

HIERARCHY OF NEEDS OF MEILIN LEE IN *TURNING RED* BY DOMEI SHI

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the hierarchy of needs of a teenager, Meilin Lee, and her characteristics of self-actualization portrayed in the movie *Turning Red*. The writer applied the theory of the hierarchy of needs by Abraham Maslow using the descriptive qualitative method to analyze this study. The study identifies 22 data on the hierarchy of needs and 9 data on characteristics of self-actualization. Mei successfully fulfills five needs based on the hierarchy of needs, they are physiological, safety, belongingness and love, esteem, and self-actualization. After successfully fulfilling her self-actualization needs, Mei is also known as an actualized person and has specific characteristics that are different from others. Mei has seven characteristics of self-actualization, they are acceptance of self, others, and nature; spontaneity, simplicity, and naturalness; problem centering; continued freshness of appreciation; democratic character structure; creativeness; and resistance to enculturation. In conclusion, though Mei is still a teenager she successfully fulfills all needs based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This is because of the characteristics of self-actualization she has.

Keywords: *Hierarchy of Needs, Characteristics of Self-Actualization, Turning Red, Meilin Lee*

INTRODUCTION

In life, humans have an impulse to always want something. Human beings will be motivated to put satisfying their most basic needs before anything else. Motivation represents the desire and spirit of humans to gain life itself satisfaction [1]. Basic needs are a crucial need for a human being to survive. These basic needs consist of a place to live, clothes, a break, water, oxygen, sleep, and a sense of sexuality [2]. Once individuals have satisfied their basic needs, they are going to be motivated by security needs. If individuals lack these needs, they are going to feel worry and fear [3]. If basic needs and security needs are satisfied, the need for affection grows. Belonging and love motivate individuals to have confidence in themselves and their opportunities, so they can contribute efficiently to processes of decision-making that encourage growth and improvement in different communities throughout society [4]. Individuals who have reached the confidence will be actualized. Self-actualization is the motivation to develop, improve, and optimize a person's abilities to be the greatest version of themselves [5]. Literature and psychology are two subjects studies that analyze the human psychological

condition. Literary works examine humans and explain how they live in every aspect [6]. Thus, psychological concepts can be employed to represent the phenomena of the existence of humans in literary works. Poems, short narratives, fiction, and movies all have psychological material. *Turning Red* depicts an issue concerning the main character's motivation to satisfy her needs. *Turning Red* means when the main character Meilin transforms into a giant red panda whenever she feels strong emotions. The phrase "turning red" is used to describe her physical reaction to her emotions, which is a significant part of her character development throughout the story to satisfy the needs and development of her character by self-actualization.

METHOD

In this study, the writer uses qualitative research. Qualitative research is descriptive, containing data obtained in the format of words or images rather than numbers [7]. The writer focuses on studying the character's psychology. Both intrinsic and extrinsic approaches are applied in this study. For the intrinsic approach, the writer

focuses on analyzing the main character in the movie *Turning Red*, while in the extrinsic approach, the writer analyzes the hierarchy of needs and characteristics of self-actualization portrayed in *Turning Red*. The movie *Turning Red* and the movie script were the sources of an important collection of data for this study. Papers, published academic journals, theses, e-books, and other material related to the hierarchy of needs and characteristics of a self-actualization person were used as secondary sources in this study. The writer applied the theory of literary psychology by Abraham Maslow. Abraham Maslow's theory is known as the Hierarchy of Needs which the writer uses to analyze the hierarchy of needs and characteristics of self-actualization through dialogue and gestures of the main character in *Turning Red*.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Mei's Hierarchy of Needs

1. Physiological Needs

The data describes Ming making breakfast for Mei. Mei is still a child, she needs food to help her grow. Ming always provides food for her daughter. It can be seen in the dialogue below.

MING. Mei-Mei... Are you up?

Breakfast is ready!

MEILIN. **Coming!**

The data explains that Ming called Mei to get up because her breakfast was ready. Hearing her mother call out, Mei woke up and answered that she would come. It proves that Mei's need for food is fulfilled.

2. Safety Needs

If the basic needs have been satisfied properly. Mei has been able to achieve her safety needs. The data describe Mei's needs for her parents as a security aspect. It can be seen in the figure below.



Figure. 2 Mei dropped off by car

Figure 2 shows Mei being dropped off by her mother at school by car. Mei arrived at her school safely. Ming drove her car carefully after passing through rush hour. This proves that Mei needs the safety of protection that she needs from her parents.

3. Belongingness and Love Needs

The data describe Mei who is still a child and needs affection from her parents. It can be seen in the dialogue below.

MING. There is a darkness to the panda, Mei-Mei. You only have one chance to banish it, and you cannot fail.

Otherwise, you'll never be free.

JIN. Let's see, the next red moon will be the 25th.

MEILIN. That's a whole month away.

MING. We'll wait it out together

And I'll be with you every step of the way.

The dialogue above shows Ming convinces Mei to do a ritual that can lock her red panda because there is darkness in the red panda that would be bad for her. In addition, Ming also assured Mei that she would always be by her side. It proves that Mei achieved her belonging because she has parents who love her.

4. Esteem Needs

The data describes when Mei mastered various subjects and gained recognition, she experienced a range of positive emotions including self-confidence. It can be seen in Mei's statement below.

MEILIN. **Anyway, who cares what stupid, evil Tyler or anyone else thinks? This is gonna be my year.**

Mei has high self-confidence so bad words about her are not affected. In addition, because her life is organized, Mei also believes in herself that in that year she will be successful. This shows that Mei realizes that she is valuable to others, especially to her parents.

5. Self-Actualization Needs

The data describe Mei at the age of 13, she needs things that can make her happy. Mei is obsessed with the boy band 4*Town and dreams of going

to their concert. It can be seen in the figure below.



Figure. 3 Mei going to a concert with her best friends

All this time, what Mei dreamed of most was going to watch 4*Town concert. Mei's process to achieve her self-actualization was not easy as she had to go through various obstacles, but Mei managed to get through all of that. This means Mei can achieve her dreams and optimize her abilities with the efforts she made to go to the 4*Town concert.

Mei's Characteristics of Self-Actualization

From the seven characteristics of self-actualization portrayed by Mei, only five characteristics are shown in this article.

1. Acceptance of Self, Other, and Nature

The data describes when Mei's teachers and schoolmates have their labels for her. It can be seen in the dialogue below.

MEILIN. I guess you could call me...
TEACHER. A very enterprising, mildly annoying young lady.
FRIEND. A major weirdo.
TYLER. An overachieving dork-narc.
MEILIN. **I accept and embrace all labels.**

The opinions given by the teacher and her friends in the dialogue above show that Mei's character is annoying, strange, and narcissistic. However, Mei responds well and shows that she is capable of accepting herself, without expecting perfection, and capable of appreciating the opinions of others and herself.

2. Spontaneity, Simplicity, and Naturalness

The data explains Mei expressed her anger because the day of the ritual coincided with the day the concert was held. It can be seen in the dialogues below.

MIRIAM. 4*Town's the same night as the ritual?

MEILIN. **No! The same night?** The same night? What? (*Breathing heavily*)

MIRIAM. Mei, chill

PRIYA. It's okay

MEILIN. No, it isn't! (*Panting*)

I can't miss 4-Town! We worked so hard! But the ritual. I'll let everyone down! No, no, no!

After successfully actualizing herself, Mei can express her anger, disappointment, and other emotions spontaneously that she has been suppressing. Instead of hiding those feelings to make others happy, Mei expresses those feelings openly.

3. Problem Centering

The data describes when Mei can separate her problems and prioritize her problems with her friends. This can be seen in the dialogue below.

MEILIN. Guys! Two hundred bucks will put us over the top. We have to do this. We'll meet at Tyler's. I'll do my thing And then we'll bounce. Easy-peasy.
MIRIAM. Dude, what about your mom?
MEILIN. **Forget my mom. I'll be back before she even knows I'm gone.**

The personal problem is her mother's reaction if she finds out that Mei came to the party, but Mei prioritizes her problems with her friends' problem with came to Tyler's party to get the lack of money that they use to buy tickets concert 4-town.

4. Continued Freshness of Appreciation

The data describes when Mei's friends challenged her to dance and sing 4-Town before she came back home. This can be seen in the dialogue below.

ABBY. Yeah! Go, Mei! See, that was good!
MIRIAM. That was dope! You passed.
And here is your reward. Nine-teen nine Australian tour, with the girl I love your jeans remix.
MEILIN. **O-M-G, Mir! I'll guard it with my life. Oh, thank you, thank you, thank you!**

The data explains Mei who got the 4-Town's CD felt very happy and would guard it like guarding

her own life. Mei also repeatedly says thank you means that she is very grateful for what she got. It proves that Mei has an extraordinary ability to appreciate all things even if it's a small thing.

5. Resistance to Enculturation

The data explains Mei can make her own decisions. Even if the decision is against her family's decision. It can be seen in the dialogue below.

MING. Mei-Mei! It's okey. We can do it again
MEILIN. I'm keeping it
GRANDMA. what did she say? Keeping it?
MEILIN. **I'm keeping it!**
LILY. Oh no!
MING. Mei-Mei
GRANDMA. Stop her!

The dialogue above shows Mei decided to cancel the ritual and chose to keep her red panda. Mei's decision led to various reactions from her family because Lee's female descendants prefer to lock up their red pandas which are the culture of the Lee family. It proves that Mei can maintain her position and is not affected by the culture in her family.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The writer examines Mei's fulfillment of five levels of the hierarchy of needs in *Turning Red*, including physiological, safety, belongingness, love, esteem, and self-actualization. Self-actualization is the highest level and requires more effort. Mei who successfully fulfills her self-actualization needs is also known as an actualized person and has specific characteristics that are different from others, Mei demonstrates seven characteristics of self-actualization, with acceptance of self and spontaneity being prominent. The writer hopes this thesis helps readers understand the hierarchy of needs and how characteristics emerge after actualization. Future researchers can analyze *Turning Red* using other psychological theories or analyze intrinsic elements.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The writer noticed that the finished of this thesis would not have been workable without the encouragement and advice provided by several parties. The writer would like to express deep gratitude to the advisor, Femmy Dahlan, S.S.,

M.Hum for her attention, knowledge, ideas, suggestions, and patience in finishing the thesis. Gratitude is also to the examiners, Prof. Dr. Elfiondri, S.S., M.Hum and Temmy Thamrin, S.S., M.Hum, Ph. D. for giving encouragement, suggestions, and feedback during the examination and finishing the thesis.

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