

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

A THESIS

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**By:
HASAN BASRI
A03213022**

**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES
STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY SUNAN AMPEL SURABAYA
2019**

DECLARATION

Name : Hasan Basri

Reg. Number : A03213022

Department : English Department

Faculty : Arts and Humanities

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.

Surabaya, January 28th 2019

The Researcher,



METERAI
TEMPEL
6000
ENAM RIBU RUPIAH

Hasan Basri

A03213022

APPROVAL SHEET

Approved to be examined at:

Surabaya, 17 January

Approved by

The advisor



Abu Fanani, M.Pd.

NIP. 196906152007011051

Acknowledged by

The Head of English Department



Dr. Wahyu Kusumajanti, M.Hum.

NIP. 197002051999032002

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

FACULTY OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES

STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY SUNAN AMPEL SURABAYA

2019

EXAMINER APPROVAL

This thesis has been approved by the Board Examiners, English
Department, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, UIN Sunan Ampel
Surabaya on January 2019

The Dean of Faculty of Arts and Humanities



Dr. H. Agus Aditoni, M.Ag.
NIP. 196210021992031001

The Board of Examiners are:

Examiner I

Abu Fanani, M.Pd.
NIP. 196906152007011051

Examiner II

Dr. Wahyu Kusumajanti, M.Hum.
NIP. 197002051999032002

Examiner III

Sufi Ikrima Sa'adah, M.Hum.
NIP. 201603318

Examiner IV

Abdul Wahab Naf'an, M.A.
NIP. 198002022015031002



KEMENTERIAN AGAMA
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI SUNAN AMPEL SURABAYA
PERPUSTAKAAN

Jl. Jend. A. Yani 117 Surabaya 60237 Telp. 031-8431972 Fax. 031-8413300
E-Mail: perpus@uinsby.ac.id

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KARYA ILMIAH UNTUK KEPENTINGAN AKADEMIS

Sebagai sivitas akademika UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, yang bertanda tangan di bawah ini, saya:

Nama : Hasan Basri
NIM : A03U3022
Fakultas/Jurusan : Adab dan Humaniora / Sastra Inggris
E-mail address : Hasanbasrimou@gmail.com

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A Child's Struggle in Dave Pelzer's A Child Called 'It'


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Abstract

Basri, Hasan. 2019. A Child's Struggle in Dave Pelzer's *A Child Called 'It'*.

English Department, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, State Islamic
University Sunan Ampel Surabaya.

The advisor: **Abu Fanani,M.Pd.**

Key words: Self-actualization, motivation, hierarchy of human needs.

This thesis focuses on the fulfillment of the self-actualization of the main character's novel '*A Child Called It*' by using the theory of Abraham Maslow. Self-actualization is the passion and desire to be like what he wanted to achieve and exploit all the potential, skills and talents. Someone who has grabbed self-actualization is someone who manages fully be himself. Human motivation is a theory that is most appropriate for implementing this analysis. This theory relates to the human effort that is able to make them do something they want.

This thesis helps finding Dave's self-actualization state to reach his fully functioning state or good life. Therefore, the writer provides the self-concept of Abraham Maslow personality theory. The writer uses psychology theory concern to personality theory and new criticism for supporting theory on *A Child Called 'It'* novel. This thesis uses descriptive qualitative method to explain Dave's life. The result of this study shows that Dave is struggle to survive in his family, he is struggle to find it although he faces a lot of obstacles.

Intisari

Basri, Hasan. 2019. A Child's Struggle in Dave Pelzer's *A Child Called It*. Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Sastra, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya.

Dosen pembimbing: **Abu Fanani,M.Pd.**

Kat Kunci:Aktualisasi diri, motivasi, hirarki kebutuhan manusia.

Tesis ini berfokus pada pemenuhan dari aktualisasi diri tokoh utama novel berjudul *A Child Called 'It'* dengan menggunakan teori Abraham Maslow. Aktualisasi diri adalah gairah dan keinginan untuk menjadi seperti apa yang ia inginkan untuk mencapai dan memanfaatkan semua potensi, kemampuan dan bakat. Seseorang yang telah menyambar aktualisasi diri adalah seseorang yang mengelola sepenuhnya menjadi dirinya sendiri. Motivasi manusia adalah teori yang paling tepat untuk menerapkan analisis ini.

Tesis ini membantu menemukan aktualisasi diri Dave untuk mencapai nya berfungsi sepenuhnya dalam kehidupan yang baik. Oleh karena itu, penulis menyediakan konsep-diri teori Abraham Maslow kepribadian. Penulis menggunakan psikologi teori keprihatinan kepribadian teori dan kritik baru untuk mendukung teori di novel *A Child Called 'It'*. Tesis ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif untuk menjelaskan kehidupan Dave. Hasil studi ini menunjukkan bahwa Dave berjuang untuk bertahan hidup di keluarganya, dia adalah anak yg berjuang untuk menemukannya meskipun dia menghadapi banyak rintangan.

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

A Child Called 'It' is one of the great novels from California, United States. This novel is written by Dave Pelzer in 1995. A novel it tells the unforgettable story of one of the most severe child abuse case in the history of California in Dave Pelzer story. Dave Pelzer is the author of the book from New York and including bestseller at the time. His real name is Dave James Pelzer; he was born in San Francisco, California on Desember 29, 1960. he was the second child of five boys. Dave Pelzer is the son of fireman Stephen Joseph Pelzer (1923-1980), a descendant of austria and Catherine roerva christen Pelzer (1929-1992). At the time his father died early in his life and his mother's own hands for at least eight years.

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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

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.

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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).

[illegible]

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'*.

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

1.3. Objectives of the Study

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

3. Human motivation: Theoretical construct used to explain human behavior which used to represent the reasons for human actions, desires, and needs
4. Psychology of Literature: The branch of literary studies which is reading and interpreting based on the various concepts and theoretical framework used in psychology.

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 researcher 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.

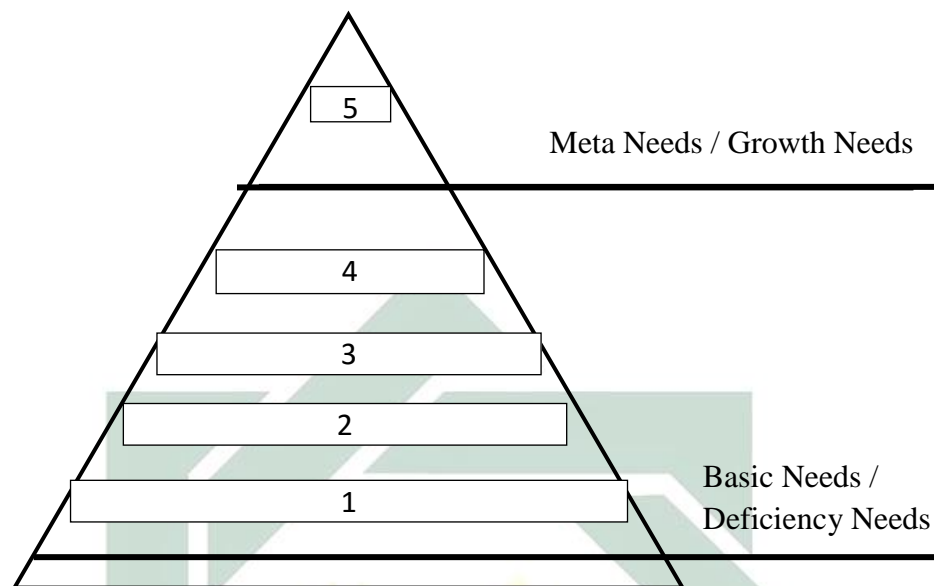
According to Agus Sujanto et al (2004), stating that the personality is a complex psikofisis of the totality of the individual, so that it appears in the vagaries of the Act. While personality according to Kartini Kartono and Dali Gulo in Sjarkawim (2006) is the nature and behavior of the typical person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

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

Figure 2. Hierarchy of Human Needs



2.3.1. PhysiologicalNeeds

The first and most basic need people have is the need for survival their physiological requirements for air, food, water, oxygen, sugar, salt, protein, warmth, calcium, mineral and vitamin. It also covers other needs such as maintenance of body temperature, needs of taking rest, sleeping, and also needs of sex. These physiological needs are the most prepotent of all (Feist&Feist, 2002). Perpetually hungry people are motivated to eat, not to make friends or gain self-esteem. They do not see beyond food, and as long as this need remains unsatisfied, their primary motivation is obtain something to eat.

Maslow (1970) said: “It is quite true that man lives by bread alone, when there is no bread” (p.38). When people do not have their physiological needs satisfied, they live primarily for those needs and strive constantly to satisfy them. Starving people become preoccupied with food and are willing to do nearly

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

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).

[illegible]

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).

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.

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2.4. General Discussion of Needs

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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.

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

“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)

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

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.

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 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.

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