

**THE PORTRAYAL OF SELF-ACTUALIZATION ON MERIT IN**

**COLLEEN HOOVER'S NOVEL *WITHOUT MERIT***

**A FINAL PROJECT**

**Presented as Partial Fulfilment of Requirements**

**To Obtain the *Sarjana Sastra* Degree**

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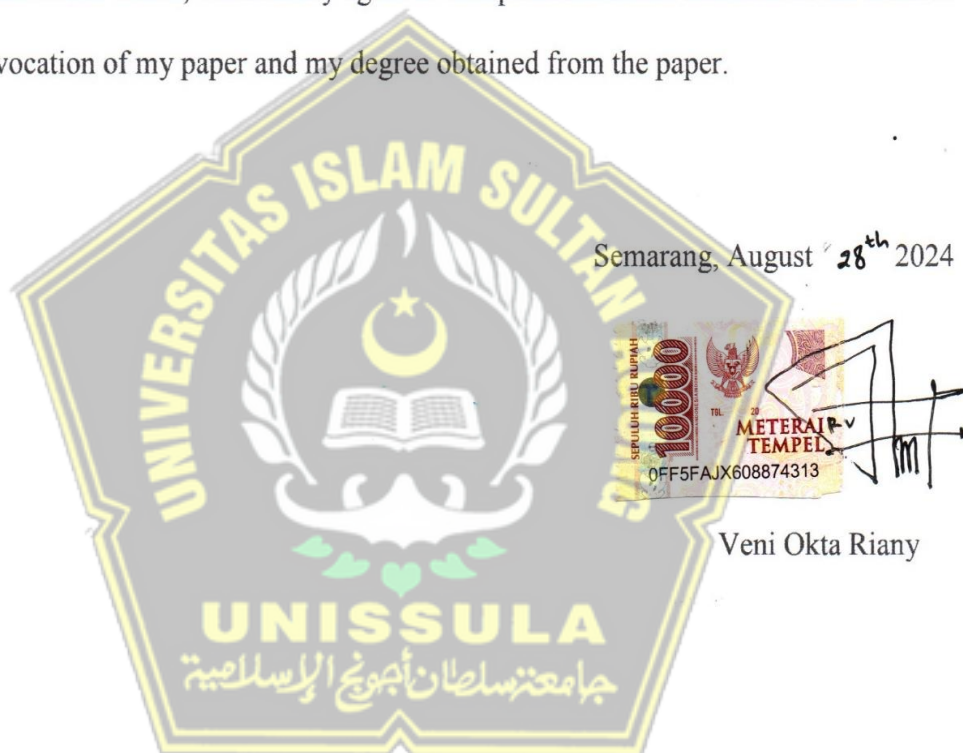
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## MOTTO AND DEDICATION

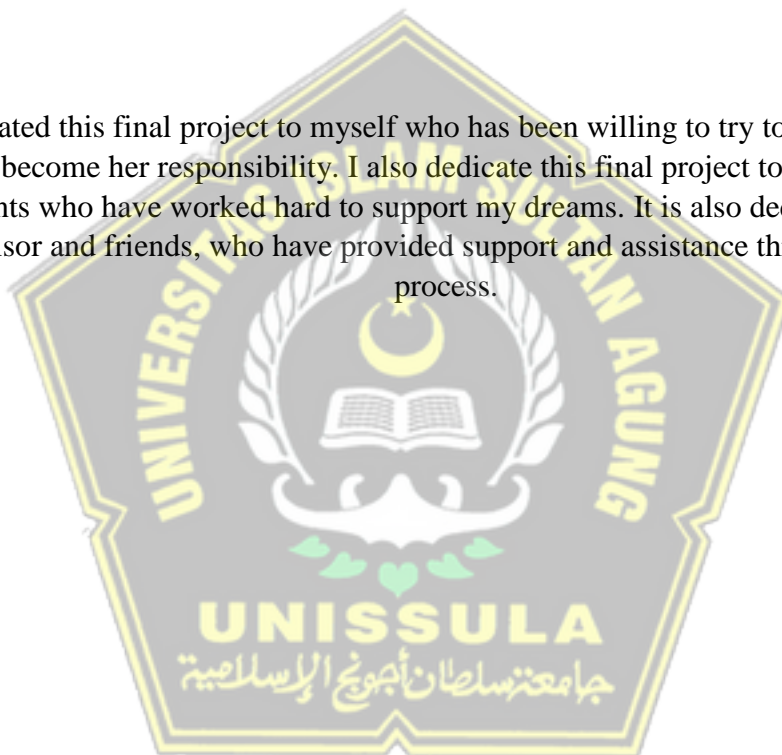
“Surely with that hardship comes more ease.”

(Q.S Al-Insyirah: 6)

"Work hard on what you are given and you will see your path"

(Yoon Jeonghan)

I dedicated this final project to myself who has been willing to try to complete what has become her responsibility. I also dedicate this final project to my beloved parents who have worked hard to support my dreams. It is also dedicated to my advisor and friends, who have provided support and assistance throughout the process.



## ABSTRACT

**Riany, Veni Okta. 30802000002.** The Portrayal of Self-Actualization on Merit in Colleen Hoover's Novel *Without Merit*. The final project of the English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Language and Communication Science, Sultan Agung Islamic University, Semarang. Advisor: Destary Praptawati, S.S., M.Hum.

This study uses a novel titled *Without Merit* written by Colleen Hoover as the object of study. The first purpose of this study is to find out the fulfillment of the needs of the main character, Merit Voss. The second aim is to analyze the self-actualization characteristics of Merit who succeeds in becoming a self-actualizing person. This study uses Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of human needs theory.

The method of analysis in this study was the descriptive qualitative method. Data were obtained from the novel, including dialogue, monologue, and narrative. Reading the novel, identifying data, classifying data, and reducing data were the steps used to collect the data in this study.

The first result of this study was the fulfillment of human needs such as food, house, family, and lovers, a sense of being valued and respected, and the need for self-actualization by Merit as the main character in the novel *Without Merit*. Secondly, this study found five characteristics of self-actualization, specifically the democratic character structure, the need for privacy, social interests, interpersonal relationships, and acceptance of self, others, and nature.

**Keywords:** *the hierarchy of needs theory, characteristic of self-actualization, abraham maslow, Without Merit.*

## INTISARI

**Riany, Veni Okta. 30802000002.** “The Portrayal of Self-Actualization on Merit in Colleen Hoover’s Novel *Without Merit*”. Skripsi program studi Sastra Inggris Fakultas Bahasa dan Ilmu Komunikasi Universitas Islam Sultan Agung Semarang. Pembimbing: Destary Praptawati, S.S., M.Hum.

Penelitian ini menggunakan novel yang berjudul *Without Merit* yang ditulis oleh Colleen Hoover sebagai object penelitian. Tujuan yang pertama dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui pemenuhan kebutuhan yang ada dalam diri tokoh utama yaitu Merit Voss. Sedangkan tujuan kedua adalah untuk menganalisa karakteristik aktualisasi diri Merit yang berhasil menjadi orang yang mengaktualisasi diri. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori hierarki kebutuhan manusia dari Abraham Maslow.

Metode dalam melakukan analisis dalam penelitian ini adalah metode deskriptif kualitatif. Data didapatkan dari novel seperti dialog, monolog, dan narasi. Membaca novel, identifikasi data, klasifikasi data dan mengurangi data adalah langkah-langkah yang digunakan untuk memngumpulkan data dalam penelitian ini.

Hasil pertama dari penelitian ini adalah terpenuhinya kebutuhan-kebutuhan manusia seperti makanan, rumah, keluarga dan kekasih, rasa dihargai dan dihormati, serta kebutuhan aktualisasi diri oleh Merit sebagai tokoh utama dalam novel *Without Merit*. Kedua, dalam penelitian ini ditemukan adanya lima karakteristik aktualisasi diri yaitu karakter yang demokratis, kebutuhan akan privasi, kepentingan sosial, hubungan interpersonal, dan penerimaan baik diri, orang lain, dan lingkungan.

**Kata kunci:** *teori hierarki kebutuhan manusia, karakteristik aktualisasi diri, abraham maslow, Without Merit.*

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Finally, it must be acknowledged that this final project is still far from perfect. Nevertheless, it is hoped that it will be of use to readers and other researchers.

Semarang, August 28<sup>th</sup> 2024



Veni Okta Riany

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the introduction of the study, which consists of the background of the study, problem formulation, limitation of the study, object of the study, the significance of the study, and outline of the study.

#### A. Background of the Study

Literature has always been a part of human life that attracts the interest and attention of many individuals of all ages and all social classes. This is because literature is a flexible and diverse art form. In *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Eagleton argues that literature is an art whose meaning can change. The meaning and value of literature is influenced by culture and society (2011). In other words, the idea of literature will differ from one society to another. The scope of literature is also broad, ranging from creative or imaginative writing to scientific works. This explain that literature can be both artistic and intellectual, exploring emotions and ideas (Barthes, 1977)

Literature is divided into two, namely fiction and nonfiction. According to Abrams and Harpham, Fiction is a form of creative writing that contains imaginative or unreal things. Whereas non-fiction is a form of scientific writing that presents a fact written scientifically and objectively (2015). Novels, poetry, biographies, magazines, and journals are types of literary works.

Literary works are usually used to reflect human life in all aspects of life. Therefore, literature is one of the fields of science that is closely related to humans. Aspects that can be related to literature include psychology, politics, economics, history, culture, sociology, and other fields. An example in novels, a writer usually not only involves feelings but also represents the meaning of life. This is explained by Aras as follows:

An author represents life according to his/her objectives, perceptions, ideologies, and value judgments and opens the doors of the unknown and invisible worlds to readers not only by arousing feelings and emotions but also by helping them to discover the meaning of life and existence (2015, p. 251).

Literature and psychology have an attachment. Psychology in literature itself is a theory used to study human life in-depth and comprehend individuals in a literary work. There are many theories about understanding the issues of individual psychology. Abraham Maslow is one of the theorists who discussed humanistic theory. This theory is known as the motivation theory, the hierarchy of needs.

The life of each human being has a variety of experiences, certainly including moments of joy and sorrow. People are often unable to achieve the goals they set out to achieve. According to Maslow (2011, p. 67), humans always want something throughout their lives. This desire gives rise to motivation. If

surviving to live is a human desire, the human can survive if their needs can be satisfied. Fulfilling human needs is necessary from born to death. Human motivation is to fulfill their basic needs, which include clothes, sustenance, security, and, eventually self-actualization.

Existing motivation is needed to reduce physical injury and maximize happiness. It means that people will seek happiness for themselves. In Feist and Feist, people will try to find ways for them to feel happy and then their needs are satisfied. Failure to achieve these goals can create a series of problems (286). This set of problems can be resulted from interpersonal conflicts that create discomfort in interactions, natural disasters that cause the loss of loved ones or valuable possessions, and various other things. In order to deal with these problems, individuals must undertake various actions and strategies. The primary goal and motivation of individuals in taking action to overcome problems is to ensure their survival.

The hierarchy of needs is a concept within Maslow's motivation theory that discusses the basic needs that must be fulfilled. In this theory, needs are divided into five namely physiological, safety, love and belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. The concept of the hierarchy of needs is that low-level needs must be satisfied to survive and the next-level needs become a motivation to be fulfilled (Griffin 87).

The lowest level of needs is the need that must be met because it is the most prioritized need. Maslow in Schultz and Schultz (251) states that lower-



level needs are more urgent and powerful because they are directly linked to survival and basic functioning. Without fulfill these needs, an individual cannot progress to higher-level needs. For instance, a person who is starving will prioritize finding food over seeking social connections or esteem. The highest needs in the hierarchy are more about personal growth and psychological fulfillment, they are considered weaker because they are not immediately essential for survival. Humans can focus on the highest needs if the lower needs are satisfied.

Self-actualization is part of the highest peak in the hierarchy of needs theory. After the lower needs are satisfied, individuals try to reach this highest point. According to Kapur (2019), a self-actualizing person accepts all the strengths and weaknesses within themselves. Individuals who have self-actualization also easily accept other people without any negative thoughts towards that person. Thus, self-acceptance is the most important form of self-actualization because the individual will be able to be honest with themselves and the environment, be realistic about what happens, and have a sense of purpose in life.

The literary work that is the object of this study is a novel entitled *Without Merit*, a novel written by the New York Times bestselling author, Colleen Hoover. The novel tells the story of Merit Voss, a teenager who feels alienated by her own family. Merit faces difficulties in accepting herself, which in the process of reaching that point involves herself and her family.

Maslow's theory that discusses human needs, commonly referred to as the hierarchy of needs, is used as a reference in this study. This novel is used as an object of the study because in this novel there is a depiction of how to satisfy human needs and succeed in becoming a self-actualizing person. This study explains the basic needs that Merit Voss successfully fulfills. In addition, this study of self-actualization achieved by Merit as the main character in *Without Merit* is interesting to analyze because this study can explain how the characteristics of people who successfully self-actualize. People who can build self-confidence and respect themselves regardless of their circumstances.

### **B. Problem Formulation**

Based on the background of the study above, there are two problem formulations will be discussed:

1. What kinds of hierarchy of needs are reflected by Merit Voss in *Without Merit* novel?
2. What are the characteristics of self-actualizing experienced by Merit in *Without Merit* novel?

### **C. Limitation of the Study**

This study focuses on the basic needs and self-actualization experienced by Merit Voss, the main character in *Without Merit* novel by Colleen Hoover. In addition, this study also discusses the characteristics of self-actualizing people of Merit Voss. This study used Maslow's theory that explains human needs, also known as the hierarchy of needs.

#### **D. Objectives of the Study**

Based on the problem formulation above, there are some purposes of this study as follows:

1. To describe the kind of hierarchy of needs experienced by Merit Voss in *Without Merit* novel.
2. To identify the characteristics of self-actualizing reflected by Merit Voss in Colleen Hoover's novel.

#### **E. Significance of the Study**

Academically, this study fulfills part of the requirements for obtaining the bachelor's degree in English Literature, at Sultan Agung Islamic University. This study is expected can be useful for people to understand the hierarchy of needs by Abraham Maslow which is reflected by Merit Voss in Colleen Hoover's novel. This study, hopefully, can help other researchers in conducting new studies related to similar topics.

#### **F. Organization of the Study**

This study is presented in five chapters. Chapters I discusses about introduction, including the background of the study, problem formulation, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and the organization of the study. Chapter II is the review of related literature and contains the synopsis of *Without Merit* novel and Maslow's theory used in this study. The theory that explained in chapter II is the hierarchy of needs and characteristic self-

actualization. Chapter III is the research method. The third chapter explains the type of data, data collecting, and analyzing the data. Chapter IV consist the finding and discussion. Chapter V contains the conclusion and suggestion.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### A. Synopsis

*Without Merit* is a novel written by Colleen Hoover that was published in 2017. The novel tells the story of Merit Voss, who had a complicated relationship with her family. The story began with Merit Voss visiting a store that sold antiques. She went to the store to buy a trophy. Merit had enjoyed collecting trophies since she was 15 years old. In the store, Merit met a man who looked at her curiously. The man was Sagan, he thought Merit was Honor. In the novel, Merit was described has an identical twin named Honor Voss.

Merit was a teenager who grew up in The Dollar Voss. It was the Voss family home located in Texas. In that house, Merit lived with her father, biological mother, stepmother, twin sister, older brother, younger brother, and uncle. Merit's father, Barnaby Voss, married a nurse who used to take care of Merit's biological mother. Merit had a younger brother named Moby from her father's second marriage. Utah was the older brother who was very close to Honor. Meanwhile, her uncle named Luck was her stepmother's brother. Merit's biological mother still lived with them, but she stayed separately in the basement area.

Merit, Honor, and Utah were in the same class. However, Merit differed from Honor and Utah, as she often chose not to attend school. Merit

always said she was feeling unwell, so she skipped classes. She kept did this because she thought her parents would not know how often she skipped school.

Unlike most families, Merit thought her family was not normal. She was not very close to her family members. She even hated her father and his second wife. She also did not like her twin sister because Honor tended to like people who were sick. Utah rarely interacted with Merit either. Additionally, Merit did not like her biological mother much because she did not want to come out of the basement and only interacted with people through social media. However, the situation changed when Luck came to Dollar Voss. Luck was a stranger who understood and became close friends with Merit.

The family started to change when Sagan and Luck stayed with the Voss family. Meanwhile, Merit was shocked to find out that Sagan was staying at Dollar Voss because of an invitation from Honor, Sagan's close friend. Merit thought they were a couple. She did not like it because her encounter with Sagan at the antique shop a few days ago made her like him. However, due to her own assumptions, Merit was forced to stay silent and did not show her feelings. Meanwhile, Luck accidentally met Merit in front of a store when she was buying dog food. Luck asked for a ride to an address that turned out to be the Dollar Voss.

Since Luck's arrival, Merit felt she had a friend. Luck was also a guy who easily blended with new people. He did not have any difficulties interacting with the Voss family. However, one day, Merit got into trouble. The problem caused chaos at home. It started when Merit was asked to help Honor.

She wanted to visit her sick close friend, which would make her father and Sagan angry if they knew Honor left, came home late, and missed dinner. Merit, unable to refuse her twin's request, helped by saying that Honor had a severe fever and was resting in her room. Everything went smoothly, but nearing midnight, Merit suddenly wondered what it would be like if she looked like Honor. Merit, who was indifferent about her appearance, naturally had a vastly different fashion sense from Honor. She tried on Honor's clothes from the laundry room. When she wanted to go to her room, she was surprised by Sagan greeting her. Of course, Sagan thought it was Honor. Sagan wanted to talk about the issue between him and Honor. Because of confused, Merit had to pretend to be Honor. She did this so that Sagan would not know Honor had left and lied about being sick. Merit even changed her tone of voice to sound like Honor. However, during the conversation, Sagan realized it was not Honor but Merit.

Sagan realized it was not Honor. He got angry and left her alone in the living room. Aware she had made a mistake, Merit wanted to tell Luck to get a solution on how to fix the misunderstanding. She went to Luck's room, but she found Luck and Utah did something inappropriate. After seen that, Merit left Luck's room without waited for an explanation from either of them. The recent situation put a lot of pressure on Merit.

She felt there was no place for her in the house and that no one cared about what she did. Feeling stressed, Merit decided to drink wine, tequila, and high doses of pills. She got the medicine from her biological mother's medicine

cabinet. She swallowed 28 pills with wine she took from the kitchen. After taking the pills, she wrote a letter full of complaints about her family members. Merit wrote about her father getting close to her biological mother again, even visiting her in the basement when his second wife was not home. She also mentioned Utah kissing her when she was little and how she had been waiting for an apology from him ever since. She also wrote about the incident between Luck and Utah. Additionally, she mentioned Honor still liking people who were seriously ill. After writing the letter, she printed it and placed a copy in each room.

Merit returned to her room and realized she was having trouble breathing. She panicked and regretted her actions. She tried to scream but her voice was faint. With the remaining strength she had, she knocked on Utah's door. When he opened the door, Utah was shocked to see his sister look like she was dying. Sagan heard something noise, came out and found Utah panicked and realized Merit had taken 28 pills. Seen the situation, Sagan pushed Utah aside and asked him to call an ambulance.

Sagan approached Merit and tried to put his fingers in her mouth to make her vomit the pills. Sagan managed to make her vomit all the pills without caring about his dirty clothes. He successfully removed all 28 pills. Merit's father, Victoria, and Moby, who had woken up, were also shocked. Victoria grabbed a wet rag. She gave it to Sagan and it used to clean Merit's face.

In her half-conscious, Merit explained that she had taken the pills she stole from her mother's room. Merit's father then calmed the family to calm



down, explained that the pills Merit took were placebo pills and would not have any harmful effects. Everyone was shocked but also relieved. At that moment, Victoria found the letter Merit had written. Shortly, Honor, who had just come home was confused about why everyone was gathered in the living room. Instead of focusing on Honor came home late, Barnaby and Victoria were more focused on Utah, who had hurt Merit's feelings since she was young. Utah tried to explain that it only happened once and had no special motive. However, Barnaby asked Utah to leave the house. Victoria was also disappointed with what Utah had done to Merit and Luck.

After the incident, Merit realized she was not lacking people who cared about her, especially Sagan, who was very worried when he saw her struggle to breathe. Merit also saw that her father's second wife really cared about her. Even her father, who she thought would not care, was the angriest when he found out Merit had been mistreated by her brother when she was little.

Since the incident, Merit began to get closer to Sagan. She had found out that Sagan and Honor were just friends, not a couple. Sagan himself started to get closer and interacted a lot with Merit. Besides that, Merit also began to deal with all the situations that had happened. She even had the courage to decide to go to therapy. Her bravery was influenced by her family, who supported and reassured Merit that going to therapy did not mean she was not normal. It was something that could happen to anyone. Merit, who was initially

always afraid that she was depressed and considered not normal, began to accept everything about herself.

In the past few years, Merit had always been half-hearted about attend to the dining room, became the person who looked forward to family meal times the most. She even began to realize her ability to cook meals. Her new habit was cooked for her family members, and she started to like tattoos. She even learned about tattoos from Sagan, as a tattoo artist. She no longer felt alienated by her family. In this situation, Merit truly became herself. She no longer felt envy and hatred towards her family. Everything that had happened became a lesson, and Merit was determined to make peace with it all.

Merit had a harmonious relationship with her family. Utah was allowed to return home, and her relationship with him became closer than before. Merit also resumed her activities and returned to school. She enjoyed life and accepted everything that had happened. She became a sweet girl who easily smiled. She did not even doubt her cooking skills anymore. Whatever she cooked became a favorite at the Voss family.

## **B. Review of Literature**

### **B.1. Hierarchy of Needs**

One of the most renowned American psychologists, Abraham Maslow made significant contributions to the field of psychology and human motivation. He developed a theory of human motivation, known as the hierarchy of needs, which continues to be a valuable reference for

many people today. Maslow divided human needs into five levels or stages: physiological needs, safety needs, love and belongingness, self-esteem needs, and self-actualization. The highest level is self-actualization.

According to Maslow, physiological needs and safety needs appear since humans are born. While love and belongingness needs appear when humans enter adolescence (Schultz & Schultz, 2017). Likewise, the appearance of self-esteem needs. Furthermore, self-actualization is the highest need but not so important and does not have to be fulfilled directly. Maslow assumes that if higher needs fail to be fulfilled, it will not cause a crisis. It is inversely proportional to other lower needs. If there is a failure in fulfill these needs, it will cause a crisis (Schultz & Schultz, 2017). The descriptions of human needs according to Maslow are as follows:

### **B.1.1. Physiological Needs**

In Maslow's theory of human needs, these needs are considered to be the most fundamental. They are also known as primary needs, which include food, water, a supply of oxygen, clothes, and so many more. These needs are the necessities that a person needs and consume every day (Schultz & Schultz, 2017).

Maslow said that physiological needs could be the only needs that can be completely satisfied or even overly satisfied. Feist

and Feist in *Theories of Personalities* also stated that physiological needs are repetitive (Feist & Feist, 2009). Whereas if people have eaten, they will become hungry and require food again. Furthermore, they must breathe repeatedly to fulfill their physiological needs. Therefore, this need needs to be fulfilled first. After these needs are met, humans will try to fulfill the needs at the next level, namely Safety needs.

### **B.1.2 Safety Needs**

The next stage of need is safety needs. This need can be fulfilled if physiological needs have been met.

When people have partially satisfied their physiological needs, they become motivated by safety needs, including physical security, stability, dependency, protection, and freedom from threatening forces such as war, terrorism, illness, fear, anxiety, danger, chaos, and natural disasters. The needs for law, order, and structure are also safety needs (Feist & Feist, 2009).

These needs are categorized as needs with the aim of survival. Safety needs are needs where humans are free from fear, anxiety, or various types of threats. The conclusion is that humans will be motivated to fulfill security needs when basic needs have been met. Examples of fulfilling these security needs are physical security, reliance, stable, freedom, and refuge.

### **B.1.3 Love and Belongingness Needs**

Fulfillment of love and belongingness needs must be fulfilled after safety needs are achieved. This need can be in the form of being loved by a partner, child, parent, friend, family member, or people who are around. like Maslow's statement in Feist and Feist:

They become motivated by love and belongingness needs, such as the desire for friendship; the wish for a mate and children; the need to belong to a family, a club, a neighborhood, or a nation (2009).

Love and belongingness needs are needs at the third stage after physiological and safety needs are already fulfilled. This need can be fulfilled by the love that is obtained from outside parties. These needs are motivated by a sense of belonging and affection. Individuals need to be loved and to love for this need to be fulfilled properly.

### **B.1.4 Esteem Needs**

A person can satisfy the need for self-esteem after all the previous basic needs have been met. When these basic needs are fulfilled, people will gain confidence and feel that they are competent and valuable.

According to Maslow, esteem needs are divided into two types. The first type is Reputation which is related to fame or recognition from others (Feist & Feist, 2009). Meanwhile, self-

esteem is a type of esteem that is based more on self-confidence and feeling valuable about oneself. If this self-esteem need is fulfilled, a person will feel more confident in their strengths and abilities. Fulfillment of this need will suppress low self-esteem. Someone feeling inferior or low self-esteem will feel insecure and be self-discouraged by their abilities and will feel lacking.

#### **B.1.5 Self-Actualization Needs**

Self-actualization needs are the highest human needs in Maslow's theory of human needs. This need can be fulfilled if the needs at the lower level or basic needs are satisfied.

The self-actualizing process may take many forms, but Maslow believed that everyone, regardless of occupation or interests, is capable of maximizing personal abilities and reaching the fullest personality development. Self-actualization is not limited to creative and intellectual superstars such as musicians, artists, and writers. What is important is to fulfill one's own potentials, whatever they are, at the highest level possible (Schultz & Schultz, 2017).

In other words, each individual has a different type or characteristic of self-actualization from another individual. People who want to reach the highest point of this need must first fulfill their basic needs. For example, if a person fails to fulfill

physiological needs then that person cannot fulfill the next level of needs.

## **B.2 Characteristics of Self-Actualization**

Maslow's highest stage of human needs is self-actualization. Where people who already exist at this point mean that they have been able to fulfill the needs at the previous level, namely physiological needs, safety needs, love and belongingness needs, and esteem needs.

According to Maslow in *Motivation and Personality*, self-actualization has fifteen characteristics (2011). The characteristics of self-actualization include the following:

### **B.2.1 More Efficient Perception of Reality**

The first characteristic of self-actualization is being able to see reality as it is. They see things that happen from an objective point of view. Also, they see the world the way they want to see it. Self-actualized people are not easily affected by judgments or how others perceive them.

They can discriminate between the genuine and the fake not only in people but also in literature, art, and music. They are not fooled by facades and can see both positive and negative underlying traits in others that are not readily apparent to most people. They perceive ultimate values more clearly than other people do and are less

prejudiced and less likely to see the world as they wish it to be (Feist & Feist, 2009).

Self-actualizing people can detect which one can analyze people with positive and negative personalities so that they can judge people correctly and more efficiently.

### **B.2.2 Acceptance (Self, Others, and Nature)**

The next characteristic is being able to accept all the shortcomings and advantages that exist in themselves.

In similar fashion, they accept others and have no compulsive need to instruct, inform, or convert. They can tolerate weaknesses in others and are not threatened by others' strengths. They accept nature, including human nature, as it is and do not expect perfection either in themselves or in others. They realize that people suffer, grow old, and die (Feist & Feist, 2009).

Self-actualizing people are aware of the imperfections of others and themselves. They are also more likely to be accepting of others, without fear of the strengths they may possess. They are also more likely to be able to accept the flaws of others without feeling the need to change them. Their expectations are realistic, avoiding demands for perfection from either themselves or those around them. They embrace nature, including the



intrinsic qualities of human nature, with an understanding and acceptance that life is imperfect. They comprehend that aging, degeneration, and mortality are natural processes, and they reconcile with these inevitabilities with a balanced and mature outlook. This profound acceptance of life's cyclical nature underscores a philosophical understanding that all beings, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses, are subject to the same universal truths of existence.

### **B.2.3 Spontaneity, Simplicity, and Naturalness**

Maslow in Feist and Feist (2009) stated that they are also grounded and unafraid to show their emotions openly. Whether they are feeling happiness, fear, sadness, anger, or joy, they express these feelings honestly and without hesitation. Their lives are usually simple, free from the need to wear extravagant outfits or put on a façade to impress or mislead others. They embrace being genuine and spontaneous, living in a way that reflects their true selves. They do not feel the need to hide behind a mask or present a false image to the world. Instead, they value authenticity and the freedom to be themselves in all situations. This straightforward approach to life allows them to connect with others on a deeper level and experience life fully and openly.

#### **B.2.4 Problem-Centering**

Those who have achieved a high level of self-actualization tend to more focus on issues and challenges beyond their concern than those who are less self-actualized.

Self-actualizing people extend their frame of reference far beyond self. They are concerned with eternal problems and adopt a solid philosophical and ethical basis for handling these problems (Feist & Feist, 2009).

Their attention is directed towards external problems, rather than being preoccupied with their egos or personal issues. Their primary concern is often how they can contribute to solving larger problems in society, helping others, or improving their environment. This focus helps them avoid getting caught up in self-centered thoughts or worries, allowing them to approach life with a sense of purpose and dedication to causes greater than themselves.

#### **B.2.5 The Need for Privacy**

Self-actualizing people maintain a sense of comfort and relaxation both when they are alone and when they are surrounded by others. They do not feel pressured to impress or seek validation

from others because their love and belongingness needs have already been fulfilled.

Self-actualizing people have a quality of detachment that allows them to be alone without being lonely. They feel relaxed and comfortable when they are either with people or alone. Because they have already satisfied their love and belongingness needs, they have no desperate need to be surrounded by other people. They can find enjoyment in solitude and privacy (Feist & Feist, 2009).

Self-actualizing people also need and want their privacy. As a result, they are free from the anxiety of craving external validation. They have their unique ways of spending their time that are fulfilling and enjoyable to them, allowing them to feel satisfied and without feeling lonely.

### **B.2.6 Autonomy**

The Next characteristic of self-actualization by Maslow is Autonomy. They do not rely on others to thrive. They tend to rely on themselves and are autonomous. Although humans are not born to be fully autonomous.

Self-actualizing people have that confidence and therefore a large measure of autonomy that allows them to be unperturbed by criticism as well as unmoved by flattery. This independence also gives them an inner peace and serenity not enjoyed by those who live for the approval of others (Feist & Feist, 2009).

Self-actualizing people choose to focus on themselves. They focus on their potential, act according to their desires, and are not influenced by the environment.

### **B.2.7 Continued Freshness of Appreciation**

The seventh characteristic of self-actualization need, continued freshness of appreciation is when people can appreciate anything. They can see the extraordinary, finding joy and meaning in common things.

self-actualizing people have the wonderful capacity to appreciate again and again, freshly and naively, the basic goods of life, with awe, pleasure, wonder, and even ecstasy (Feist & Feist, 2009).

People who succeed in the stage of self-actualization and appreciate every single thing they have as a form of gratitude. They appreciate every single thing they see, have, and feel. They

live a life with ordinary things that will always be appreciated for their existence.

### **B.2.8 The Mystic Experience (Peak Experience)**

The peak experience is considered a mystical event since it allows persons with this trait to notice things that ordinary people do not. Mystical experiences are the summit of self-actualization. Individuals who reach self-actualization will have a more profound understanding of life's meaning. Maslow describes truth, beauty, goodness, love, and kindness as "being-values".

The peak experience is seen only as beautiful, good, desirable, worthwhile, etc., and is never experienced as evil or undesirable. Maslow also believed that the peak experience often has a lasting effect on a person's life (Feist & Feist, 2009).

Mystical experiences are the summit of self-actualization. Individuals who reach self-actualization will have a more profound understanding of life's meaning. Maslow describes truth, beauty, goodness, love, and kindness as "being-values". Peak experiences often have a deep and lasting impact on a person's life. These special moments can change how individuals see themselves and the world, leading to a more meaningful and fulfilling life.

### **B.2.9 Social Interest (*Gemeinschaftsgefühl*)**

Humans are created as social beings. Therefore, self-actualizing people care about others and are interested in interacting with one another.

Maslow found that his self-actualizers had a kind of caring attitude toward other people. Although they often feel like aliens in a foreign land, self-actualizers nevertheless identify with all other people and have a genuine interest in helping others strangers as well as friends (Feist & Feist, 2009).

In conclusion, people who have the habit of helping and caring for others. Whether they know the person or not does not matter, because their main goal is to care about others.

### **B.2.10 Interpersonal Relations**

The next characteristics of self-actualization are related to social interest (*Gemeinschaftsgefühl*). Social Interest has a broad sense of caring for other people.

Self-actualizers have a nurturant feeling toward people in general, but their close friendships are limited to only a few. They have no frantic need to be friends with everyone, but the few important interpersonal

relationships they do have are quite deep and intense (Feist & Feist, 2009).

Interpersonal relationships refer more to close relationships that are limited and only involve a few people. They tend to be selective in choosing people to be friends with. They tend to choose people who have healthy relationships and are not dependent on other people. Even so, their social interest allows them to show empathy and sympathy toward those individuals in general.

### **B.2.11 The Democratic Character Structure**

The democratic character structure is a characteristic of self-actualization where the person can establish relationships and be friendly with anyone without caring about social status, skin color, gender, appearance, and so on. They are open to everyone.

Maslow found that all his self-actualizers possessed democratic values. They could be friendly and considerate with other people regardless of class, color, age, or gender, and in fact, they seemed to be quite unaware of superficial differences among people (Feist & Feist, 2009).

Self-actualizing people does not differentiate between people in their interactions. They put everyone on the same level and are not influenced by race, ethnicity, culture, or even religion.

### **B.2.12 Discrimination between Means and Ends**

Self-actualizing people have a clear view of what is right and wrong. They always agree about important values.

Self-actualizing people have a clear sense of right and wrong conduct and have little conflict about basic values. They set their sights on ends rather than means and have an unusual ability to distinguish between the two (Feist & Feist, 2009).

In essence, self-actualizing people know what they are doing. They can distinguish between right and wrong in doing something.

### **B.2.13 Philosophical Sense of Humor**

The next characteristic of self-actualization concerns a sense of humor. Self-actualizing people can enjoy and create their jokes to make others laugh.

Healthy people see little humor in put-down jokes. They may poke fun at themselves, but not masochistically so. They make fewer tries at humor than others, but their attempts serve a purpose beyond making people laugh. They amuse, inform, point out ambiguities, provoke a smile rather than a guffaw.



The humor of a self-actualizing person is intrinsic to the situation rather than contrived; it is spontaneous rather than planned (Feist & Feist, 2009).

In other words, jokes made by self-actualizing people are usually spontaneous or not planned before. They respect and care about other people's feelings. Therefore, they do not laugh or make jokes that hurt others.

#### **B.2.14 Creativeness**

Showing creativity is a characteristic of the ability of people who actualize themselves. They are known for their imagination, creative thinking, and their own thoughts or the idea is original.

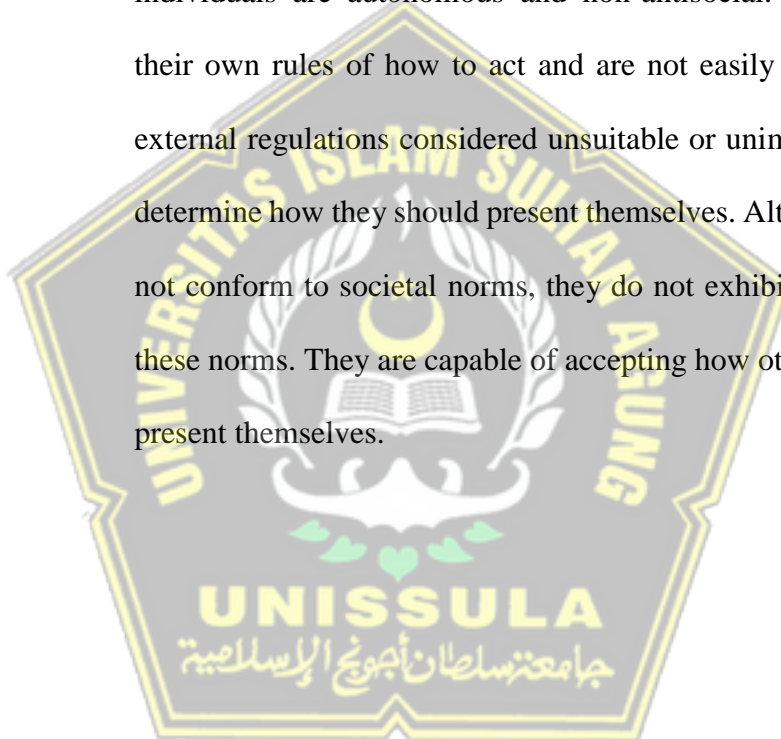
All self-actualizing people studied by Maslow were creative in some sense of the word. In fact, Maslow suggested that creativity and self-actualization may be one and the same. Not all self-actualizers are talented or creative in the arts, but all are creative in their own way. They have a keen perception of truth, beauty, and reality ingredients that form the foundation of true creativity (Feist & Feist, 2009).

The conclusion, self-actualizing people do not always have talent in the arts. Maslow explained that each person has their

creative side. They have their views on matters related to creativity and are able to show their creative side.

#### **B.2.15 Resistance to Enculturation**

According to Maslow (Feist & Feist, 2009), self-actualizing individuals are autonomous and non-antisocial. They possess their own rules of how to act and are not easily influenced by external regulations considered unsuitable or unimportant. They determine how they should present themselves. Although they do not conform to societal norms, they do not exhibit resistance to these norms. They are capable of accepting how others choose to present themselves.



## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHOD

#### A. Types of Research

The method used in this study is qualitative research. Qualitative research refers to the process of analyzing, collecting, and describing data to explain the subject of the study in the form of words (Miles & Huberman, 1944). In *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Method*, a naturalistic and interpretive approach to the subject is used in qualitative research. In other words, qualitative research can provide detailed descriptions of the object of the study based on data collected through case studies, observations, personal interviews, and literary media such as books or literary works (Patton, 2002). The data was analyzed to find the solution to the problem formulation, which is the aim of the study.

#### B. Data Organizing

The data collection method is associated with the data collection process, which was analyzed in various methods and stages. Several methods for collecting data are applied in this study, which includes:

##### B.1 Data Collecting Method

The method used to collect the data consists of the following steps:

### **B.1.1 Reading Novel**

The novel *Without Merit* by Colleen Hoover is the object of discussion in this study. Reading the novel multiple times was obligated to this study to gain a deeper understanding.

### **B.1.2 Identifying the Data**

The next step was to find the data after reading the novel multiple times. Throughout that process, emphasis was placed on key components of the research. Data takes several forms, such as dialogues, narrations, and monologues.

### **B.1.3 Classifying the Data**

After collecting the data as a process of identifying the data, the next process was to classify it according to the type of data, such as novel quotes, reference materials, and statements. All of the information gathered was organized into a table called appendices.

### **B.1.4 Reducing the Data**

The last step of the process of data collection was data reduction. This step used to classify the relevant data that have previously been collected from the novel.

## **B.2 Types of the Data**

This study employed two types of data: primary and secondary. Primary data were frequently referred to as the primary source, whereas secondary data is used to supplement existing primary data.

1. Primary data was obtained from Colleen Hoover's novel *Without Merit* (2017). The novel contains various kinds of data such as dialogue, narration, and monologue.
2. Secondary data was taken from research papers, articles, essays, and internet sites that are related to this study.

## **C. Analyzing the Data**

The last step was analyzing the data after it had been collected. This procedure employed descriptive methods, with all data described in descriptive terms. This descriptive pattern included quotes, references, and comments. The final part was an appendices that revealed several of the data in the novel that were employed to substantiate this research. To strengthen and explain the present assertions, each assertion was aided by plenty of statements from papers, books, academic papers, essays, or internet sites.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will explain the two problems formulated in chapter one. This study focuses on Merit Voss, the main character in *Without Merit*. This chapter is divided into two sub-chapters, first sub-chapter is the kind of needs experienced by Merit in *Without Merit* novel and the characteristics of self-actualization reflected by Merit in Colleen Hoover's novel *Without Merit*.

#### **A. The Kind of Human Needs Reflected by Merit in *Without Merit* Novel.**

Abraham Maslow made significant contributions to the field of psychology and human motivation. He developed a theory of human motivation, known as the hierarchy of needs, which continues to be a valuable reference for many people today. Maslow divided human needs into five levels or stages: physiological needs, safety needs, love and belongingness, self-esteem needs, and self-actualization.

In his theory, Maslow explains that humans need to fulfill the needs that are at the lowest level before fulfilling other needs. After the basic needs or low-level needs are fulfilled, humans will be motivated to reach the highest point, which is self-actualization. Merit Voss as the main character in *Without Merit* is depicted as fulfilling her needs. The following is an explanation of Merit's fulfillment of needs as depicted in the novel.

### A.1. Physiological Needs

Physiological needs are needs that occupy the lowest position. In Maslow's theory, the lowest needs are those that must be met. These needs are very important to fulfill as they indicate survival needs. One of the most important needs that need to be fulfilled includes food, air, water, clothing, and sleep. Starving people are not motivated to fulfill love and belongingness or esteem needs. They are more motivated to get food because it is a primary need (Feist & Feist, 2009). The following monologue describes evidence of Merit fulfilling her sociological needs:

The NyQuil begins to kick in as soon as I hear the front door open. Moby's voice carries down the hallway and Victoria's voice soon follows as she calls after him to go wash his hands before he eats a snack. **I reach to my nightstand and grab my headphones. I'd much rather fall asleep listening to Seafret than to the sound of my family right now (22).**

Sleep is one of the physiological needs of humans. As in the quote, Merit will go to bed after the activities she did outside. If Merit's sleep needs are met, she can fulfill human needs that are at a higher level than physiological needs. The next level of needs cannot be met if the most basic needs are ignored.

Further evidence that Merit is driven to satisfy her most basic needs can be found in the following quotation:

**I managed to make it through breakfast that morning** without uttering a single word. Once everyone started to gather their things and leave, **I breathed a small sigh of relief until I realized he was still in the kitchen** and did not look like he was leaving like everyone else (23).

The above quote explains that food and air are recurring human needs. This means that someone who has eaten will feel hungry and need to eat again. The same goes for breathing, it's repetitive to fulfill. Merit's quote shows that Merit managed to fulfill her physiological needs. This is also reflected in the following quote:

**I make myself a sandwich** and turn on the TV but by the time I'm done eating I still haven't found anything interesting to watch. **I slept so long tonight I feel completely energized** and I'm hardly even thinking about Honor and her boyfriend. I decide to use my unusual burst of energy to clean my room (26).

Based on this quote and Maslow's needs theory, the hungry human will be motivated to eat. Meanwhile, people who are sleepy and need rest will also be motivated to sleep. Hungry and sleepy conditions cannot generate motivation to fulfill esteem needs, love,



and belongingness needs. Therefore, Merit in the quote has completed her physiological needs first by eating and sleeping. In other words, Merit has fulfilled her physiological needs and is motivated to fulfill the next level of needs.

## A.2. Safety Needs

This need is a need that arises following the fulfillment of physiological needs. In Feist and Feist, Maslow argues that safety needs include freedom from fear, threats, danger, and other factors that endanger human survival (2009). In *Without Merit*, the safety needs that are fulfilled can be identified from the following quotation:

**Our house is located just off an oil top county road in a Microscopic Northeast Texas town.** The building we live in was once the highest attended church in our tiny town, but it's been our house since my father, Barnaby Voss, purchased the fledgling church and closed its doors to the patrons indefinitely. Which explains why we have a marquee in our front yard (14).

The monologue quote illustrates that Merit has a house to live in. The house bought by her father can protect Merit from the threat of disaster and the house is an example that can be a safe place. Merit also has her own room where she sleeps. In that room, Merit

feels comfortable and safe when she sleeps. This means Merit's safety needs can be met.

### **A.3. Love and Belongingness Needs**

This need necessitates other people as a form of fulfillment. Humans will be motivated to share and receive love. The fulfillment of this need is like having a partner, friends, parents, and people around.

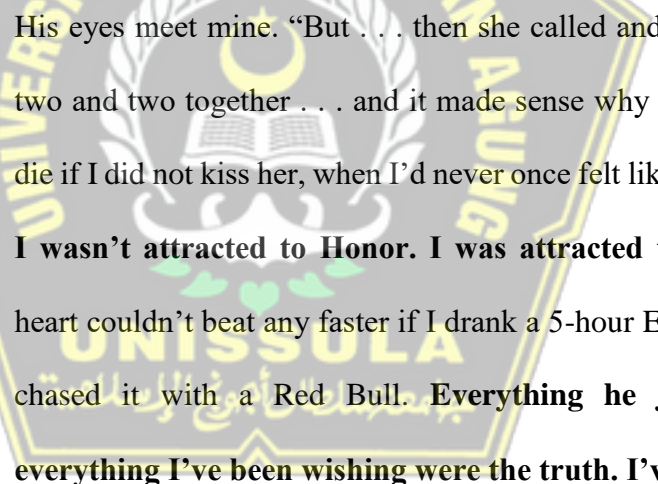
They become motivated by love and belongingness needs, such as the desire for friendship; the wish for a mate and children; the need to belong to a family, a club, a neighborhood, or a nation (Feist & Feist, 2009).

One of the ways in which this need can be fulfilled is through interaction. It is possible to experience love and a sense of belongingness not only with a partner, whether that be a husband or wife, but also in the form of closeness and affection that exists through friends and other family members. Merit can be seen to fulfil this need, as evidenced in the monologue below:

He hesitates, nods a little and then smiles before closing my bedroom door. We all start to laugh, but he swings it open again and says, “I’m glad you’re all spending time together. But it’s late. Go to bed.” “It’s a weekend,” Utah groans. My father raises an eyebrow at Utah and that one look is enough to lift everyone off the bed. Sagan is the last to leave my room.

Right before he closes the door, he smiles and says, “**You were really easy to like today, Merit.**” I sigh and lie back on my bed (118).

In the previous data, Merit's family played a role in fulfilling Merit's love and belongingness needs. The warm interactions that occurred made Merit feel loved and happy. Furthermore, the need to receive and give love can also be obtained from a very close relationship with another person. There is proof that this need is fulfilled by Merit in *Without Merit* in the following dialog excerpt:



His eyes meet mine. “But . . . then she called and I finally put two and two together . . . and it made sense why I felt like I’d die if I did not kiss her, when I’d never once felt like that before. **I wasn’t attracted to Honor. I was attracted to you.**” My heart couldn’t beat any faster if I drank a 5-hour ENERGY and chased it with a Red Bull. **Everything he just said is everything I’ve been wishing were the truth. I’ve fantasized that he saw something different in me that he did not see in Honor, and now that I’m hearing his version of it, I half expect to wake up from a cruel dream** (175).

Based on the dialog above, Merit's family played a role in fulfilling Merit's love and belongingness needs. Sagan also became one of the people who had a close relationship with Merit in this novel.

Sagan's interest in Merit fulfills Merit's intimate relationship with people other than her family. Furthermore, Merit's esteem needs must be fulfilled because Merit's physiological, safety, love and belongingness needs have been fulfilled.

#### A.4. Esteem Needs

The fulfillment of esteem needs is the next stage or level in the hierarchy of human needs, occurring once the basic physiological and safety needs have been met. One form of esteem needs is self-confidence and a perception of self-worth. This need is subject to influence from factors external to the individual, for example, if the individual feels that their existence is recognized. This concept is elucidated by Maslow in the following quotation:

We require esteem and respect from ourselves, in the form of feelings of self-worth, and from other people, in the form of status, recognition, or social success. Satisfaction of the need for self-esteem allows us to feel confident of our strength, worth, and adequacy, which will help us become more competent and productive in all aspects of our life (Schultz & Schultz, 2017).

In Colleen Hoover's *Without Merit*, the main character fulfills her esteem needs and can be seen in the dialogue below:

“Having depression is no more out of your control than Sagan's intolerance to milk, or Utah's pale skin, or Honor's bad

vision. It's nothing to be embarrassed about. But it's not something you can ignore or correct on your own. And that doesn't make you abnormal. **It makes you just as normal** these idiots,” he says, waving toward everyone else (237).

In this quote, it can be seen that Merit is still appreciated for who she is even though she was later diagnosed with depression. He is still considered normal like the other family members. From what Utah said, it made Merit feel happy with this recognition. This is where Merit begins to know what is needed and what actions need to be taken. This can be seen in the following quotation:

Victoria forks another pancake onto her plate. **“This is really good, girls.”**

**“It is,” my father agrees.**

Everyone else kind of mutters the same with mouthfuls of food, but we're all distracted by a sudden banging on the front door (246).

Merit's confidence in making pancakes for breakfast and her belief in her own abilities. She decided to make breakfast for her family. There has been recognition and praise for what he did. According to Maslow, reputation or recognition is a form of esteem need (Feist & Feist, 2009). She did well and not only received praise from Sagan but also from her father and stepmother. Other family members also

appreciated Merit's cooking. It is often the case that when people feel respected by others or believe that others hold them in high regard, they begin to perceive themselves as valuable and experience a sense of internal self-esteem.

#### **A.5 Self-Actualization**

Those who fail to achieve or fulfill their esteem needs will be unable to reach this level. Maslow argues that the most important factor in self-actualization is an individual's understanding of their potential and knowing well about what they need. An example of Merit Voss's self-actualization can be observed in the following dialogue:

I smile, because **I'm relieved. So relieved. I've already decided I'd go to therapy**, especially after that stupid crumpled-up piece of paper on my bedroom floor and the cheesy conversation it led to last night. But I really did think it was a little unfair that no one else in this family was being required to go. My father is right. This family is long overdue.

“What about Mom? Will she be going to therapy?” (242).

Self-actualization represents the highest level in the hierarchy of needs. They know the potential and abilities they have. Also, accept themselves as they are. People know how to enjoy something and achieve their own satisfaction. People at this stage accept themselves and know what they need in their lives. Merit can make a choice for therapy without pressure from others. She knows that

she needs the help of an expert, namely a psychologist/psychiatrist. Therefore, she decided to go to therapy. This is also a form of Merit accepting her condition.

Therefore, Merit can fulfill her needs starting from physiological needs, safety needs, love and belongingness needs, and esteem needs. She also reaches the level of self-actualization as the highest level in Maslow's theory.

## **B. Characteristic of Self-actualization Experienced by Merit in *Without Merit* Novel.**

The hierarchy of needs theory places self-actualization at the top or last level of need fulfillment. After low-level needs such as physiological, safety, love and belongingness, and esteem are met, Merit can become a self-actualizing person. In Feist and Feist, Maslow divides the characteristics of self-actualization into fifteen types (2009). As a result of the analysis of the novel, Merit has four of the fifteen types of characteristics in Maslow's theory.

### **B.1 The Democratic Character Structure**

Self-actualizing people does not differentiate between people in their interactions. They put everyone on the same level and are not influenced by race, ethnicity, culture, or even religion. According to Maslow:

Maslow found that all his self-actualize possessed democratic values. They could be friendly and considerate with other people regardless of class, color, age, or gender, and in fact, they seemed to be quite unaware of superficial differences among people (Feist & Feist, 2009).

Self-actualizing people They also do not consider background traits such as race, color, gender, and religion to be of importance. An example of this can be observed in the following dialogue between Utah and Merit in the novel:

I place the bag of dog food in the trunk and am about to open my front door when kilt-guy appears out of nowhere. He's chewing on a piece of beef jerky, assessing my car like he's about to steal it. He walks toward the front of the car and taps his neon green Nike against the front tire twice. **"Think you can give me a ride?"** He looks at me and leans against the car. **Despite the kilt, there's no trace of a Scottish accent. There's also no trace of a Texas accent, either. But when he said the word you just now, he sounded a tad British. "What kind of accent is that?" I ask.** I open my front door and stand behind it to put a barrier between us. He looks harmless, but I don't like his confidence. I need to shield myself from it. Overly confident people should never be trusted. He shrugs. "I'm from all over,"



he says, but he says, over with an Australian twang. “Ovah? Are you Australian?” “Nevah been there,” he says. “What kind of car is this?” He walks to the rear of the car to read the make and model. “Ford EPX. They’re extinct,” I tell him. **“Where do you need a ride to?” (45).**

In this quote, Merit and Utah meet for the first time. Utah which uses a different language accent than Merit. She was curious about where Utah was from because Utah's accent changed. Even though Merit is a foreigner, she still gives Utah a ride even though they have different languages and they do not know each other. Merit treated him well by giving him a lift and even taking Utah to his destination.

## **B.2 The Need of Privacy**

Self-actualizing people have their unique ways of spending their time that are fulfilling and enjoyable to them, allowing them to feel satisfied and without feeling lonely. They are not distressed or self-conscious when interacting with others. However, they are also capable of enjoying their own personal time and respecting the privacy of themselves and others. This is explained by Maslow in the following quote:

They feel relaxed and comfortable when they are either with people or alone. Because they have already satisfied their love and belongingness needs, they have no desperate need to be

surrounded by other people. They can find enjoyment in solitude and privacy (Feist & Feist, 2009).

In other words, they do not depend on others or seek out social interaction; rather, they are always engaged in the act of enjoying every moment. However, they are also capable of appreciating each moment, regardless of whether they are in social interaction or not. Merit is capable of experiencing pleasure from the simple things in life. This is evidenced by the following account:

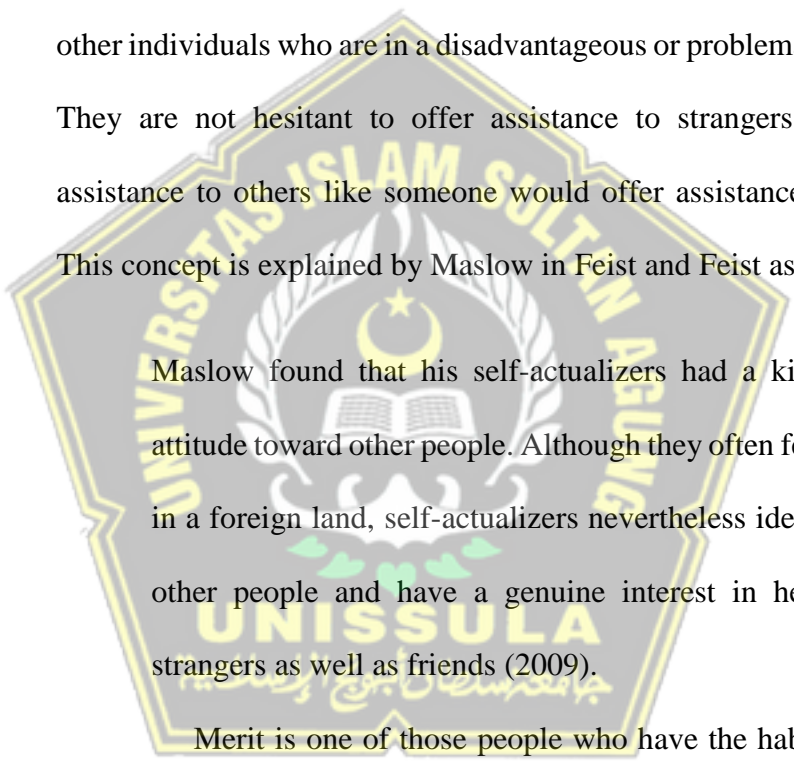
So many secrets in this house. And yet, the one secret I should have told years ago is the one I've kept the quietest. Speaking of quiet. **I haven't heard anyone moving around in the house for a while, which means everyone is probably in bed now.** Not only am I starving, but I would put money on the fact that no one has fed Wolfgang today. **I go to the kitchen and open a frozen dinner. After I put it in the microwave, I grab a pitcher from beneath the sink to fill it with dog food** (110).

They have their unique ways of spending their time that are fulfilling and enjoyable to them, allowing them to feel satisfied and without feeling lonely. In the quote, Merit chose to spend her time feeding Wolfgang, Pastor Brian's dog. Merit does not hate family time, especially in the dining room. But when everyone is out,

Merit chooses to spend time alone at home even if it's just making sandwiches, watching TV, and feeding Wolfgang.

### **B.3 Social Interest**

The next characteristic of self-actualization is social interest. Self-actualizing people are characterized by high levels of empathy and care. Such individuals are inclined to provide assistance and support to other individuals who are in a disadvantageous or problematic situation. They are not hesitant to offer assistance to strangers. They offer assistance to others like someone would offer assistance to a friend. This concept is explained by Maslow in Feist and Feist as follows:



Maslow found that his self-actualizers had a kind of caring attitude toward other people. Although they often feel like aliens in a foreign land, self-actualizers nevertheless identify with all other people and have a genuine interest in helping others strangers as well as friends (2009).

Merit is one of those people who have the habit of helping and caring for others. Whether they know the person or not does not matter, because their main goal is to care about others. This characteristic can be seen in the following narration:

The boy's eyes dim immediately and he frowns as he goes to set the pig back on the shelf. But his little hands fumble when he tries to set it down and the pig slips from his grasp, shattering at his feet. "Don't move," I say to him, reaching him before his

mother does. I bend down and start picking up the pieces. His mother plucks him up and sets him a few feet away so that he's out of reach of the glass.

"I told you not to touch anything, Nate!" I glance over at the little boy and he's staring at the broken glass like he just lost his best friend. His mother presses her hand to her forehead like she's exhausted and frustrated, and then bends down and starts helping me pick up the pieces. **"He didn't do it," I say to her. "I'm the one who broke it." The woman looks back at her little boy and her little boy looks at me like he doesn't know if this is a test. I wink at him before she turns back around and I say, "I didn't see him standing there. I bumped into him and dropped it."** (203-204).

Merit empathizes and cares about what Nate (The kids) is going through. Merit tries to understand and help him. Merit's social interest arises because of Nate. Merit helps Nate avoid getting hit by glass shards. She even tried to help Nate by admitting that Merit was her fault. Merit did this because she did not want Nate's mother to scold Nate and did not have to pay for what the kids broke at the shop.

#### **B.4 Interpersonal Relationship**

Interpersonal relationships refer more to close relationships that are limited and only involve a few people. Maslow stated that self-actualizing people interact easily with everyone but to build closeness

in a relationship, they tend to be choosy. This means that not everyone will have a close bond with self-actualizing people.

Self-actualizers have a nurturant feeling toward people in general, but their close friendships are limited to only a few. They have no frantic need to be friends with everyone, but the few important interpersonal relationships they do have are quite deep and intense (Feist & Feist, 2009).

This quotation suggests that relationships with those who are closest to self-actualizing people are perceived as being more meaningful and valuable. Merit demonstrates a commitment to maintaining positive and mutually beneficial relationships with individuals whom she perceives as being within her inner circle. This is demonstrated by the discourse between Merit, Utah and Honor.

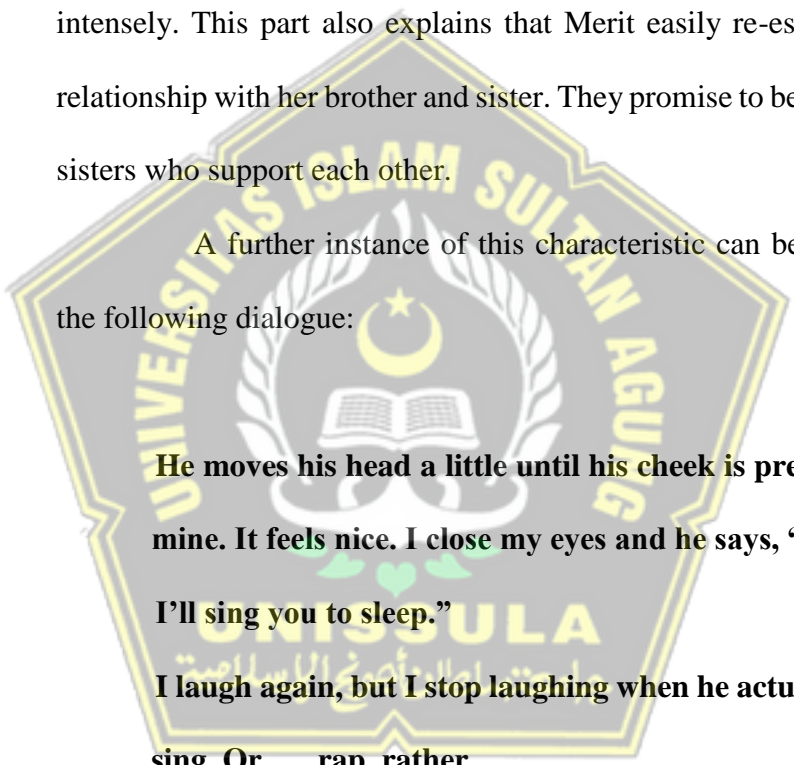
**“I’m sorry, Honor.” I sooth my hand over her hair and say the same thing to her that Utah said to me. “I’ll be a better sibling. I promise.” She lets out a quiet sigh of relief, but she doesn’t let go of me. We hug for a long time,** and it makes me wonder why everyone in this family has been so opposed to honesty and hugging for the past several years.

It’s actually not so bad. I think we all just got to a point where we were waiting for someone else to initiate it, but no one ever did. Maybe that’s the root of a lot of family issues. It isn’t actually the issues people are hung up about for so long. It’s that no one has

the courage to take the first step in talking about the issues (222-223).

Based on the dialogue above, Merit chose to mend her relationship with her elder brother. The interpersonal relationship that exists in Merit is able to build a relationship with her brother again intensely. This part also explains that Merit easily re-established her relationship with her brother and sister. They promise to be brothers and sisters who support each other.

A further instance of this characteristic can be observed in the following dialogue:



**He moves his head a little until his cheek is pressed against mine. It feels nice. I close my eyes and he says, “Okay, then. I’ll sing you to sleep.”**  
**I laugh again, but I stop laughing when he actually starts to sing. Or . . . rap, rather.**

“Y’all know me, still the same OG . . .”

“Sagan,” I say, laughing.

“But I been low key . . .”

“Stop.”

He doesn’t stop. He spends the next few minutes rapping every single line to “Forgot About Dre.” (249).

Couples are one of the interpersonal relationships. This intimate relationship is established because self-actualizing people only build deep closeness in a relationship with a few people. In contrast to his ability to build relationships. His relationships with others will be different from those in his small and closest sphere. Merit's interpersonal relationship with Sagan is closer in the middle of the story. In this quote, it can be seen that Merit's relationship with Sagan looks good and Merit is joking with Sagan. Merit does not need many friends. She only needs the people closest to her when viewed from the characteristics of interpersonal relationships.

#### **B.5 Acceptance (Self, Others, Nature)**

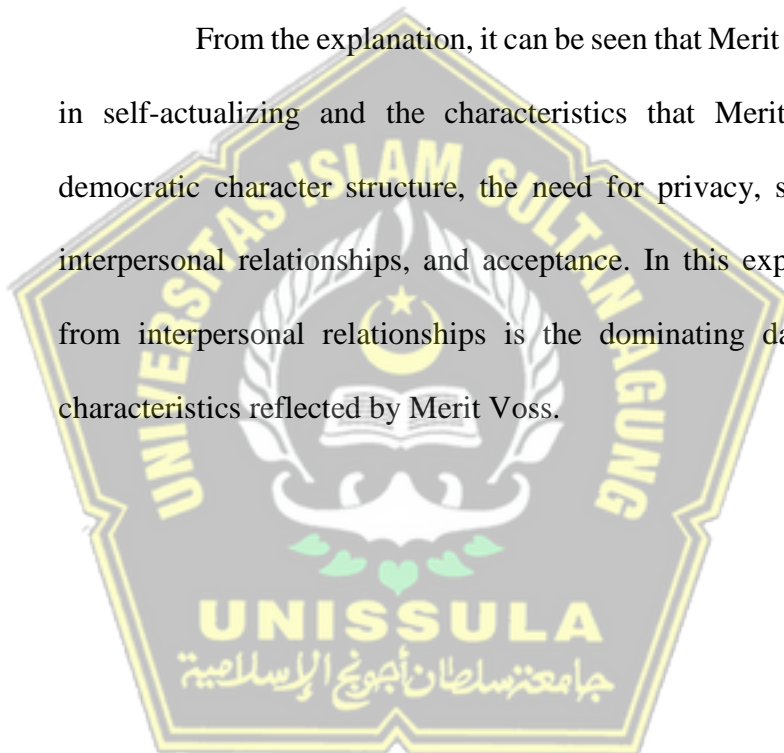
Maslow argues that self-acceptance is a characteristic of self-actualization. Such individuals demonstrate a notable absence of traits such as defensiveness, pretense, and feelings of self-defeating guilt. They exhibit a notable lack of self-criticism regarding their inadequacies and are not unduly affected by excessive feelings of anxiety or an overwhelming sense of shame (Feist & Feist, 2009).

**I don't even attempt to respond to all he just said to me. Instead, I rest my head on his shoulder as he wraps his arm around me. I think about what he said earlier when he told me I was really easy to like today. I find some comfort in that, because in the past twenty-four hours, he's probably seen the most authentic side of me he's ever seen. I close my eyes**

and readjust myself against him. “You’re easy to like every day,” I whisper, right before I finally fall asleep (237-238).

Based on the quotation above, it can be indicated that Merit behaves as she is. She shows how she should behave and act without shame. This is supported by the statement that Sagan already knew how Merit originally was. In other words, it is a form of self-acceptance.

From the explanation, it can be seen that Merit has succeeded in self-actualizing and the characteristics that Merit has are the democratic character structure, the need for privacy, social interest, interpersonal relationships, and acceptance. In this explanation, data from interpersonal relationships is the dominating data of all the characteristics reflected by Merit Voss.





## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

#### A. Conclusion

The analysis presented in chapter IV leads to two conclusions regarding the two points of issue in problem formulation. The first conclusion is related to the fulfillment of human needs experienced by the main character, Merit Voss, in the novel *Without Merit*. The second conclusion relates to the characteristics of self-actualization as reflected on Merit. In analyzing Merit's needs, self-actualization achieved, and the self-actualization characteristics reflected by Merit. In the hierarchy of needs theory, there are five levels or stages, namely physiological needs, safety needs, love and belongingness needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization. According to Maslow, human needs must be fulfilled from the lowest level before progressing to the next. As the main character, Merit attains self-actualization after fulfilling all five human needs.

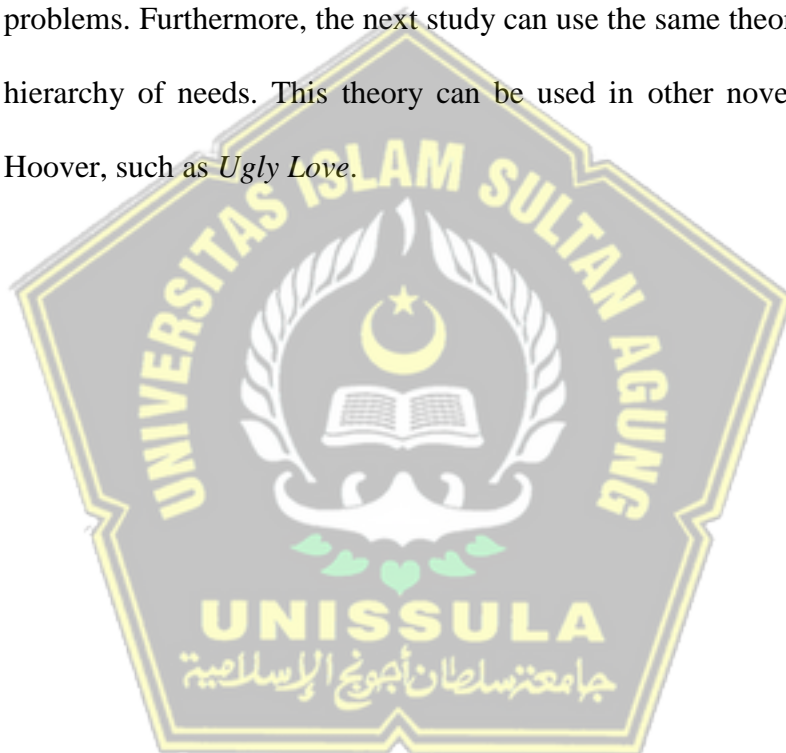
The first result of this study concludes that Merit is successful in fulfilling all of the human needs, from the basic or lower to the self-actualization level. Merit is not experiencing any difficulties fulfilling her basic needs, including the physiological necessities of food, water, and sleep. Furthermore, she has a home that provides her with a sense of security and protection from any potential dangers or sources of distress. Merit

derives happiness from her family and Sagan. The family provides Merit with love and a sense of belonging, thereby fulfilling her love and belongingness needs. Moreover, her esteem needs are satisfied because her family regards and respects her existence. Ultimately, Merit has become a self-actualizing people. She is capable of accepting herself unconditionally, embracing both her shortcomings and her strengths. Following an awareness of her weaknesses and strengths, Merit was also able to identify her needs. Therapy was a necessary component of her treatment plan, and she was not in denial about her condition. Additionally, she obtained knowledge regarding her cooking abilities.

The second, as a self-actualizing person, Merit has five of the fifteen characteristics by Maslow. Merit has a democratic character structure or can establish relationships with anyone regardless of gender, race, language, skin color, or religion. She tolerates differences. She is also able to enjoy and maximize time commonly referred to as the need of privacy. The next characteristic is social interest. Merit has concern for others as a form of self-actualizing people. In addition, the characteristics of self-actualization depicted in Merit are interpersonal relationships. Merit has an intense and close relationship with her family. The last characteristic is acceptance. She accepts herself, others, and the environment or nature as a form of self-actualization.

## B. Suggestion

This study leads to several suggestions for further study with the same object. Firstly, further study on the personality of Merit in *Without Merit* using Sigmund Freud's theory. The study will focus more on the id, ego, and superego within Merit or even other characters. In addition, it can focus on Merit's behavior as a form of defense mechanism in dealing with problems. Furthermore, the next study can use the same theory, namely the hierarchy of needs. This theory can be used in other novels by Colleen Hoover, such as *Ugly Love*.



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