

## Exploring Humanity in Mega-Mega Arifin C. Noer Through Humanistic Psychology

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to reveal the human values in the script of the drama Mega-Mega by Arifin C. Noer through a humanistic psychology approach. The main focus of the research is to answer the question: How do the struggles of the characters in the drama reflect the five levels of human needs according to Abraham Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs? These five needs include physiological needs, a sense of security, social relationships, rewards, and self-actualization. The drama Mega-Mega depicts the lives of marginalized groups who struggle to maintain dignity amid social, economic, and political pressures. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with text Panutysis, identifying the manifestation of Maslow's needs in the behavior and dialogue of the characters. The results show that the conflict in the drama is not only external, but also reflects an existential crisis and the search for meaning in life. Characters like Mae, Koyal, and Retno experience the process of self-actualization through struggle, emotional attachment, and efforts to maintain dignity. Thus, Mega-Mega is not only a social critique, but also a reflective mirror of humanity's struggle in extreme conditions. This study offers a new perspective on the script through the lens of humanistic psychology, which was previously rarely used in the Panutysis of this drama.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Humans who are aware of their existence always question the meaning of life, freedom, and identity. Throughout life, humans face inner conflicts as well as social, political, and cultural pressures that limit their space for movement and choice. According to Harjito, internal conflicts occur within individuals, while external conflicts arise between individuals and the external environment [1]. Febriyanti and Mafaza emphasized that because drama represents life, conflict becomes a medium to explore and express human

emotions [2]. Conflict in drama not only deepens the character but also conveys moral and humanitarian values.

Drama as a literary work is conveyed through direct action and dialogue between characters. Kosasih mentioned that the drama depicts life through the conflicts and emotions of the characters [3], while Restian emphasized the importance of dialogue in moving the plot and revealing the characters [4]. Through characters, conflicts, and dialogue, the drama presents a reflection on the complexity of humanity. Therefore, this study aims to examine human values in the *Mega-Mega* manuscript by Arifin C. Noer through a humanistic psychology approach.

The drama *Mega-Mega* by Arifin C. Noer was born from the oppressive socio-political dynamics. This work depicts the inner struggle of marginal figures who live together under an old banyan tree in the square of Yogyakarta. Mae, an older woman with no children, takes care of five foster children: Retno, Panut, Tukijan, Koyal, and Hamung, each of whom survives in her way. When Koyal dissolves into the delusion of winning the lottery, almost all the characters are trapped in the illusion except for Tukijan, who awakens them. They then leave in search of a new life, leaving Mae alone. Through this story, Arifin shows the existential struggle of how to be human in an inhumane situation.

To interpret the value of humanity in *Mega-Mega*, this study uses a humanistic psychology approach. Nevid asserts that humanistic psychology views individuals as unique, self-aware, and with the potential to thrive [5]. Kandi et al. compile a hierarchy of human needs from the most basic to self-actualization [6], as also explained by Maslow, who said that this order can be different for each individual [7].

Actualized individuals are described as open, independent, creative, and caring for others [8]. Robbins, Saefudin, and Saputra add traits such as simplicity, confidence, appreciation for life, openness to criticism, and orientation to human values and common goals [9], [10], [11]. Raule and Gibson et al. affirm that self-actualization is a conscious and responsible process of developing one's potential optimally [12], [13].

Humanistic psychology also sees humanity as an ever-evolving process. Edmawati said that understanding oneself is the key to healthy relationships and a meaningful life [14]. In this context, *Mega-Mega* is not just a social critique, but a story of psychological and spiritual change, which invites the audience to understand, not judge, the inner experiences of its characters.

Several previous studies have highlighted the psychological aspects of *Mega-Mega*, but they are still limited. Yohana et al. use a literary psychology approach to examine Koyal's inner conflicts, especially related to ambitions and irrational dreams to become rich [15]. Meanwhile, Pribadi focuses his study on external conflicts (physical and social) in the context of literary learning in schools [16]. Despite contributing to understanding the dynamics of the characters, the two studies have not examined the figures of *Mega-Mega* specifically through the perspective of humanistic psychology that focuses on the potential for growth, the fulfillment of basic needs, and self-actualization. Therefore, this study is here to fill this gap by examining how human values such as hope, self-esteem, and the struggle to become a whole human being are reflected in the conflicts and inner transformations of the characters in the drama *Mega-Mega*.

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Based on this background, this study aims to answer three main questions. First, how the dynamics of human needs according to humanistic psychological theory are reflected in the characters of the drama *Mega-Mega* by Arifin C. Noer. Second, the process of achieving self-actualization is shown through the conflicts and inner journeys of the characters. Third, what is the meaning of humanity that can be expressed from the drama *Mega-Mega* in the context of humanistic psychology.

## 2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach combined with a humanistic psychology perspective to reveal the meaning of humanity in the drama *Mega-Mega* by Arifin C. Noer. Moleong emphasizes that the qualitative approach aims to understand the meaning behind phenomena, not just measure visible variables [17], while Hidayati adds that this approach focuses on processes, contexts, and in-depth narrative descriptions [18]. In this study, *Mega-Mega* is treated not only as a literary text but as a reflection of the complexity of human life.

The humanistic psychology approach, particularly Abraham Maslow's theory of needs, was chosen because it provides a framework that emphasizes human values, self-awareness, and the individual's potential for growth, unlike psychoanalytic approaches that tend to focus on subconscious inner conflicts, or Marxist criticism that highlights power structures and the economy. Humanistic psychology is more relevant to understanding the existential struggles, hopes, and self-actualization efforts of the characters in *Mega-Mega*. This approach views humans as active subjects in the search for the meaning of life, which is very much in line with the theme of Arifin C. Noer's script.

The main data source in this study is the *Mega-Mega* drama script, which was analyzed through documentation study techniques with intensive and repeated reading. The researcher marks quotations or passages of text that reflect the human needs, moral values, and psychological dynamics of the characters in a reflective atmosphere so that the implied meanings can be understood in their entirety. To maintain the validity of the data, a trust strategy is applied in the form of prolonged involvement through in-depth reading and recording, as well as periodic peer discussions to test the consistency of interpretation and minimize personal bias. This strategy strengthens the validity of the findings and maintains the integrity of the analysis process.

Researchers are aware that subjective positions can influence interpretation. With a background in literature and psychology studies, the researcher brings a particular perspective that has the potential to shape an understanding of character and conflict. For this reason, critical reflection and openness to the various meanings of the text are always maintained. In maintaining the ethics of research, the researcher respects the copyright and integrity of Arifin C. Noer's work, analyzing the text in a relevant socio-historical context without altering the original content or message. Citations are used appropriately and responsibly while upholding the intellectual value of the work.

The analytical framework in this study includes three stages. The first is coding, which identifies texts that reflect the fulfillment or inhibition of Maslow's five needs: physiological, safety, social, reward, and self-actualization. Second is categorization, which

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is grouping citations according to the category of needs. Third, interpretation, which is Panutyzing how the dynamics of these needs shape inner conflicts, the psychological condition of the characters, and the meaning of humanity in the story.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 RESULT

The findings of the study show that the meaning of humanity in *Mega-Mega* by Arifin C. Noer can be understood through the approach of Abraham Maslow's Humanistic Psychology. The five levels of human needs are physiological, safety, social, rewarding, and actualization. This is seen in the characters, dialogues, and plots, which reflect the characters' struggles in fulfilling life and finding meaning. The following are the results of exploring humanity in *Mega-Mega* Arifin C. Noer through Humanistic Psychology.

##### 1) Physiological Needs

According to Maslow [19] and Yuliani [21], physiological needs such as eating, drinking, air, sleep, and shelter are the most basic needs that must be met first in order for a person to survive and function optimally. The following is an excerpt of a dialogue that reflects the physiological form of basic human needs.

- Mae : You will be a beggar like an older man who lives alone. Sigh, sigh. It is a pity, your body will be useless if you do not use it to work.
- Panut : Begging, too, is a job, right? It is not light, it also requires energy and mentality. Nevertheless, that is not the case. The problem is that I am really unlucky. After all, it is a matter of the stomach, not the feelings.[20]

In the quote, Panut affirms the harsh reality he faces: "*It is a matter of the stomach, not the feelings.*" This expression shows that in the midst of the squeeze of life, dignity and feelings can be neglected in order to survive. Actions such as begging or pickpocketing are not just a matter of morality, but a matter of survival at the most basic level. When Panut said, "*A Beggar is also part of work, right?*". Panut taught that begging also requires strong energy and mentality. For him, work is not about honor; it is about survival. In his world, the choice is not correct or wrong, but instead between eating or starving. Koyal also took a similar path, reflecting the harsh reality that is clearly depicted in the dialogue between Panut and Hamung.

- Hamung : The funny thing is, Koyal aspires to have much money. Strangely enough, he did not work. I just want to beg.
- Panut : He does not even want a joint meal like us. He just wants to eat, but he does not want to pay [20]

The dialogue between Hamung and Panut indirectly reflects Koyal's struggle to meet his basic needs, namely eating and earning money to survive. Even though it is conveyed through the perspective of other characters, it is illustrated that Koyal chooses the easy path without wanting to try and share. This choice raises a conflict of values because it is considered unfair by other figures. In this context, there is a conflict, how a person faces life when the demands of basic needs are no longer in line with the norms of togetherness and hard work.

Dialogue excerpts show that physiological needs are the main basis for the actions of characters such as Panut and Koyal. Extreme choices such as begging are not a matter of morality, but a reflection of an empty stomach and the struggle of life. In these conditions, eating and drinking transcend social norms, revealing the most fragile side of humanity. Without the fulfillment of these basic needs, psychological integrity and the achievement of noble values become impossible.

## 2) The Need for a Sense of Security

According to Maslow [19] and Azwardi [22], the need for security includes protection from extreme weather, physical danger, and physical and mental tranquility, both from environmental threats and social conflicts. The following quote shows the effort to meet the need for a sense of security.

Mae : Actually, this is inappropriate, especially tonight. Nevertheless, for some reason, I feel happy. The moon was shining brightly, and it felt very comfortable to sleep in the square, right in front of the stage, like getting a blessing. Thanks, it is stunning. The air is so fresh. Here we can daydream in peace.

Panut : It does not smell like in the Museum [20]

The character feels a rare comfort when sleeping in a bright and cool square, in contrast to the previous place, which was dirty and uncomfortable. Cleanliness and tranquility provide a sense of security, not only physically, but also psychologically. This moment shows that security includes an emotional need that is essential for inner peace and mental health, especially in difficult life situations.

These findings suggest that the need for a sense of security goes beyond physical protection, encompassing inner peace and psychological stability. In a peaceful atmosphere like sleeping in a well-lit square, the character feels a rare physical and emotional comfort. This confirms that a sense of security is an important foundation for psychological integrity and is the foundation of humanity, where humans can dream, think clearly, and grow while feeling protected and valued.

## 3) Social Relations Needs

According to Maslow [19] and Santosa [23], the need for love includes social relationships such as friendship and brotherhood, because social relationships occur through mutual interactions that affect each other. The following quotation shows the effort to meet the need for social relations.

Mae : Retno, Mae loves you very much. Also to Hamung, Tukijan, Koyal, Panut, and anyone who considers Mae a mother. Just like Mae loves Mas Ronggo very much. (silent) He was hit by lava. (silent) Retno, Mae was secretly devastated when Tukijan said goodbye this morning. Coupled with the departure of Hamung and Panut.

Retno : Already, do not think about it anymore, Mae.

Hamung : "Yes, Mae. Retno will stay here and continue to be by Mae's side.

Mae : Indeed, that is what Mae wants, but for Retno it is the opposite... [20]

The quote shows the strong emotional bond between Mae and other characters such as Retno, Hamung, Tukijan, Panut, and Koyal, where Mae is considered a mother figure and they are like her children. Even though there is a separation, they still want to support each other. Mae's grief when her children leave underscores the importance of emotional bonding and the desire to maintain closeness to loved ones.

Mae : (Tears begin to subside) I felt very lonely not only as a woman, but also as a human being. I even doubted myself; I did not even know where I was. It feels like a nightmare. It is scary to get to that point. I could not see anything else; everything was blurry. I began to doubt everything, even whether I really existed or not. Everyone is busy with their respective duties and roles, while I... Like the woman from the paper, who has only lent a short life. Neglected and sidelined [20]

In the quote, Mae's character experiences a very deep loneliness and feelings of alienation, both as a woman and as a human being. This is evident in the quote, "*I feel so lonely*. This sense of loneliness is not only physical, but existential. The character feels disconnected from others, to the point of starting to doubt his existence, as seen in the quote "*I begin to doubt everything, even whether I really exist or not*." The quote shows Mae feeling unrecognized and losing a place in the lives of people she considers like her own children, while the need for social connection is also evident in Mae and Retno's conversations.

Retno : Mae, do not worry. I will always be with Mae, and I will never leave.  
 Mae : Finally, everyone left Mae. Mae's first husband once said so, but then he left me. Then my husband, Sutar, also left me. My most loyal husband, the longest supporter of my life, was finally snatched away by Merapi's furious rage.  
 Retno : No, Mae. I am also alone and feel wasted. That is why I am happier with Mae. Getting together can reduce sadness [20]

In the quote, the two characters Retno and Mae share a sense of loneliness, the experience of being abandoned, and the need for togetherness. This illustrates that they are trying to meet the need for a feeling of acceptance and belonging. Sentences like: "*I am also alone and feel wasted. That is why I am happier with Mae*." Gathering reduces sadness as an effort to build closeness and support each other, while Hamung and Koyal's conversation shows an effort to maintain the harmony of social relations.

Hamung : Do you really believe it?  
 Koyal : Of course, the payment has been made.  
 Hamung : Yes, it has. The result is the same.  
 Koyal : What is the same?  
 Hamung : If you believe the astrologer, I believe it too. Let you be happy, right? You would like to be happy.  
 Koyal : (laughs) How are you? It is nice that that is everyone's goal, right? [20]

This conversation shows that Hamung prioritizes relationships with compromise and empathy, willing to follow Koyal's beliefs in order to maintain closeness rather than pursue the truth. Saying "*Happy is everyone's goal, isn't it?*" This hints at a shared recognition of

feelings and the importance of happiness in social relationships, as Mae also feels, showing the strong need for emotional connection.

- Mae : Yes, I hope so, too. I have to fight for it. But... Suddenly, I felt very scared. Hamung will leave soon. Soon, everything will be quiet again. Why is my heart like this? I was shaking violently.  
... The sound of a car whistle sounded faintly in the distance
- Mae : (suddenly) hugging Tukijan.  
Jan!... (in isak) Jan... Why don't you have any gratitude at all? .... Only... Although your love for me is unclear, I know for sure that your departure will add to the loneliness in my life. (after calming down) However, as a mother and parent who tries hard, of course, I have to let you both go with prayers and blessings. I will accompany your steps with deep concern[20]

The quote describes Mae, who is sad and afraid of loneliness and wants to maintain emotional closeness to people who are considered like her child. Some important passages affirm this: "*But... Suddenly, I felt very scared. Hamung will leave soon. Soon, everything will be quiet again. Why is my heart like this? I was shaking violently.*" Mae's physical reaction to anxiety shows how shaken she is by the separation, as well as her longing for the affection and recognition of her loved ones. This can be seen in the sentence "*But as a mother, as a parent who tries hard, of course I have to let you both go, with prayers and blessings.*" Although in that sentence, he tried to be steadfast, the sense of loss and emotional attachment was very clear.

These findings suggest that the need for love and social connection is reflected in emotional closeness and acknowledged desires. Characters like Mae and Retno experience loneliness and existential crises when they lose relationships, affirm that human relationships are the foundation of identity and resilience of the soul, and strengthen the understanding that humans are fragile and always crave warmth in the midst of alienation.

#### 4) Award Requirements

According to Maslow, the need for reward includes self-esteem and recognition from others [19], while Umama emphasizes the drive to achieve achievements, status, responsibility, and reputation [24]. This is reflected in the dialogue between Mae and Panut, who show the urge to be appreciated.

- Mae : I mean, you believe there is a God, right?
- Panut : Like other people in general, but Mas Woto said that God does not exist. God is dangerous, like wine, opium, or cigarette smoke. That is what Mas Marwoto said.
- Mae : It does not need to be listened to. Do you believe it yourself? If you believe it, it is not appropriate to steal someone else's goods [20]

This quote describes Mae encouraging Panut to realize self-worth and the drive to be appreciated, emphasizing that being kind, faithful, and moral is part of self-dignity. This is illustrated in the sentence "*If you believe, it means that it is not appropriate to steal other people's goods.*" The encouragement to get an award is also reflected in Retno's statement.

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Retno : Ever since I was a girl, I have always wished I could have a boy. The child had eyes that were as calm as a pond, and every time I looked into his eyes, my heart felt like it was shaking. However, over time, his eyes became dry and swollen because his father never cared. Once upon a time, I was sick. (silent for a long time) The child was also sick, starved, and eventually died. From then on, I almost went crazy with disappointment and regret... (silent). My husband came home one day after drinking much wine. I was so angry. Suddenly, our house caught fire... (teeth clenched tightly) Devil! Devil! [20]

This quote describes Retno's inner wounds due to the collapse of self-esteem and loss of recognition as a mother and wife, which gives rise to a sense of failure, sadness, anger, and marginalization, while the drive for appreciation is also reflected in the character of Hamung.

Hamung : You are like a person who has lost their mind. If you keep going like this, you can go crazy. However, it is also good that if you go sideways, the Koyal will have friends. The difference is, if Koyal likes to show off everywhere that he is the son of a kumico and is proud because he is tall like a Dutch soldier, you are busy claiming to be of Japanese descent. (laughs) [20]

This quote shows Koyal and other figures building self-esteem through status and appearance, reflecting the search for identity and the need for recognition, albeit exaggeratedly. Words like "*You are like a person who loses their mind*" indicate anxiety when one's identity feels blurred. All of this illustrates a strong drive to be appreciated and recognized, even if sometimes through images that are not entirely real.

Koyal : (indifferent) Then I thought, I have to have much money first. Even recently, I have come to love money. Why not? I have seen luxury houses, cool cars, and all the beautiful things that money can buy. Then...

Hamung : ..... Begging again. (Laughs with Retno)

Koyal : So I started raising money. However, it feels too long. Finally, I bought it for the lottery. Moreover, I almost won just now (laughs). That is a sign that I am going to really win. And if I keep winning... and win again... oh, my money will pile up as high as Mount Merapi... [20]

This quote shows Koyal pursuing status and social recognition through wealth, considering wealth as a symbol of self-esteem and a way of achieving emotional and social rewards, which is also reflected in the dialogue with Tukijan.

Tukijan : (suddenly angry) Shut up, you!

Koyal : I will be silent, but after you admit that I am the one who won.

Koyal : Jan, please. Let us say I won the lottery.

The quote above illustrates Koyal's emotional drive to be recognized as a winner, not because of a prize, but for the sake of maintaining self-esteem. Requests like "*Just say I won the lottery*" reflect a need for validation, especially when feeling down or underestimated. This urge reflects the inner resistance to failure and the desire to feel meaningful, also seen in the dialogue between Panut and Mae.

- Panut : This is my money. My own money.  
Mae : However, you are my son.  
Panut : But you are not my mother [20]

The quote confirms that Panut wanted to be rewarded for his hard work, not for mercy. Panut wants recognition as an independent person, not just a child in an emotional relationship. He needs to be respected for his actions as an empowered individual who deserves recognition. The encouragement to get an award is also reflected in Tukijan's figures.

- Tukijan : You have insulted me, Yal. You have already mocked me. How many times have I said this? You are free to do anything with him. Who can ban? Indeed, she is a prostitute, I know that, Yal. Therefore, no one can prohibit you from doing anything with it. Even if you are not sane, do not do that in front of me. How many times have I told you? Not in front of my eyes. All friends understand that. But it turns out that you are secretly provoking my anger [20]

The quote, describing Tukijan's anger over Koyal's actions, he felt his pride was hurt. Tukijan did not mind the act in general, but felt humiliated when it was done in front of him. He said, "*But do not do that in front of me,*" which is a demand to be respected. An explosion of emotions arises from the wound and loss of appreciation for Koyal's treatment that degrades Retno's dignity; Tukijan hopes that Koyal will continue to respect Retno, reflecting the urge to be appreciated in their dialogue.

- Koyal : This time I am sure of winning.  
Tukijan : I think you will be healed if I dare to act. That is right, you want much money, right?  
Koyal : Right.  
Tukijan : Someday you will definitely become rich, rich in wealth and all sorts of things (the lottery was torn apart)  
Koyal : (do not) Mae, she ripped my money [20]

Koyal craves lottery winnings as a symbol of success and recognition, showing a desire for status and self-esteem, not just the necessities of life. When Tukijan rips up the lottery and Koyal says, "*Mae, he ripped my money off,*" it shows a sense of loss for the hopes and dreams of self-achievement that he has been relying on the lottery. The encouragement to get an award is also reflected in the dialogue between Tukijan and Retno.

- Tukijan : I am upset that you changed your attitude again.  
Retno : I was angry because I was angry. It is okay that you have dared to yell. What do you want me to be in other people's countries later? Become a helper? As much as you want. Do you think I would starve to death if I stayed here? (suddenly crying) I am Confused [20]

The quote reflects Retno's rejection of degrading treatment. Retno refused to be positioned as a maid because it hurt her dignity. By asserting that she can survive on her own, Retno shows the need for self-esteem and recognition. His emotional swings reflect the

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inner conflict between the desire to be appreciated and the fear of the future, confirming how important respect and justice are to him.

Quotes show that the need for rewards encourages characters like Mae, Retno, Panut, Koyal, Hamung, and Tukijan to struggle to maintain their self-esteem and seek recognition, even through illusions such as a lottery or fake status. This desire reflects the search for meaning, dignity, and place in a world that often ignores these values, affirming the important role of rewards in the psychological integrity of character.

### 5) The Need for Self-Actualization

Self-actualization is the stage when a person develops his or her potential to the fullest and becomes a whole person, not easily affected by external pressures [19]. Asmadi added that this is the process of conquering inner turmoil and external influences to become the authentic self [25]. This quote reflects the character's efforts to express his actualization.

- Mae : I mean, you believe there is a God, right?
- Panut : Like other people in general, but Mas Woto said that God does not exist. God is dangerous, like wine, opium, or cigarette smoke. That is what Mas Marwoto said.
- Mae : It does not need to be listened to. Do you believe it yourself? If you believe it, it is not appropriate to steal someone else's goods [20]

The quote shows an in-depth conversation about beliefs and identity, where Mae encourages Panut to be true to herself and find integrity between values, beliefs, and actions at the core of self-actualization. Similar efforts are also reflected in the dialogue between Tukijan and Retno.

- Retno : (Just looking at the man for a while)
- Tukijan : I also do not like to make appointments. Everything is still uncertain. All I have is a will. After all, we only heard that the land on the other side was full of hidden riches. It is vast, and everything is still hidden, both on the ground and in ourselves. If we really want to, we have to bring that wealth to the surface of our lives. That is how I think [20]

This quote reflects the character's awareness of the hidden potential in him and his life, as well as a strong drive to realize it. Phrases such as "All I have is a will" indicate the belief that something valuable is within us and needs to be fought for. This is not just survival, but achieving meaning and living in harmony with the deepest values, the essence of self-actualization, which is also reflected in the dialogue between Tukijan and Koyal.

- Tukijan : Do not cry. You are not a child anymore. If you keep crying, you will never get that much money, just numbers.
- Koyal : You are evil. (Scared to death) [20]

This sentence shows Tukijan's encouragement for Koyal to control his emotions and start acting maturely in pursuit of goals, marking the beginning of a process of self-actualization, which is also reflected in Hamung's dialogue.

- Hamung : Maybe I will work hard there, or go back to my old job as a pedicab driver. However, I want to try to be a slacker. You have to be strong to work in

Sumatra. Your enemies are not only animals, but also big trees. Have you ever heard Mbah Wirjo's story about a family that was lost to a snake? I do not have anything now, but I want to have something after living in Jakarta for a long time. I think I have to learn a lot from the Batak people... I have to be like them. If they are ready to die, I must be ready like that too... [20]

This quote illustrates Hamung's determination to thrive through hard work and learning, reflecting Maslow's drive for self-actualization, which is also reflected in Tukijan's statement.

Tukijan : I understand. It is not just you who love him; many people also love him. We are all grateful to Mae for taking care of us with love. I cannot forget cooking for myself. We often wonder how it can go from makeshift ingredients to delicious food... However, do you think Mae is the only one who counts replies for everything she does? Mae is old. Parents never ask for anything; they want their children to be happy, even happier than themselves.

Tukijan's dialogue shows Mae has achieved self-actualization, giving sincerely without seeking recognition, either physically or emotionally. This is also reflected in Mae and Retno's dialogue as a form of the meaning of life through selfless giving.

Mae : You are indeed my daughter. You are beautiful and kind. That is the truth. Honey, you do not realize it. (silent) Now, as a good child, follow what Mae says: go with Tukijan.

Retno : (crying while hugging) No, Mae. I cannot.

Mae : Of course, you cannot. Moreover, who is happy with death? Nothing. However, who can resist it? Not at all. You think Mae wants you to leave Mae? (Retno shakes her head) No, right? Mae does not want you to leave either... However, do you think Mae is willing to keep you here selling yourself? [20]

This quote describes Mae's emotional conflict that pushes Retno out of a humble life in order to find meaning and self-dignity, reflecting the spirit of self-actualization to rise and grow meaningfully.

Dialogue shows that self-actualization is reflected through moral reflection, awareness of potential, and sincere actions. Characters like Panut, Tukijan, Mae, Hamung, and Retno undergo complex inner processes, presenting actualization as a journey full of conflict and authentic life courage. These findings affirm the importance of actualization in forming intact characters who continue to search for meaning in the midst of uncertainty.

### **3.2 SYNTHESIS OF HUMANITY IN MEGA-MEGA**

In an in-depth Panutysis of basic human needs according to Maslow's hierarchy, as illustrated in the dialogue excerpts, we can see that the characters undergo a dynamic process between emptiness and growth. Their journey is not always linear, but full of inner turmoil, difficult choices, and conflicting values. Here is a further elaboration based on each need and how the big picture of humanity is portrayed in the Mega-Mega drama shows.

First, the drama *Mega-Mega* depicts humans as complex creatures who struggle to meet the needs of life, from the most basic to the search for meaning. Through marginal characters such as Panut, Koyal, Mae, and Retno, this drama highlights five main things, namely: 1) the struggle for survival at the expense of self-esteem; 2) the longing for a sense of security in the midst of uncertainty; 3) the need for love and social relations as a filler of emptiness; 4) desire to be recognized and valued for the sake of self-esteem; 5) the search for meaning and self-actualization behind suffering. So it can be concluded that the *Mega-Mega* drama reflects the human journey in search of a meaningful and authentic life.

Second, the drama *Mega-Mega* shows that the fulfillment of human needs takes place in a tug-of-war between emptiness and growth. Panut and Koyal are trapped in a void because their basic needs are not met. A sense of security gives a pause for reflection, while social needs trigger emotional growth that is still fragile in Mae and Retno. The desire for appreciation is often pseudo, but it is the starting point of self-awareness. Actualization can be seen in Mae, Tukijan, and Hamung, who begin to live in harmony with values and empathy. The characters experience emptiness and growth at the same time, reflecting that actual growth is born from the struggle to meet basic needs and the search for meaning in life.

Third, the characters in the *Mega-Mega* drama each seek the meaning of life from the basics: Panut seeks dignity in the midst of poverty, Mae craves love and acceptance, Retno wants to recover and build self-esteem, Koyal pursues recognition through wealth, Hamung believes in hard work to grow, and Tukijan upholds integrity and responsibility. This drama affirms that the meaning of life is born from the struggle for self-esteem, love, hope, and responsibility, even in the midst of limitations and suffering.

### **3.3 DISCUSSION**

Abraham Maslow's approach to the theory of basic needs in Indonesian drama has had a very significant impact, especially in two main areas, namely the study of Indonesian drama itself and the study of literary psychology, especially from a humanistic perspective.

#### **1) For Indonesian Drama Studies**

The approach to basic human needs, according to Maslow, makes an important contribution to the understanding of Indonesian drama, especially in exploring characters and conflicts. First, this approach encourages the creation of a more psychologically profound figure, not just representative of social class or ideology, but also experiencing complex inner struggles. Second, conflict in drama is understood not only as a result of social structure but also as a failure to meet psychological needs, thus opening up space for exploring the human side of the characters. Third, this approach encourages the birth of reflective and therapeutic drama, providing space for the audience to experience catharsis and self-reflection through emotional closeness to the characters.

#### **2) For Literary Psychology**

Maslow's approach to reading plays is in line with humanistic psychology, which emphasizes potential, freedom, and the search for meaning in human life. First, drama

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becomes a narrative medium to represent Maslow's theory, allowing an in-depth exploration of the process of self-actualization, trauma, and character growth. Second, this approach enriches the study of psychology with realistic emotional narratives, offering a portrait of the inner character as material for qualitative Panutysis. Third, this approach strengthens humanistic literary criticism that highlights self-awareness and human values, making literature not only an academic object but also a mirror of life and a means of emotional healing.

Based on the description above, Maslow's approach opens up new opportunities in the study of Indonesian drama to see characters as whole human beings with needs and potential. In addition, literary psychology acquires a strong narrative dimension, helping to bridge the gap between theory and concrete human experience. This approach encourages an integration between art, science, and the humanities that provides the basis for art practices that are more value-conscious and more relevant to the psychological conditions of society.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Humanity in *Mega-Mega* is reflected through the characters' existential struggles in meeting hierarchical needs, as explained in Maslow's theory. In the extreme urgency of life, they not only survive physically, but also continue to dig into meaning, identity, and self-esteem. This manuscript displays the psychological dynamics of human beings that go from trying to maintain life to finding identity, through the stages of basic needs, emotional security, social attachment, recognition, and self-actualization. Instead of just presenting a portrait of poverty or social conflict, *Mega-Mega* is transformed into a complex representation of the human mind that, even in a depressed condition, still strives to fulfill its deepest human values.

Theoretically, this study expands the horizons of humanistic literary Panutysis by using Maslow's theory of needs as an instrument for interpreting the psychological complexity of characters and narrative structures. This approach highlights that literary works can not only be read as aesthetic texts, but also as a reflection of the dynamics of human growth in borderline situations. The practical implications lie in the potential for more transformative literary learning, namely, reading that is not only cognitive but also affective and empathic. In the context of education, the integration of humanistic psychology allows dramas such as *Mega-Mega* to become a pedagogical medium to foster social sensitivity, self-recognition, and a deeper understanding of human values.

The main limitation of this study lies in its singular focus on Maslow's theory, which, while productive, does not yet cover the complexity of the humanistic approach in its entirety. Other perspectives, such as Carl Rogers' theory of empathic relationships or Viktor Frankl's logotherapy of the search for meaning in suffering, offer a conceptual framework that can complement the reading of the inner dynamics of the characters. In addition, the socio-political background inherent in Arifin C. Noer's work has not been elaborated as an element that helps shape the structure of human needs in the text. Therefore, further studies need to adopt a broader and interdisciplinary humanistic-existential approach in order to

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uncover the links between social conditions, existential experiences, and the construction of identity in literary works more comprehensively.

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