

**A CHILD'S STRUGGLE IN DAVE PELZER'S *A CHILD CALLED 'IT'***

**A THESIS**

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This thesis contains material which have been accepted for the award of Bachelor Degree of English Department Faculty of Arts and Humanities State Islamic University of Sunan Ampel Surabaya to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by other person where due reference is made in text of thesis.

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## EXAMINER APPROVAL

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a discussion of the background of the study, statements of the problem, objectives of the study, scope and limitation, and significance of the study, method of the study, and definition of key terms.

#### 1.1. Background of Study

A work of literature is the expression of realm of words, thought, feelings or opinion about life and the world. Wellek and Warren state that literature is a creative activity, or work of art (7). According to the theory of the literary work David Cater that literature in General is a written text that includes history and philosophy. From the above definition, the author concludes that literature is a literary man who want to express their feelings, ideas or their thinking in words and actions. On the other hand the meaning of the literary work is am kind to sense of fiction. (Eagleton 10). This means that is an author has something hidden in the text, and then a reader should be able to fine and understand it. According to Robert the literary work is a literary that refers to a composition tells the theory, expressing the situation, expressing emotion, and advocating the idea. The conclusions of the meaning that a work of literature shows that literature as a reflection of life.

One of the types of literary works is prose. Prose refers to any written piece of work that is built on sentence and paragraphs. According to Edgar and Jacobs that prose have two types: the first type is fiction prose and the second type is the nonfiction prose (2). The first type is fiction prose. According to Abrams, in



Dave Pelzer was able to cope and deal with some of the mental suffering and fear then he became daring to educate the world, at age 18 years Dave Pelzer-old outside custody and joined the US air force on it.

Dave Pelzer is able to write many books or his work in New York and then he traveled to promote understanding, endurance, and inspire those who hear them speak. Pelzer is also one of the first Americans to win the “outstanding young person of the world award”, although an entrepreneur make money from its history, he is the one who is tackling abuse and inspires others out there that they don't have to suffer quietly and they can also be overcome. Dave Pelzer writes four books. *A Child Called 'It'* first book from Dave Pelzer and then he writes some novel interrelated with the novel. There are the lost boys, a man named Dave and helps yourself, and those novels reflect his own story.

*A Child Called 'It'* novel is nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. Pelzer has won many awards and accolades from President Reagan, Bush Clinton and George. The novel helps yourself nominated for Pulitzer Prize, so that the writer interests with this novel *A Child Called 'It'*. *A Child Called 'It'* novel tells about a child struggle to survive. He had to face his mother tortuous. A mother tortured him like playing game. Unpredictable games were done by his mother until left him nearly dead. He had to learn how to play the game his mother to survive because she no longer considered him a boy, but a slave, and no longer a boy, but the bed 'was' Dave are old army bunks the basement, and her clothes torn and raunchy. When his mother allowed him to fine dining, it is no more than the rest of the meal that even the dogs were refusing to eat. The outside world knows nothing of his living

nightmare. He had nothing, but his dreams kept him alive, dreams of someone taking care of him, loving him and calling him their son. His father did not protect him; only an alert schoolteacher saved him.

There is hard struggle in this novel. A child with many ways faced his mother torturous. And he never complained about that to anyone. He just tried to survive. No one knew about his mother torturous until serious injury in his body made his school teachers suspicious about that. The school teachers reported that to the police and then Dave had a safety. Then, he was in foster care until the age of 18. The torturous finished when he was 12 years old. About 8 years he had a torturous from his own mother.

The researcher chose novel *A Child Called 'It'* because the novel is a realistic novel. The novel tells about true story of the writer's life when he was four years old until twelve years old. The true story of the author is told in this novel by a good character of Dave Pelzer. He lives with his mother that not considered him as a son, but an 'it'. And he fights to survive because he wanted to keep his dreams.

The readers would know several aspects that built novel. According to John, there are two points which are intrinsic and extrinsic; intrinsic itself is part which develops a literary work from inside such as plot, character ad characterizations, and the moral value. All of this makes a story come to life. The intrinsic element is important to analysis the novel because intrinsic element is the soul of the novel (86). So that is why intrinsic elements are important for analysis, because unsure intrinsic element if more complex in analysis of the novel.

The researcher uses *A Child Called 'It'* as an object of research. A novel of *A Child Called 'It'* by Dave Pelzer is the true story explained Violence of children. The novel tells about a child that abuse by his mother. Basically, he is mandate and gift from God. He has basic rights of human that must be recognized by society. A child needs a treatment, special protection, and law protection. The family is a natural area for the development and safety of children. For the good personality development, a child needs a family area that is full with love and affection, and attention. Many countries admit to respect and guarantee rights of child without discrimination, but in fact, there is still violation toward the child rights. It reflects in *A Child Called 'It'* novel by Dave Pelzer. The novel explains about violence. The novel reflects a child struggle survives.

This novel is one of the fictions prose. According to Wolfe's, he said that the novel contains a piece of prose fictions which are assumable longest. Bluestones, in other opinions states that the novel is an imaginary object that include, myth, symbol and convention to satisfy all time and place (31).

According to Webster, of the novel there a few those are important in the story that is related to human experience, social behavior that all relate am kind to prose narrative (687). The stated novel because novel has been a long story that is written by the author. From the explanations above, the writer concludes that the novel is a fiction of prose, which has long stories that is written by the author. Authors can freely write, feelings, imagination or their minds.

In other perspective in this *A Child Called 'It'* novel because this is a tragic novel. The tragic part of this novel can be seen in part when the main character, Dave Pelzer, got a torturous from his mother. The writer can make the reader to be moved. The reader would be joined to feel sad as perceived by the author because the author of this novel fights hard to protect himself. The main character, Dave Pelzer, has a struggle to protect him. He fights to survive for getting his dreams.

I say this *A Child Called 'It'* novel is a motivation novel also because the high motivation is reflected in this novel by the struggle of Dave Pelzer. His dreams kept him alive. He hoped someone taking care of him, loving him and calling him their son. The struggle to survive can be studied in humanistic and new criticism term which studies the human life and character.

Based on the previous references the author will understand *A Child Called 'It'* novel using a humanistic and new criticism, so the writer constructs the title *A Child's Struggle in Dave Pelzer's A Child Called 'It'*.

## **1.2. Statements of the Problem**

Based on background research, the author formulates the problem as follows.

1. How is Dave Pelzer described in the novel *A Child Called 'It'*?
2. How does Dave Pelzer struggle to survive reflect in the novel *A Child Called 'It'*?

## **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

According to problem statement above, the objectives of the study are as follows;

1. To describe Dave Pelzer as the main character in the novel of *A Child Called 'It'*.
2. To know how Dave Pelzer struggles to survive reflected in the novel *A Child Called 'It'*.

#### **1.4. Scope and Limitation**

This study will be limited to the novel of *A Child Called 'It'*. Then focusing on Dave Pelzer as the main character in *A Child Called 'It'* and intrinsic elements such as character and characterizations of main character in the novel. Besides that, the limitations of this study the writer Humanistic and New Criticism theory to analyze novel *A Child Called 'It'*.

#### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

The results of this study are expected to provide some of the following benefits. Theoretical Benefit, this study is aimed to give additional information to literature research especially the literary studies on *A Child Called 'It'* novel. The authors hopes that this thesis readers will get an understanding of the three aspects, the first know more about characters and characterization studies. The second is about how that happened in the *A Child Called 'It'* novel. Practical Benefit, this study is aimed to give deeper understanding in literary field as the reference to the other researchers in analyzing the same object, *A Child Called 'It'* novel into different perspective. The writer also hopes that the readers will get more understanding and knowledge about Dave Pelzer, especially *A Child Called 'It'* novel. Moreover, the readers can explore more about some information's from this study and both understanding and appreciated Dave Pelzer other literary



The technique of collecting the data in this research is library research; the data from both primary and secondary sources are collected and recorded in a sort of document as evidence. Data collection techniques are as follows:

1. Reading the novel
2. Browsing the internet to get several information and related to the object of the study
3. Taking notes of important data from both primary and secondary sources
4. Arranging the data into several parts according to its classification, and
5. Selecting particular parts that are considered important and relevant for the analysis.

#### **1.6.4. Technique of the Data Analysis**

1. Selecting and accumulateing the data in from of narration and conversation from the novel related to the problem
2. Analyzing the data collected by the problem statement and
3. Drawing conclusions based on data analysis.

#### **1.7. Definition of Key Terms**

To avoid misunderstanding or misinterpretation about the terms, the researcher defines important related terms to this research as follows:

1. Main character: The character who consider as the most important who is given priority in the story
2. Self-actualization: Self-actualization is a person's desire to become everything he or she is capable of becoming.



## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents and discusses the review of related literature which consists of theoretical framework, Maslow's theory: basic concept of humanistic psychology, hierarchy of human needs, general discussion of needs, new criticism and review of related study.

#### 2.1. Theoretical Framework

This chapter focuses on Abraham Maslow theory to help finding Dave's self-actualization state to reach his fully functioning state or good life. Therefore, researcher provides the self-concept of Abraham Maslow personality theory. The researcher uses psychology theory concern to personality theory. Then there searcher focuses on humanistic aspect which is one of personality approaches. Besides explaining about Abraham Maslow personality theory as the main theory, there searcher is also using New Criticism theory, focused on character and characterization to analyze Andrea Such as the main character of *A Child Called 'It'* Abraham Maslow note that 'a good life is process, not a state. This is the direction, not the destination' (187). For this analysis, the application of those theories helps the writers make vivid and logical analysis so the researcher can achieve the purpose of the study.

According to Agus Sujanto et al (2004), stating that the personality is a complex psikofisis of the totality of the individual, so that it appears in the vagaries of the Act. While personality according to Kartini Kartono and Dali Gulo in Sjarkawim (2006) is the nature and behavior of the typical person that

differentiate it from others; integration characteristics of structures, patterns of behaviour, interests, pendiriran, abilities and potential of a person; everything about a person as known by others. Psychiatric practice of this theory called psycho analysis.

In conclusion, personality theory is a main study in psychology, because the key point of personality is study about human psyche or personality traits. Moreover, John believes that individuals are important and unique. From the individualist, 'person' is the very subject matter of personality psychology (4). So in psychology view, every human is difference one with another one, each of them has their own personality.

Another statement stated that personality is not just any individual difference but personality is about individuals who reflect the preferences and bias of the underlying motivation system. Along any dimension or within any dynamic that we would call personality, individual shaving preference and bias motivated for what they see or believe, what they want to have, how they like to get the desired state, and how they want to deal with the failure to get it (John et.al 183).

There are six different approaches to studying personality. The main theories include psychodynamic, neo-behaviorists, freudian, humanistic, biological, nature or disposition and cultural perspective (Schultz and Schultz 55). In this study the researcher focuses on humanistic approach by Abraham Maslow. Such a humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, believe that people strive to be self-actualization depending on the figure of their own.

## **2.2. Maslow's Theory: Basic Concept of Humanistic Psychology**

Abraham Harold Maslow was an American psychologist born in Russian Jewish family on April 1, 1908 Brooklyn, New York. He was a shy, neurotic, and depressive but has a great curiosity and intelligence were outstanding. With an IQ of 195, he excelled in school (Butler-Bowdon, 2005: 273). When he was young, Maslow began to admire the work of philosophers such as Alfred North Whitehead, Henri Bergson, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Plato, and Baruch Spinoza.

Maslow lives in the age where many streams emerge psychology emerging as a relatively young discipline. In America, William James developed functionalism. Gestalt psychology developed in Germany, Sigmund Freud triumphed in Vienna, and John B. Watson popularized behaviorism in America. When Maslow published his book, *Motivation and Personality*, the two theories which very popular and influential in American universities at that time are the Sigmund Freud Psychoanalysis and Behaviorism John B. Watson (Goble, 1987: 17).

In the realm of psychology, Psychoanalysis Freud considered as the first school. While behaviorism called as the second school. But Maslow (although never admired the two schools) have different principles. Freud's research samples are the neurotic and psychotic patients in his clinic. The question is: how can conclusions from a sample of people who are disturbed can be applied to the people in healthy mentally. Maslow had the principle that before understanding the mental illness, anyone should understand first about mental health. At the other hand, the Behaviorist collects data from research on animals such as pigeons

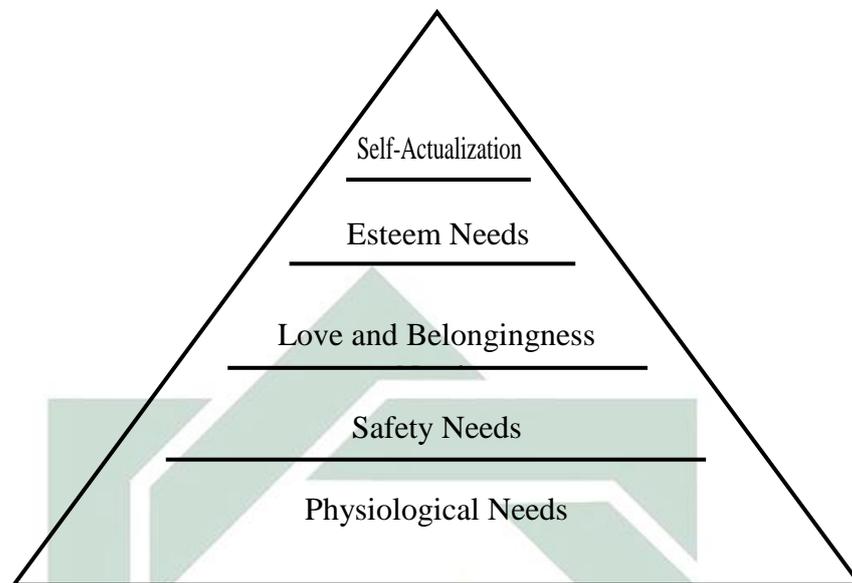
and white rats. Maslow saw that their conclusions could be applicable for fish, frogs, or mice, but not for the human race (Goble, 1987: 18-23, 33- 37).

Humanistic psychologists try to see human life as people see their lives. They tend to hold on to an optimistic perspective on human nature. They focus on the human ability to think consciously and rationally for the biological control of desires, as well as in achieving their maximum potential. In the humanistic view, human is responsible for their lives and deeds. They also have the freedom and ability to change their attitudes and behavior.

Humanistic psychologists itself start from the assumption that every person has their own unique way of perceiving and understanding the world and that the things they do only make sense in this light. Humanistic psychologists explicitly endorse the idea that people have free will and are capable of choosing their own actions, although they may not always realize this. They also take the view that all people have a tendency towards growth and the fulfillment of their potential.

### **2.3. Hierarchy of Human Needs**

In Human Motivation Theory, Maslow assumes that people are constantly being motivated by one need or another. The needs is believed as the basic motivation own by human in general. It can be arranged on a hierarchy or staircase, with each ascending step representing a higher need but one less basic to survival (see Figure 1). Maslow (1970) listed the following needs in order of their prepotency: *physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, self-esteem needs and self-actualization needs.*

**Figure 1. Hierarchy of Human Needs**

Those five needs are grouped into 2 groups, *Basic needs and Meta needs*. *Basic needs* which also called as *Deficiency Needs* is needs of human which have to be fulfilled to be alive. It consists of physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, and esteem needs. While the *Metaneeds* which also called as *Growth Needs* is needs which giving contribution to grow, such as self-actualization needs (see Figure2.).

This Maslow's hierarchy of needs concept assumes that lower level needs have prepotency over higher level needs. It means that the lower level needs must be satisfied or at least relatively satisfied before higher level needs become motivators (Feist&Feist, 2002). For example, their needs of hunger and safety at least partly should be satisfied before they become motivated by love and esteem needs. Only after people are relatively satisfied in each of these needs can they strive toward self-actualization.



anything to obtain it (Feist&Feist, 2002).

All of them mentioned above are the strong needs own by human individually. The needs are the most important needs to be met as they relate to their lives. In emergency situation, all of needs can be leaved and struggle for fulfilling this needs (Boeree,G.). People should have food to eat, water to drink, and a place to call home before they can think about anything else. If any of these physiological necessities is missing, people are motivated above all else to meet the missing need.

These needs are also important to understand human behavior. For example on the needs of the food, the effects of starvation or lack of it really affects the behavior of individuals. One of them is shown by the moral decline, such as stealing. Thus, it cannot be denied that this need can be a driving force and a powerful influence on human behavior. Reflexively, human would fulfill it first then meet the higher need.

In conclusion, physiological needs differ from other needs in at least two important aspects. First, these needs are the only needs which can be completely satisfied or even overly satisfied. One can get enough to eat until that food can be completely loses its motivational power. For someone who just finished a large meal, the thought of more food can even have a nauseating effect (Feist&Feist, 2002). A second unique characteristic to these physiological needs is their recurring nature. After people have eaten, they will eventually become hungry again, they constantly need to complete their food and water supply, and one breath of air must be followed by another. Other level needs do not constantly

recur. For example, once love and esteem needs are relatively met, they remain satisfied, but physiological needs continually reappear. (Feist&Feist, 2002).

### **2.3.2. SafetyNeeds**

After their physiological needs have been satisfied, people can work to meet their needs for safety and security. Safety is the feeling people get when they know no harm will befall them, physically, mentally, or emotionally. While security is the feeling people get when their fears and anxieties are low. The need for protection, law, stability, limits, structure, dependency, order, and the freedom from such threatening forces as illness, anxiety, danger and chaos are also included as safety needs (Maslow, 1970). The needs of physiological and safety are considered as the needs for struggling humanlife.

This safety needs is seem clear in a baby characteristic. When a baby is listening to the sound of thunder, he will give a response of fear. However, when he begins to frequently hear the sound, he experiences a process of learning where he begins to be habituated until the fear will be diminished. From this sample, it can be concluded that the learning and experience factors can affect a decrease in the level of safety needs in human.

Safety needs differs from physiological needs in that they cannot be overly satiated, people can never have too much safety. For example, humans can never be completely protected from meteorites, fires, floods, or the dangerous, acts of others. (Feist&Feist, 2002). However, safety needs become activated during emergency situations such as a natural disaster, unintentional injury, or war. During periods of immadiate danger or threats to physical well-being, the higher

level needs such as love, esteem, and self-actualization will lose their potency and people become motivated primarily by safety needs.

### **2.3.3. Love and Belongingness Needs**

After people partially satisfy their physiological and safety needs, they become motivated by the higher level of love and belongingness needs. The needs are arranged at the third level by Maslow. These needs are gotten by the satisfactory relationship with family members, friends, peers, classmates, teachers, and other people with whom the individual interacts. Satisfactory relationships imply an acceptance by others. Essentially, this needs includes the human desire for friendship, affection, the wish for a mate and children, the need to belong family, a club, a work group a neighborhood, or a nation. (Feist&Feist, 2002).

According to Maslow (1970), those feeling of love and belonging are the common feeling. Without feelings of love, a person will be overpowered by hatred, emptiness and worthlessness. He refuses the Freud's view who considers love as the sublimation of sex thought.

Motivation for love is ordinarily strongest when the need is only partially satisfied. People who have never received love, who have never been kissed or cuddled, can go for long periods without expression of love. They take absence of love for granted and eventually devalue this need. Conversely, people who have had love and belongingness needs enough satisfied from early years do not panic when denied love. These people have confidence that they are accepted by those who are important to them, so when other people reject them, they do not feel devastated (Feist&Feist, 2002).

On the other hand, people who have tasted love only in small doses will be

strongly motivated to seek satisfaction of love and belongingness needs. In other words, people who have received only a little amount of love have stronger needs for affection and acceptance than do people who have received either a healthy amount of love or none at all (Maslow, 1970).

#### **2.3.4. Esteem Needs**

After a human feels a sense of belonging, the need for esteem arises. Esteem needs may be classified as internal and external. External esteem needs are those such as reputation, in which the perception of the prestige or social status, attention, reward, recognition, or fame a person has achieved in the eyes of others. People want knowledge that others hold them in high esteem. While internal esteem needs are reviews those related to self-esteem, in which a person's own feelings of worth and confidence. It also includes the self-respect, achievement, competence, independence, and freedom. Every individual wants a conviction that himself is valuable and able to overcome all challenges in his life.

Self-esteem is based on more than reputation or prestige, it reflects "a desire for strength, for achievement, for adequacy, for mastery and competence, for confidence in the face of the world, and for independence and freedom. In other words, self-esteem is based on real competence and not merely on others' opinions. Once people meet their esteem needs, they stand on the threshold of self-actualization, the highest need recognized by Maslow", (Feist&Feist, 2002).

The satisfaction of this need certainly will deliver human confidence that he is quite valuable and beneficial. Conversely, if the need is not satisfied, individual usually feel frustrated, pessimistic, and worthless. However, the health of self-

esteem is the result of the individuals concerned on their achievements, and not based on the descent and opinion by other people.

### **2.3.5. Self-actualization**

When lower level needs are satisfied, people will proceed more or less automatically to the next level. Self-actualization needs include self-fulfillment, the realization of all one's potential, and a desire to become creative in the full sense of the word (Maslow, 1970).

People who have reached the level of actualization become fully human, satisfying needs that others merely glimpse or never view at all. They are natural in the same sense that animals and infants are natural that is, they express their basic human needs and do not allow them to be suppressed by culture (Feist & Feist, 2002).

This need can be addressed only when the previous four have been satisfied. Self-actualization is reached when all needs are fulfilled, in particular the highest need. Because of the positive feedback, self-actualization is not a fixed state, but a process of development which does not end (Heylighen, 1992). The word derives from the idea that each individual has a lot of hidden potentialities: talents or competences he or she could develop, but which have as yet not come to the surface. Self-actualization signifies that these potentialities of the self are made actual, are actualized in a continuing process of unfolding.

However, in some cases, when people once esteem needs are met, they do not always move to the level of self-actualization. According to Feist (2002), originally, Maslow ever assumed that self-actualization needs become to realize







The same person at the end of the story as it was in the beginning. Static characters are characters that remain the same from the beginning of a work of until the end of the story (Yanni 55).

### **2.5.2. Characterization**

Character and Characterization are inseparable. Characterization has function to show how the character is characterized or described in the story. It is the way of writers the way of the writer in describing and picturing the charactering their literary work.

According to Di Yanni, Characterization is a representation of how imagined person who inhabits a story or called character behaves throughout the story (54). Although character in a fiction is not real person, only an imaginary person who is created by the author to live the story, but they are the imitation of real human which have feature and characteristic. Methods of characterization according to Yanni's narrative description with the use of explicit assessment of when the author tells the explanation that since the beginning of the people know who he is or who she is or who it is? According to Yanni's (57) characterization techniques can be divided into six ways, namely:

1. Summary of the narrative without assessment
2. A narrative description without explicit or implicit assessment
3. Details of the surface or dress and physical appearance
4. Action characters what they do
5. The speech of the character what they say (and how they say it)
6. Awareness of the character what they think and feel.

The way of the six, the author uses only 3 ways in this analysis: the actions of the character - what they do, the character – what they say (and how they say it), awareness of the character – what they think and feel. The ways it helps researchers analyze the Dave’s character. To summarize, researcher applies theory of Abraham Maslow as main theory, self-concept theory and fully functioning or good life theory. The researcher using self-concept theory of Abraham Maslow because to find out Dave’s self-actualization. The researcher also applies new criticism theory but focus on character and characterization as supporting theory to help analyze Dave personality in *A Child Called ‘It’* novel.

## 2.6. Review of Related Study

There have been several previous studies that have been written. Previous studies come from the same object, a novel untitled *A Child Called ‘It’* written by Dave Pelzer, as the researcher but from different perspective from another the researchers. First, previous study has been written by Lucy Irawati Anwar untitled “*Alcoholism on Roerva in Pelzer’s A Child Called ‘It’ (2008)*”. She concluded that there is a child abuse in the novel done by a mother to her child. The mother is alcoholism and psychological factor becomes the reasons why the mother does the abuse. Second study has been written by Ruruh Handayani, untitled “*A psychological Analysis on Dave in A Child Called ‘It’ (2005)*”. She concluded that there is some changing in Dave’s character. Dave had to different psychological developments; there was normal and abnormal development. (<http://library.gunadarma.ac.id/abstaction>). Similar to the previous studies above, the researcher also main characters as a subject. Dave Sachs. All of previous study



## CHAPTER III

### ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the writer presents to perform an analysis of psychological aspect of the characters of the novel, Dave Pelzer, based on the underlying theory which has been explained in chapter two. This chapter involves the Humanistic Psychological theory proposed by Abraham Maslow, Abraham Maslow is known in his theory “hierarchy of needs. In his hierarchy of needs theory, Maslow states that there are general types of needs that people must fulfill before they can keep alive. Analysis of this novel uses Abraham Maslow’s frame work that consists of physiological needs, safety needs, love and belongingness needs, self-esteem needs, and the last is self-actualization needs. Those are the several needs that human being is motivated to do some efforts in their life.

#### 3.1. Dave’s Character

Character is created by the author who plays a story. A story is played by the characters. Character in the story can be divided into two types, major character and minor character. A character in literature is character that plays a people I the study who are not the main point of the story. The major characters in this novel are Dave Pelzer and Catherine Roerva. The minor characters are Stephen Joseph, Mr. Hansen, Mr. Ziegler, nurse of school, and Ron and stand Dave Pelzer is the main character.

#### 3.2. Brave

Dave is a child who comes from a white family. He has a loud voice that is different from other children. “*Dave is a brave child. He never feels afraid of*





"Well, you ah...you better go back in there and do the dishes." (ACCI, 1995:54)

Father's reaction to Dave's mother stabbing Dave is not what Dave expects, and it confirms once and for all that Dave's father will not be the superhero that Dave has always hoped he would be. He is not strong enough or braves enough to stand up to his wife to protect his son: she has managed to control him the way she controls everyone else in the family.

"In my dream, I flew through the air in vivid colors. I wore a cape of red... I was Superman." (ACCI, 1995:59)

Shortly after realizing that his father would not be his Superman, Dave realizes that he is his *own* Superman. He keeps up his strength even after being terribly harmed, fighting off infection and keeping himself alive. He is the only one he can truly count on in this situation, and this confidence in himself and his abilities keeps him going through the terror he is forced to suffer.

"You are a no body! And It! You are nonexistent! You are a bastard child! I hate you and I wish you were dead!" (ACCI, 1995:82)

For years, Dave's mother had called him "the boy," indicating that she viewed him as unworthy of a name or his own identity. This escalates as the abuse continues, and by the last chapter of the memoir, she calls him "it." This theme of dehumanization is so important that it became the title of the book, and it makes it clear just how low Dave felt during his abuse.

"This is my favorite place in the whole world!" (ACCI, 1995:94)

At the end of the book, Dave's son, Stephen, declares that the Russian River is his favorite place in the world. Dave used to feel the same way, before it became corrupted on his last visit when his mother abused him there however, he

still agrees with Stephen, showing that his mother had not truly taken away all of his happiness.

### 3.5. Good Times

Flashes back to before Dave's abuse, when he and his family lived happily in the 1960s. He and his two brothers had loving parents who did everything for them, living in a modest house in Daly City. His father, Stephen Joseph, worked as a fireman in San Francisco; his mother, Catherine Roerva, was in charge of the family and "*glowed with love for her children*"(ACCI, 1995:15). She took housekeeping very seriously and was a gifted cook, and often took her kids on tours of the city, including neighborhoods like Chinatown.

Their house was full of pets, and Dave particularly remembers a tortoise that he had named "Thor." His mother would teach them lessons about the animals they kept, including a lesson about the miracle of life when their cat had kittens. They celebrated holidays as a family, starting with Halloween, and his mother always decorated the house extensively for Christmas. The whole family would decorate the Christmas tree for hours, and then they would take a drive to look at everyone else's decorations.

When he was twelve years old. Now, the book flashes back to when Dave was a very young child, before the abuse even began. This suggests that Dave separates his life into two distinct eras: the "good times," when his family got along and his mother loved him, and the "bad times," after his mother began to abuse him. Now, though, the tone makes an abrupt switch to lighthearted, happy nostalgia, as Dave remembers a time before his terrible abuse. The nostalgia is

also infused with a sense of longing: though the author Dave is much older and well beyond this period of his life, he still obviously wishes that this happier time had lasted much longer. Dave's mother, Catherine Roerva, is one of the most interesting characters in this memoir primarily because of the different ways she is presented before and after she began abusing her son.

### 3.6. Bad Boy

Dave's relationship with his mother drastically changed shortly after this; it began with discipline that spiraled into "*a kind of lifestyle that grew out of control*" (ACCI, 1995:21). He notes that it became so bad that he had no strength to fight it. Dave notes the things about him as a child that may have influenced the way she treated him, including his loud voice and his propensity to get caught during mischief.

His mother's own behavior changed rapidly; when his father was away all day at work, she would lie on the couch in her bathroom and watch television, only getting up to go to the bathroom. She started to yell at them, losing her nurturing voice. Dave was able to determine what kind of day he would have based on how she was dressed—when she was put together and wearing makeup, that would be a good day. Dave's punishments began to evolve. It started with having to sit in a corner of the bedroom, and progressed to the "mirror treatment," in which she would smash his face against the mirror and force him to say he was a bad boy.

When their father was away at work, she would have Dave and his brothers search the house for something she lost. These searches continued until

Dave was the only one doing them, and she would beat him when he asked what they were looking for. He never found any of the things for which he was supposedly looking. His father became his protector, because his mother never hurt him around him. She would dress up and relax around him, and Dave would follow him around whenever he was home. One day he left for work, warning Dave to be a "good boy" on his way out. In that moment, Dave knew he was a "bad boy."

### **3.7. The Fight for Food**

“I always steal food before school started, while my classmates playing outside the building. I would sneak into the wall, right outside my classroom, dropping my lunch pail with another bucket and knelt down so that no one can see me hunting through their lunch.” (ACCI, 1995:49)

Dave's current situation: in this part of his life, finding food became the most important thing for him. All of the decisions he made were made with food in mind, whether he was actively seeking out food or trying not to upset his mother so that she would feed him. Once again, Dave had become a dehumanized animal, fighting only for basic survival needs the way an animal would.

While the physical abuse Catherine Roerva unleashed on her son in the last chapter was terrible, the punishments she uses in this chapter are absolutely horrifying. Things like smearing fecal matter all over his face, forcing him to eat his vomit, and making him swallow ammonia take her abuse to the next level, and these punishments make it clear that there is something wrong in his mother's mind to make her treat her son this way. Pelzer goes into great detail when discussing these incidents, which serves two purposes. First, it proves that these punishments have made a lasting mark on him, since he remembers them so

vividly, and second, it allows readers to picture the full horror of these experiences so that they sympathize with him and understand the things that his mother was capable of.

### **3.8. While Father is Away**

When Dave's mother suddenly starts treating him kindly, it seems too good to be true. The ease with which Dave falls for her act shows how desperate for love and affection he really was. In that moment, Dave was willing to ignore years of wrongs she had done to him, as long as she seemed willing to love him again. Sometimes it is difficult to remember that Dave is still just a child who wants his mother to love him, but in this moment, his youth and innocence is extremely clear.

"I felt like a fool because I had fallen for it. I was so hungry for love that I had swallowed the whole charade." (ACCI, 1995:74)

Following the stabbing, Dave's father spent much less time at home and much more at work. When he was home, he would help Dave with the dishes, asking him how he was doing and if he had had anything to eat that day. He told Dave that someday they would both get out of that house. But as usual, his mother put an end to his father helping him with the dishes, and his father gave in and stopped. Still, he repeatedly told Dave how sorry he was.

At one point when his father was away for an extended period of time, his mother starved him for ten consecutive days. At long last, she placed a plate of leftovers in front of him and told him he had two minutes to eat but as soon as he started eating it, she pulled it away from him and threw it out. He ran to the garage

and listened as his brothers ate their dessert, jealous that his mother never treated them the way she treated him. Finally, he was able to eat.

Also while his father was away, his mother played another cruel game with him. She put a bucket of ammonia and Clorox in the bathroom with him and shut the door. The air began to change, and the mist from the mixture made him sick. He wet a rag and covered his face with it, sucking air from the air vent. While this helped, he ended up coughing up blood downstairs in the garage once she let him out.

His mother made him take a job mowing lawns, which was not successful; instead, he ended up punished because one client felt bad for him and gave him a bag of lunch. His mother made him sit on rocks in the backyard while she took "her sons" to the zoo (ACCI, 1995:65), and then had him lie in a freezing cold bathtub with his face submerged in the water so he could not breathe. He then had to put his clothes on and sit in the backyard, wet and cold, listening while the rest of his family laughed and ate inside. When he started fourth grade in the fall, he had a nice substitute teacher who gave the children ice cream as a reward for good behavior. He loved her because she treated him like a real person later, he realized that he had a crush on her. The punishments continued, and his mother even began to whip him with the dog's chain. He still never ate. He realized that his father's plan to take him away was a hoax, and that his mother had forbidden his father to see him.

At school one morning, he had to report to the school nurse. It was difficult at first, but he eventually started telling her about his mother. On

Halloween, his mother made him do the bathtub routine while the rest of the family carved pumpkins. Listening to his mother talk nicely to his brothers reminded him of the mother she had been years ago. After, she told him to go sleep in his father's bed in the master bedroom, while she slept upstairs with his brothers. This continued, even when his father was home. He received roller skates for Christmas, but this was so that his mother could force him to skate outside in the cold while the other children were inside. At the end of March that year, his mother had another baby, and things were better while she was in the hospital. When his father went to visit her at the hospital, the boys would stay with a neighbor named Shirley, who was kind to them and reminded Dave of his mother before the abuse started. Finally, his mother came home with a new baby brother named Kevin. Shirley and Dave's mother became close friends. Shirley asked his mother why Dave was not allowed to play with the other kids, and she made up excuses. One day, his mother inexplicably broke all ties with Shirley. Then one Sunday, his mother came into the room, hugged him, and told him it was all over and that she was sorry that she would try to be a good mother. Dave could not believe it, but for two days, Dave was treated like his other brothers, wearing nice clothes and eating good food.

It was too good to be true, though, because the next day a social services woman came and asked Dave questions about his life, whether he was happy, and whether his mother beat him. Because nothing bad was happening then, he answered that he was happy, as his mother encouraged him. He said that she only beat him when he was a bad boy, which he knew was the wrong thing to say.

Everything went back to normal after that, because she had only been treating him nicely because of the social worker.

This time, Dave's focus is on his father's absence: the way his father's constantly being away has affected how his mother treats him but he is still only a child part of him still seeks to depend on his father. His father, however, continues to flee because he is too weak and passive to face up to what is happening and stop it. Every person has a fight or flight response to trouble, and Dave's father's response is flight. Many of the supporting characters in this book, including Dave's father, his schoolteachers, and the neighbor Shirley, are guilty of being bystanders in Dave's situation. They can see the clues as to what is going on in some cases, they know for sure what is happening but they choose not to intervene. This bystander effect is an unfortunately common occurrence in society, and this memoir is an important examination of how, in situations like Dave's, an observer's refusal to intervene can be just as terrible as the abuse itself.

By this story, the abuse has been going on for five years, and during this time Dave's mother has still treated Dave's brothers kindly. It takes until this point; however, for Dave to truly express jealousy and wish that his brothers could bear some of the brunt of her ire. Both readers and Dave are left with the unanswerable question: why was Dave singled out among his brothers? Why was he the one she decided to mistreat, while she still called the others "my sons"? Memoirs differ from other kinds of books in that readers only get one side of the story: try as we might to understand her motivation, we can never truly know what made Dave's mother single him out.

### 3.9. The Lord's Prayer

The first time that Dave has thought seriously about God in this memoir, despite the horrible things he has gone through. It makes sense for him to look to God at this point in time, once he realizes that his father is not the superhero he hoped he would be however, it also makes sense that he feels that God has abandoned him, because of the terrible things he has gone through. This chapter reiterates that Dave blames himself for the terrible things he has gone through, because he has not tried to make these things stop in his mind, he is at fault, not some external power. For a while now, Dave has been calling his mother "The Bitch." This mirrors her calling him "The Boy" and "it." Just like she did to him, he is stripping her of her identity as his mother, because he no longer feels any sort of familial connection to her after everything she has put him through. She is no longer worthy of her name or of being called "Mother," and he will not give her the satisfaction of using these titles.

"At the core of my soul, I hated myself more than anybody or anything. I came to believe that everything that happened to me or around me was my own fault because I had let it go on for so long." (ACCI, 1995:80)

Blame is one of this memoir's overarching themes, and from the very beginning Dave blamed himself for what he was going through. First it was because he thought he was a "bad boy" and had misbehaved in some way to make his mother do what she did, and near the end of his abuse, he blamed himself for not doing anything to make it stop. He internalized his mother's abuse, feeling as if it were his fault in some way.

It is easy to forget that while he has been forced to grow up far too quickly, Dave is still a young child, with the same wishes and needs that any other child would have. Just like other children, Dave longs for praise and recognition even more so, because he has not received it in so long. This is why he latches on to Mr. Ziegler's praise and support. Despite everything, he is also like any other child in that he still wants to please his mother and make her proud, which is why it hurts him so much that nothing he accomplishes makes her treat him any differently. Though he is only discussed for a few paragraphs, Dave's baby brother Kevin is an important character because he is one small glimmer of light and love in Dave's family.

Dave has lost faith in every one of his family members his mother, his brothers, even his father, who was once his idea of a hero. Kevin has not been touched by their mother's destructive hand of control yet, and as such, he is still innocent and pure. For this reason, Dave loves him, and his love for Kevin the first time in a long time he has felt any sort of familial love is what keeps him going. Finishing at the peak of Dave's abuse after his father has given up and left him for good. This, however, is where above explanation fits in chronologically, when Dave goes to school one day and the nurse and the principal finally decide to do something and call the police. Despite the dejecting finish to the end explanation, readers can remember the freedom that Dave was granted at the end and feel hope, knowing that Dave was able to escape the prison his mother had created for him.

The epilogue confirms that he has moved past this period of his life and changed for the better. The epilogue takes place when he is an adult, and Dave remarks upon the numerous lessons he has learned and the strength he has gained as a result of his experiences. The most important part of the epilogue is the presence of Dave's own son, Stephen. Stephen is Dave's chance at redemption; even though Dave did not get to grow up with the love of a parent, he can provide that love for his own son, filling an essential gap in his own heart. Stephen is an opportunity to provide everything his mother and his father did not: support, courage, love, care, and praise, things necessary for a child's wellbeing. In the epilogue, Dave returns to the Russian River with his son. This allows him to heal the wound that was left by the last time he went to the Russian River, when this place of happiness was corrupted by his mother's abuse. At the end of the epilogue, Dave agrees with his son that the Russian River is his favorite place in the world, showing that no matter how hard his mother had tried, she was still not able to truly erase Dave's innate happiness. He has stayed resilient, which is an important theme of this memoir.

### **3.10. Dave Pelzer's Physiological Needs**

The physiological needs are the basic needs. It means that human being will be motivated firstly by the physiological needs. The physiological needs include food, drink, oxygen, sleep, clothes. Here the main character shows that he needs to eat. He says that he will not sleep when he feels hungry.

“All right I was so hungry, my stomach growled as if I were an angry bear. At night I lay with a concentration on food.” (ACCI, 1995:48).

Besides food, here Dave needs clothes. His mother orders him to wear the same clothes every day. After a long time, his clothes become weathered, torn, and smelly.

“Because the mother told me to wear the same clothes week after week, in October, my clothes are becoming obsolete, RIP, and odorless.” (ACCI, 1995:47).

The good place is also needed by Dave. He is ordered by his mother to live in the basement. He is forbidden to enter the house. He is only permitted to enter the house when his mother orders him to do homework. Here shows that Dave also needs to take a rest.

“I was grounded to the house,” (ACCI, 1995:50)

From the statement above, the researcher can conclude that the main character needs to eat, to take a rest, and to get new clothes. He also needs the good place that comfortable. Some people can fulfill their physiological needs easily, but not for Dave in his young age. Dave must fight to fulfill it. In this novel, there is a chapter focusing on the Dave’s struggle to eat. It is fourth chapter, “*The Fight for Food.*” Here is the Dave’s struggle to get food.

“My idea was to sneak out of the playground and run to the local grocery store and stealing a cake, bread, chips, or whatever I can. In my mind, I planned every step of my scheme.” (ACCI, 1995:59)

“It was my function to wash the dishes. Standing there with my hands in boiling water, I could smell the remains of dinner in the trash. At the first my idea was nauseating, but the more I thought about it, the better it seemed. It was my only hope for food.” (ACCI, 1995:62)

“When I started running to school, I made sure I was running extra fast so that I will have more time to hunt for food. I then change the road stopped and I knocked on the door. I would ask the woman who answered if he happened to find a lunch box near his home. Mostly, my plan worked.” (ACCI, 1995:69)

Dave steals food to survive. His mother almost never gives him food. Because that, Dave is forced to steal his friends' food and food in the store. Dave has a lot of effort to obtain food but his mother always knows how Dave gets food. It makes his mother to act crueler. But it all makes Dave be motivated to try harder to obtain food.

From the explanation above, it can be seen that the physiological needs of Dave are difficult to be fulfilled. Dave has been struggling to survive in the age of a child. But not all physiological needs are met. Food already makes Dave able to survive. All of it takes to fight hard. Physiological needs such as to take a rest; to get a good place cannot be gotten by Dave, because it is difficult to obtain in Dave's condition which is always hungry.

### **3.11. Dave Pelzer's Safety Needs**

The safety needs come when one's physiological needs are satisfied or relatively well satisfied. The safety needs include physical security, stability, dependency, and protection. The safety needs are very needed by Dave when he gets cruel actions from his mother. The safety needs of Dave when he lives with his mother could not be fulfilled enough. He is not treated well by his mother and no one is able to help her until she is twelve years old.

In his young age, Dave is not able to keep himself from his mother's cruel treatment. Protection that should he gets from his parents he does not get. His mother does not keep him but on the contrary, she tortures Dave. At home, Dave has the expectation that his father would always protect him. But factually Dave's







Dave struggles to gain respect, and he does for his mother. He just wants his mother to appreciate him. As he struggles to obtain food by stealing, he is not concerned with the assessment of others. He does not expect respect from others. He just wants to live and gets love from his mother.

From the explanation above, it can be seen that Dave does not get respect from his mother. There is no one respect him except his teachers. His friends also do not respect him even on the contrary; his friends hate him because he is very dirty and disgusting.

#### **3.14. Dave Pelzer's Self-Actualization Needs**

The last level of needs by Abraham Maslow is self-actualization needs. Maslow characterizes self-actualization as the person's desire to become everything that he or she is capable to becoming. (Heller and Ziegler, 1992:454).

In this novel, Dave does not show his self-actualization. Dave is a child. In his young age, Dave does not understand yet the potential that exists in him. He just wants a normal life like other children.

Dave is a bright child. He is also a clever child, but after his mother tortures him, he only focuses on how to survive in facing his mother's abuse. He does not have time to learn, to play, to interact with the outside world, so that he cannot develop himself, only school where he can be free from his mother.

When Dave faces the cruel action from his mother, Dave always imagines being a child who is capable of facing any problem. His dreams make his spirit be alive. The torture of his mother makes him think in as adult.

“I knew if / wanted to live, / would have to think ahead. I can no longer crying like a helpless infant. I ordered to survive, I can never give up on

him. That day I swore to myself that i will never again give a whole the satisfaction of hearing i begged him to stop hitting me.” (ACCI, 1995:43).

Self-actualization need of Dave cannot be fulfilled. Dave cannot fight to actualize himself in the bad condition. The difficulties that are faced by Dave in fulfilling the physiological needs make him ignore the other needs.

In conclude above is every human being is supposed to live in joy, delight, pleasure, and cheerfulness. It can be called as needs. The human needs motivate the human to fight in their life. *A Child Called it* is a novel about a child struggle to survive. A Child in his young age must fight to fulfill his needs. Dave faces his mother’s abuse by himself. No one helps him. A father who should protect and guard him has gone away. His dreams make him have spirit in fighting to survive. And finally at the age of twelve years he could be free from his mother. The struggle to survive is shown in Dave’s ways to fulfill his needs. Dave Pelzer wants to remind for everyone not to feel desperate in their life. Everyone has the same chance to reach their desires. Dave Pelzer also reminds everyone not to run away from problem but face it, and not to give up. It is a logical thing that everyone wants to be happy. And all of it cannot be reached without struggle.





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