wife. As time went on, Bambang was eventually able to fully meet his physiological needs again.

4.2 Safety Needs

The second level of basic needs according to Maslow is the need for safety. This need can only be considered after physiological needs are fulfilled. Abraham Maslow explains that safety needs include physical and emotional protection, where every individual desires order, predictability, and control in their life. The fulfillment of safety needs can come from family and society, such as protection from crime by law enforcement, safe education in schools, financial stability through work or business, and health care when sick. These needs also cover various aspects, such as mental security, financial stability (including job and social security), law and order enforcement, freedom from fear, social stability, protection of property, and physical and emotional well-being. Additionally, safety needs include protection in unexpected situations, such as accidents or injuries, to ensure a stable life (Richards, et al., 2023).

In *Sendiri* by Tere Liye, the second and third conflicts represent the unfulfilled safety needs of Bambang. The second conflict occurs when Bambang has a nightmare about his late wife.

1) "Your mother! Your mother fell into the well!" Bambang shouted repeatedly. Sweat poured down his face. "It's just a dream, Dad!" Ayu comforted him. Bambang shook his head. The dream felt so real. Ayu looked on sadly. It was four in the morning. This was the second time in a row he had the same dream. She quickly helped him sit up and fetched him a glass of water. (Liye, 2024, p. 61)

As a result of the nightmare, Bambang couldn't sleep peacefully at night. However, this triggered a psychological shift in Bambang's thinking, convincing him that his wife was in another world and trying to send him a message. This second conflict subconsciously helped develop his physiological needs even further, because the belief motivated him to start leaving his room and spending more time in the library.

The third conflict occurs when Bambang is in the Underworld. As soon as he arrives in the strange forest, he is immediately attacked by a group of snakes and giant mosquitoes, placing him in danger and leaving his safety needs unmet.

2) *But after just a few minutes, Bambang's cheerful face turned tense. He had barely taken three or four steps into his adventure when he stopped abruptly. Ssst… sss… Oh no! Bambang instinctively jumped back. In front of him, emerging from the bushes, were two even larger snakes.* (Liye, 2024, p. 94)

3) *Bzzz… bzzz… bzzz… The mosquitoes buzzed, charging forward, no longer lurking quietly. Bambang shouted in panic and ran again. As fast as his legs could carry him. He couldn't fight off mosquitoes the size of fists. They could drain all his blood.* (Liye, 2024, p. 99)

Bambang's need for safety is fulfilled when a companion character appears. A character known as the Scout Knight saves Bambang from danger and provides protection, allowing him to feel safe and satisfying his safety needs.

1) *At that moment, just when the situation was dire, someone ran swiftly from behind, from the direction of the steep cliff. His feet moved nimbly as if flying over the swampy surface… "Stay seated, Little One! We can't go anywhere once the sun rises!" the rescuer called out firmly.* (Liye, 2024, p. 103)

Moreover, Bambang's sense of stable security is clearly portrayed when Princess Rosa's group agrees to help him achieve his goal—opening the doors to his past.

2) *"I don't know how you're feeling right now. But I'm sorry for blaming you earlier when Boe sacrificed himself. I was wrong."* (Liye, 2024, p. 233)

Even though the setting is described as dangerous and tense, this is what builds the bond between characters in *Sendiri*. Tere Liye illustrates friendship, mutual support, protection, and even self-sacrifice among the characters. These moments create a sense of security, thus fulfilling Bambang's safety needs.

4.4 Belongingness and Love Needs

The third level of needs relates to the social aspects commonly found in human life: the need for love, affection, and a sense of belonging (Triana, 2023). According to Abraham Maslow, humans naturally seek love as part of fulfilling this need. Like the previous levels, this social need can only be met once the individual has fulfilled the earlier needs. A sense of belonging refers to a person's emotional need to form interpersonal relationships, feel accepted, connected, and be part of a group. This includes aspects such as friendship, emotional closeness, mutual trust, acceptance, and the ability to give and receive love and affection (Richards, et al., 2023).

In *Sendiri* by Tere Liye, readers are shown how the initial conflict unfolds, which also indicates the lack of love and affection in Bambang's life. At an old age, Bambang has lost his life companion—his wife, who had been with him for more than 50 years.

1) *"Sus... I won't cry... I promised you that a month ago... But what should I do now, Sus? Without you, my life is no longer exciting. Sus... how can I go on living? Honestly, I don't know anymore."* (Liye, 2024, p. 33)

For Bambang, losing his wife was a devastating blow. Some people, after losing a loved one, find it hard to go on, as if the world has stopped. That's the kind of grief Tere Liye portrays through Bambang in *Sendiri*. The loss of someone so dear can cause the entire hierarchy of needs that has been built to collapse to its lowest point.

However, this novel doesn't only portray the absence of affection—it also illustrates how love returns through the presence of supporting characters, namely Bambang's children. From the beginning to the end of the story, readers witness how much love and care Bambang's children show for him.

2) *"From the moment we entered this world, we've always been by your side, Dad… Protecting you from snake bites, mosquito bites, and the attacks of shadow warriors. We followed your adventure, opening each seal one by one. But we couldn't speak, couldn't tell you, or even tell Princess Rosa…"* (Liye, 2024, p. 312)

In the novel *Sendiri*, the fulfillment of the need for love and affection doesn't come from a romantic partner, but from family. Initially, Bambang's love needs were met by his wife, but after her passing, that love was replaced and fulfilled by his children. Their affection is shown through attention, sincerity, and protection.

4.6 Esteem Needs

The fourth level in Maslow's hierarchy includes the need for self-esteem, achievement, and respect. Maslow divides this need into two main categories: (a) self-esteem, which includes personal values, accomplishments, mastery of skills, and independence; and (b) the need for recognition from others, such as reputation, status, and titles. Esteem needs reflect the human desire to be accepted and appreciated by their social environment. To meet these needs, individuals often pursue specific professions or engage in hobbies as efforts to gain recognition and appreciation from others (Richards, et al., 2023).

In *Sendiri*, the hierarchy of esteem needs is portrayed very dynamically. The character Bambang experiences ups and downs in his ambitions. In the early chapters, Bambang is depicted as an old man who is unable to go on with life. However, in the eyes of those closest to him, he is remembered as a genius scientist of his time.

1) *"I know your father very well, Ayu…" The family doctor looked more serious, "Even though he often downplayed his intelligence, your father was the inventor of the automatic drone delivery algorithm, dear. A great entrepreneur—your family's business. He's not crazy. Your father is very smart."* (Liye, 2024, p. 71)

Bambang's self-esteem begins to rise as he becomes convinced that his nightmares are a sign—a message from another world where his wife is. He becomes ambitious to solve the mystery, and his confidence grows when he manages to enter the Underworld.

2) *He was alone now. No matter. Bambang's face turned bright and spirited. His fists clenched. Susi must be here, or the time machine—he would find it. Whatever the obstacles.* (Liye, 2024, p. 94)

However, when his expectations don't align with reality, Bambang's confidence falters again. He watches his companions sacrifice themselves to help him reach his goal. Bambang is overwhelmed with guilt.

3) *Bambang shook his head. He didn't believe it. Everything would've been fine if he hadn't found the door on the red stone bridge in his world. Everything would've been fine if he had just accepted Susi's passing—if he had made peace.* (Liye, 2024, p. 233)

By analyzing the role of esteem needs in *Sendiri*, we can understand how these elements influence character dynamics and enrich the plot. In the context of the novel, the fourth level of Maslow's hierarchy—esteem needs—is clearly reflected through Bambang's life journey. This level encompasses the drive to achieve, gain recognition from others, and build a strong sense of self-worth. These traits are evident in Bambang's interactions with supporting characters, in how he faces challenges, and in his efforts to accomplish both personal and social goals.

4.3 Self-Actualization

Self-actualization is the highest level in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It involves a person's efforts to realize their full potential, meet inner needs, achieve personal growth, and experience peak moments. This level reflects how far individuals can understand and actualize their potential. Maslow describes self-actualization as the drive to achieve everything a person is capable of and to become the best version of themselves. The fulfillment of this need is highly specific to each individual. For instance, someone might have a deep drive to be an ideal parent or to attain mastery in a particular field they consider meaningful (Richards, et al., 2023).

After overcoming various obstacles, inner turmoil, and psychological changes, Bambang finally manages to fulfill all the levels of basic needs, culminating in self-actualization. This is clearly illustrated in the following passage:

1) *No. In the end, Bambang decided... He shook his head slowly... he would not go back to the past to see Susi. He would move on with his life. Continue the adventure. This was the great adventure. Whatever the ending, he would accept it. Bambang smiled again. A better smile. A more sincere one. "I've always loved you, Sus... Then, now, tomorrow, always... But I won't go back there." Bambang closed the door with the soft light. He had made his decision.* (Liye, 2024, p. 304)

The self-actualization experienced by Bambang is a form of acceptance. Tere Liye, in *Sendiri*, portrays the process of self-acceptance through his main character. Deep and meaningful experiences are important elements in the journey toward self-actualization. Through such experiences, characters in the story grow personally, deepen their understanding of themselves, and achieve a higher level of self-awareness.

The conflicts or challenges faced in the story often act as triggers for characters to reach self-actualization, encouraging them to overcome obstacles and grow through hardship. In *Sendiri*, analyzing Bambang's journey reveals how he reaches his personal peak, searches for life's meaning, and evolves through his adventure in the story. These elements reflect the principles of Maslow's theory of self-actualization, in which individuals strive for holistic and complete personal development.

Meaningful experiences—such as learning from failure, facing major challenges, or finding joy in simple moments—also play a crucial role in the journey toward self-actualization. By analyzing how Bambang finds life's meaning, develops his potential, and reaches the height of personal growth, we are shown how these elements represent the highest level in Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

5. Conclussion

Explain what has been done, and draw conclusions in accordance with the objectives of the research that has been determined. The conclusions are delivered narratively, do not contain equations, tables, and figures.

Based on the results of research conducted on the novel *Sendiri* by Tere Liye using the theory of the hierarchy of human needs through Abraham Maslow's humanistic approach, it can be concluded that a person's personality can be formed from conflicts that occur in his life. The fulfillment of Bambang's physiological needs occurs when he gains confidence from his nightmares. The fulfillment of security needs occurs when Bambang is saved by the Scout Knight and Princess Rosa's

entourage who are willing to accompany him to achieve his goal. Fulfillment of affection needs occurs when he loses his wife but is replaced by the love of his children. The fulfillment of self-esteem needs is very dynamic throughout the storyline until Bambang manages to achieve self-actualization through a form of acceptance.In the novel, the fulfillment of basic needs is not fulfilled from the beginning due to conflict. But as the story progresses, these conflicts build individuals to have different thoughts than before and this can affect the fulfillment of basic needs.This also applies to the surrounding environment and the people involved. Humans are creatures that have high adaptability. Before reaching self-actualization, every individual must be hit by various difficult situations. This research shows that conflict goes hand in hand with the fulfillment of individual basic needs. Conflict not only destroys the foundation of basic needs, but also builds development in fulfilling the basic needs of individuals so as to achieve self-actualization or a better person.

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