

The Progression of Self-Actualization through Self-Acceptance of Jerusha Abbott in *Daddy Long Legs*

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the kinds of self – acceptance characteristics in the development of self – actualization as depicted in Daddy Long Legs. This study is significant because self-acceptance plays an important role in shaping an individual's personal growth and psychological maturity. Focusing on the main character, Jerusha Abbott, this study employs a qualitative research methodology, with the primary data were taken from the novel Daddy Long Legs supported by theoretical concepts based on Abraham Maslow and Elizabeth Hurlock. Secondary data were obtained from journals, articles, e-books, and previous research. Several steps were conducted in the process of collecting the data in this study, including reading the novel, identifying the data, classifying the data, and reducing the data. Jerusha is considered a self – actualized primarily influenced by her self – acceptance, as reflected in the fulfillment of the five characteristics of self – acceptance. These characteristics include realistic self – expectations, self – confidence independent of others' opinions, awareness of personal limitations and strengths, freedom of self-expression, and acceptance of shortcomings without self-blame. This study concludes that self-acceptance plays a crucial role in assisting people in reaching self-actualization because it helps them recognize their true selves and reach their greatest potential.

Keywords: *Self-actualization; self-acceptance; Daddy Long Legs*

INTRODUCTION

Motivation can affect choices and actions in all aspects of life. When people make even the most fundamental daily decisions and pursue long-term goals, they follow their wants and desires. Abraham Maslow's theory of personality is grounded in several fundamental assumptions concerning motivation. First, Maslow adopted a holistic approach to motivation; in other words, motivation comes from the entire person, not just from any one aspect or function (Feist-Feist, 2021, p. 285). Second, motivation is usually complex, reflecting that a person's actions could be motivated by multiple distinct factors (Feist-Feist 2021, p. 285). The third assumption is that people are continually motivated by one need or another (Feist-Feist, 2021, p. 285). Usually, once a need is fulfilled, it loses its ability to motivate people and is replaced by a different need. Another assumption is that all people everywhere are motivated by the same basic needs (Feist & Feist, 2021, p. 286). Moreover, a final assumption concerning motivation is that needs can be arranged in a hierarchy (Feist-Feist, 2021, p. 286).

Maslow provides an understanding of character development and motivation in literary works through his Hierarchy of Needs. The hierarchy of needs is the most popular theory of Abraham Maslow. Maslow stated that lower-level needs must be fulfilled first so that higher needs can be reached. There are five stages of the hierarchy of needs. The first is physiological needs, including food, drinks, and rest, which are fundamental human needs. The second is safety needs, which include physical security, stability, dependency, protection, and freedom from threatening forces. The third is love and belongingness needs, since humans are social beings. Every individual tends to have a good relationship. The fourth is esteem needs, which include self-respect, confidence, competence, and the knowledge that others hold them in high esteem. The last is self – actualization. Maslow assumed that self – actualization needs become potent whenever esteem

needs have been met (Feist & Feist, 2021, p. 289). A self-actualized person can reach the deepest needs that most people cannot.

Self – actualization has 15 characteristics, such as more efficient perception of reality, acceptance of self, others, and nature, spontaneity, simplicity, and naturalness, problem-centering, the need for privacy, autonomy, continued freshness of appreciation, peak experience, *gemeinschaftsgefühl*, profound interpersonal relations, democratic character structure, discrimination between means and ends, philosophical sense of humor, creativeness, and resistance to enculturation. Although it does not have to fulfill the 15 self – actualization characteristics, an individual who reaches self – actualization has some of the characteristics that can be concluded as a self – actualized person.

According to Hurlock (1986), self – acceptance is a positive trait when individuals accept themselves as human beings. This attitude is an acceptance of oneself, including strengths and weaknesses, without being disappointed but receiving it as a human part. According to Jersild (in Hurlock, 1974), there are five characteristics of self-acceptance. Self – acceptance plays a role in achieving self-actualization, as Rogers. Novel is one of the works of literature that often depict the struggles of human in fulfilling their needs also depicting the attitude of acceptance in a person. Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides an interesting analysis of human motivation by explaining how human needs are arranged in a hierarchical structure, from basic physiological needs to self – actualization. Moreover, Hurlock's theory of self-acceptance can be used to analyze the main character's attitude toward herself. Interestingly, there is a connection between the two theories. Self – acceptance plays a role in achieving self-actualization, as emphasized by Rogers. *Daddy Long Legs* by Jean Webster is one of the novels in which the main character shows the role of self – acceptance in achieving self – actualization. *Daddy Long Legs* was published by Gramedia on May 27, 2023. This novel tells the story of an orphan girl named Jerusha Abbott who had a dream of becoming a writer. She was funded to go to school by a man who Jerusha called “Daddy Long Legs” because she could only see his tall and thin shadow. She writes monthly letters without expecting a reply. Through her letters, Jerusha shares her experiences and struggles in college, showing her personal growth that happened to Jerusha.

A previous study analyzed the use of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, such as Bulan's study, which analyzed human needs in the character Charlotte Bronte in the *novel Jane Eyre*. Similarly, Alvi Oktavia analyzed the main character in the *movie Soul*, which depicts character development and motivation. This study will discuss the hierarchy of needs by Abraham Maslow, focusing on the role of self – acceptance in achieving self – actualization of Jerusha Abbott in *Daddy Long Legs*.

Previous studies have typically focused more on the fulfillment of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and the traits of self-actualization without thoroughly examining the influence of self-acceptance. Therefore, this study aims to close this research gap by analyzing the role of self-acceptance in achieving self-actualization. The following research question serves as the foundation for this analysis: what kinds of self – acceptance characteristics support Jerusha in achieving self-actualization, as depicted in the novel?

This study focuses on the' protagonist of Daddy-Long-Legs, Jerusha Abbott. Jerusha's journey as an orphan who obtains educational support and progressively develops her identity as a writer exemplifies the psychological development process that leads to self-actualization. Writing became a tool that helped her comprehend, accept, and appreciate herself as a result of her school experiences. Thus, the main focus of this study is on how Jerusha Abbott's process of reaching self-actualization is impacted by her level of self-acceptance. Through an analysis of her ideas, behavior, and personal growth, this study emphasizes self-acceptance as an essential element that facilitates the transition into a self-actualized person.

In conclusion, the Jerusha's journey to become a writer in the novel *Daddy Long Legs* by Jean Webster suits to analyze with the theory of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Elizabeth Hurlock's self – acceptance, in addition to add depth of understanding the role of self – acceptance in the progress of achieving self – actualization.

Review of Literature

Abraham Maslow has developed an interesting theory about person development that based on human motivations. The hierarchy of needs is a popular theory proposed by Abraham Maslow. Maslow assumed that a person's needs can be arranged in a hierarchy (Feist-Feist, 2021, p. 286). Maslow's hierarchy of needs concept assumes that lower-level needs must be satisfied or at least relatively satisfied before higher-level needs become motivators (Feist-Feist, 2021, p. 286). This implies that a person needs to satisfy the lower level of needs before they can reach the highest level. Maslow listed the following needs in order of their prepotency: physiological, safety, love and belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization (Feist & Feist, 2021, p. 286). First, physiological needs are essential for every human to survive. Physiological needs include food, water, oxygen, maintenance of body temperature, and so on. If this need is not met, a person will continue to work to fulfill this need. Second is safety needs. This need is required so that a person can feel safe and support them in fulfilling other needs. Safety needs include physical security, stability, dependency, protection, and freedom from threatening forces such as war, terrorism, illness, fear, anxiety, danger, chaos, and natural disasters. Furthermore, Taormina and Gao's elaboration of Maslow's original theory emphasizes the significance of financial stability as a component of safety needs (157). The third needs is love and belongingness needs, after a person satisfied the physiological needs and safety needs, cause human is a social being, people tend to want a good relationship with the people around them, such as friends, family, neighbors, and others. Esteem needs are the fourth.

This includes self-respect, confidence, competence, and the knowledge that others hold them in high esteem. Esteem needs have two levels: reputation or how individuals are perceived by others, and self – esteem or self-confidence. The last need is self – actualization, and the self – actualized person has the potential to be a full human because they fulfill their deepest needs that other people cannot reach. Self – actualization needs include self-fulfillment, the realization of all one's potential, and a desire to become creative in the full sense of the word (Feist & Feist, 2021, p. 289). A person who reaches self – actualization shows some characteristics of self – actualization. Maslow (1970) listed 15 qualities that characterize self-actualizing people to at least some degree, such as: more efficient perception of reality; acceptance of self, others, and nature; spontaneity, simplicity, and naturalness; problem-centering; the need for privacy; autonomy; continued freshness of appreciation; the peak experience; *gemeinschaftsgefühl*; profound interpersonal relations; the democratic character structure; discrimination between means and ends; philosophical sense of humor; creativeness; and resistance to enculturation (Feist-Feist, 2021, p. 297-301). However, a self-actualized person does not have to fulfill all 15 characteristics, since self – actualization is not about being perfect but about being whole, authentic, and living with full awareness of one's true identity and personal goals.

According to Hurlock (1986), self – acceptance is a positive trait when individuals accept themselves as human beings. A person with self-acceptance can be confident in all facets of life since they fully embrace themselves. Furthermore, self-acceptance can be a factor that influences attaining self – actualization. According to Rogers (2007), one of the most fundamental factors that influences self – actualization is self – acceptance. People need to accept every aspect of themselves to become the best version of themselves. The emergence of negative feelings as well as the thought of being weak, embarrassing, and not up to standard, is normal in the process of knowing who you truly are. They will learn to find themselves as they accept all aspects of themselves. When they become more open, they can experience natural growth and express their potential without constraints. Based on Hurlock's study, self – actualizing people are those who can accept

themselves and others. Even though these people were imperfect, their acceptance of who they were allowed them to live purposefully and follow their life's purpose on their own, free from external influences (qtd. In Hurlock, 1974, p. 425).

A self – acceptant person exhibits several characteristics of self – acceptance. According to Jersild (in Hurlock, 1974), there are five characteristics of self – acceptance. First, people who accept themselves have realistic expectations of their circumstances and respect themselves. If people have a small distance between their ideal self and real self, they can accept themselves. Second, they are confident in their standards and knowledge without being fixated on the opinions of others. People with self-acceptance tend to have emotional security; therefore, they believe in their principles and values, which makes them confident in facing problems. Third, they have an account of their limitations and do not look at themselves irrationally. Self-accepting people do not think that they are perfect; they can see both their strengths and weaknesses. Fourth, they realize their own assets and feel free to attract or do what they want. Besides, they know their strength. Self-accepting people also know their potential; they are free to live in accordance with their own ideals and objectives. Fifth, they realize shortcomings without blaming themselves. Even though self – acceptance people know their flaws, they do not blame or diminish themselves.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative research methodology. According to Cresswell “Qualitative research is a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants; asks broad, general questions; collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants; describes and analyzes these words for themes; and conduct the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner.” The goal of qualitative research was to add depth to the understanding of human experiences using interpretation and non – numerical data. The form of words was used in the qualitative research, which was taken from stories, such as novels, short stories, poems, and script films, rather than numbers. As the focus of this method, the author applied the theory of Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and Elizabeth Hurlock’s self – acceptance. This study aimed to examine the main character of *the* novel, Jerusha Abbott, to portray the role of self – acceptance in achieving self – actualization.

This analysis took four steps to collect the data, such as: 1) reading the novel, the process of reading the novel was done in several times, the first time reading was done to understand the whole story of *Daddy Long Legs*, the second time was for gathering the data of the theory hierarchy of needs by Abraham Maslow. The third reading is for collecting the data that Jerusha is a self – acceptance person from the characteristics of self – acceptance. 2) Identifying the data, after reading the novel, this was done to collecting the essential data from conversations and related sentence. Sticky notes were utilized to label the obtained data and determine whether it aligned with the theory. 3) Classifying the data, the data which has been gathered was classified based on the characteristics of self – acceptance. 4) Reducing the data, after that the data was reduced which was weak to be included in the characteristics of self – acceptance.

The data were taken from primary and secondary data. The primary data which was used in this study was the novel *Daddy Long Legs* by Jean Webster, which are dialogues and narrations. While the secondary data was from journals, articles, e-books, and previous research which related with the theory of hierarchy of needs by Abraham Maslow and self – acceptance by Elizabeth Hurlock, in addition the role of self – acceptance in achieving self – actualization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the theory Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, the writer find out that Jerusha is a self – actualized person by fulfilling the stage in hierarchy of needs from the basic needs up to highest needs which is self – actualization. Furthermore, Jerusha shows nine characteristics of self –

actualization, which are acceptance of self, others, and nature; spontaneity, simplicity, and naturalness; autonomy; continued freshness of appreciation; the peak experience; profound interpersonal relations; discrimination between means and ends; philosophical sense of humor; creativeness. The progress of Jerusha in achieving self – actualization is influenced by self – acceptance that she has. Since, she has to accept themselves to become the best version of themselves. For knowing that Jerusha is a self – acceptance person, she shows five characteristics of self – acceptance and we can see it from the quotes below:

Five Characteristics of Self – Acceptance in Jerusha Abbott Daddy Long Legs

After the analysis and collecting the data from the novel *Daddy Long Legs*, Jerusha depicts five characteristics of self – acceptance who makes her recognize her strengths and weaknesses to be the best versions of herself.

People who accept themselves have realistic expectations of their circumstances and respect themselves.

People who have a small distance between the gap of ideal and real self, will accept themselves as they are. Since the self – acceptance people are someone who realizes their shortcomings, so they will have a realistic expectation. This characteristic is shown by Jerusha through this quote:

It isn't the great big pleasures that count the most; it's making a great deal out of the little ones—I've discovered the true secret of happiness, Daddy, and that is to live in the now. Not to be for ever regretting the past, or anticipating the future; but to get the most that you can out of this very instant. (Webster, 2017, p. 143).

Hurlock said that only when the gap between the real and the ideal self-concepts, based on unrealistic expectations, can be narrowed down to the point where the ideal can be attained may the person hope to be self-acceptant. So long as a gap between the two exists, he will be self-rejectant to some extent (Hurlock, 1974, p. 435). The phrase illustrates how Jerusha is understanding of her present circumstances, including her history as a child in an orphanage and her limitations, reveal her true nature. Her ideal self, on the other hand, is content and unconcerned about the future or regrets from the past. Jerusha then made the decision to live in the present and appreciate it, free from wishful thinking, false expectations, and faking. This demonstrates how Jerusha has reduced the gap between her ideal and true selves. This shows that life is accepted for what it is right now.

Confident in the standards and knowledge of themselves without being fixated on the opinions of others.

Self – acceptance people tend to have emotional security, they are not worry and feel anxious of who they are and whether they are “good enough”. They believe with their principles and values so they can face their problem. Jerusha shows this characteristic through this quote.

Well, Daddy, it did appeal to me! I almost weakened; if he hadn't been so dictatorial, maybe I should have entirely weakened. I can be enticed step by step, but I WON'T be forced. He said I was a silly, foolish, irrational, quixotic, idiotic, stubborn child (those are a few of his abusive adjectives; the rest escape me), and that I didn't know what was good for me; I ought to let older people judge. We almost quarrelled—I am not sure but that we entirely did! (Webster, 2017, p. 156)

Jerusha demonstrates her determination toward her own beliefs and judgments in this scene. She wants to be respected and free from outside control, and she will not be intimidated. Jerusha demonstrated her personal security when she stated, "I WON'T be forced," and "I ought to let older people judge." Jerusha is subjected to criticism, but she refuses to allow it to change her convictions. Hurlock's remarks and her firm position in the face of criticism are quite consistent. In Hurlock's quote it is explained self-acceptance is accompanied by personal security. This encourages the person to believe that he can handle life's problems and that he is accepted by significant people in his life. It also encourages him to rely on his own principles and values to guide his actions rather than on the conventions and standards of others (Hurlock, 1974, p. 437).

Jerusha shows this when she insists on not being forced, showing that she is confident in her principles and abilities.

Has an account of his/her limitations and does not look at himself/herself irrationally.

Self – acceptance people does not think that they are perfect. They can realize their strength as well as their shortcomings, however the self – acceptance people will not think that they are flawless. The quote below shows Jerusha has this characteristic.

But I'm getting acclimated. I don't make such awful mistakes as I did; and I don't feel uncomfortable any more with the other girls. I used to squirm whenever people looked at me. I felt as though they saw right through my sham new clothes to the checked gingham underneath. But I'm not letting the gingham bother me anymore. Sufficient unto yesterday is the evil thereof. (Webster, 2017, p. 97)

Jerusha's admission of her past errors appears when she says, "I don't make such awful mistakes as I did." Nevertheless, Jerusha gradually improves these mistakes, as seen by her admission that "I don't feel uncomfortable any more with the other girls." This shift shows that Jerusha has begun to make peace with herself and no longer feels inferior to other people in her social environment. In addition to admitting her flaws and traumatic history, Jerusha grows more confident and emotionally stable throughout this stage of self-acceptance. This quote is accordance with the reference from Maslow which said the self-acceptant person does not think of himself as a paragon of perfection. Instead, he is able to recognize his good features as well as his faults. One characteristic of the person who is well adjusted is that he usually recognizes his good features, before his faults and emphasizes them rather than his faults. As one person explained: 'We all have to live with ourselves twenty-four hours a day and therefore we should think much of ourselves, at least enough to give confidence to our ego to improve ourselves (Hurlock, 1974, p. 437).

Realizes his/her own assets and feels free to attract or do what he/she wants.

People who have self – acceptance recognize that they have potential, besides that they also have a courage to live in accordance with their own ideals and objectives. It suits with Hurlock's statement that self-accepting teenagers believe they are entitled to their own thoughts, goals, and wants. They don't restrict themselves with unreasonable expectations or prevent themselves from experiencing life satisfaction. In the case of Jerusha, she shows this characteristic.

Isn't it fun to work—or don't you ever do it? It's especially fun when your kind of work is the thing you'd rather do more than anything else in the world. I've been writing as fast as my pen would go every day this summer, and my only quarrel with life is that the days aren't long enough to write all the beautiful and valuable and entertaining thoughts I'm thinking. (Webster, 2017, p. 179).

Judy uses her employment to communicate her satisfaction as well as her thoughts and goals, especially in writing, which she considers to be the most rewarding and enjoyable activity. This shows that she has found a profession that she enjoys and that gives her the opportunity to express herself fully. In this quote, Judy conveys her immense inspiration and passion, as well as the belief that her life is coming to an end since she has so many lovely and valuable thoughts to give. This reflects to what Hurlock said among the outstanding characteristics of self-accepting adolescents are spontaneity and responsibility for self. They accept the qualities of their humanity without condemning themselves for conditions beyond their control. They do not see themselves as persons who should be above anger or fear or devoid of conflicting desires, free of human fallibility. They feel they have a right to have ideas, aspirations, and wishes of their own. They do not begrudge themselves the satisfactions of being alive (Jersild 71) in (Hurlock, 1974, p. 437).

Realizes shortcomings without blaming oneself.

Self – acceptance people recognize their shortcomings well, but that is not a reason for a self – acceptance people to blame and diminish themselves. In actuality, he still possesses the ability to approve of himself and to accept others. When one recognizes their own limitations, it becomes possible to understand and forgive the imperfections of others. Furthermore, Jerusha shows this characteristic through this quote.

I know lots of girls (Julia, for instance) who never know that they are happy. They are so accustomed to the feeling that their senses are deadened to it; but as for me—I am perfectly sure every moment of my life that I am happy. And I'm going to keep on being, no matter what unpleasant things turn up. I'm going to regard them (even toothaches) as interesting experiences, and be glad to know what they feel like. 'Whatever sky's above me, I've a heart for any fate.' (Webster, 2017, p. 174)

According to the citation, Judy demonstrates a positive and accepting outlook on life in this quote, even putting up with unpleasant situations. Jersild has emphasized the significance of self-acceptance in adolescence. "The adolescent who realistically accepts himself has a treasure. Within his own world, the one with meagre talents who forthrightly appreciates what he has is richer than the one who is bountifully endowed but deplores himself" (71) (Hurlock, 1974, p. 436). In addition to recognizing that she is happy, she makes the conscious decision to remain joyful no matter what. Her willingness to "regard them (even toothaches) as interesting experiences" shows that she can tolerate suffering as a natural part of life without complaining or protesting. People who have reached a condition of self-acceptance, where they are unaffected by setbacks and can see difficult circumstances as an essential aspect of life, share this trait. "Whatever sky's above me, I've a heart for any fate" expresses a deep acceptance of life's circumstances without grumbling or providing an explanation. Despite life's uncertainty, Judy chooses to accept reality as it is and concentrate on happiness and personal growth. The environment and self-acceptance, a potent quality of self-actualization, are centered around this.

CONCLUSION

According to the study, Jerusha Abbott is a self-actualized person who has effectively met each of Maslow's Hierarchy of demands' five levels, which go from the most basic physiological needs to the highest level of self-actualization. Jerusha's personal development throughout Daddy-Long-Legs is a reflection of a slow process of need fulfillment that allows her to grow emotionally and psychologically. She has shown through her experiences that fulfilling her lower-level needs is crucial to advancing her path to self-actualization.

Furthermore, Jerusha exhibits nine characteristics of self-actualization, namely acceptance of self, others, and nature; spontaneity, simplicity, and naturalness; autonomy; continued freshness of appreciation; peak experiences; profound interpersonal relations; the ability to discriminate between means and ends; a philosophical sense of humor; and creativeness. These qualities, which demonstrate her ability to live a genuine and meaningful life, are continuously demonstrated in her thoughts, behavior, and reactions to obstacles in life. Her status as a self-actualized person is further highlighted by her creative writing, emotional independence, and close interpersonal interactions.

Self-acceptance is essential to Jerusha's psychological growth in the process of reaching self-actualization. Jerusha is able to grow gradually and get over feelings of inferiority triggered by her history as an orphan by fully loving herself, flaws and all. She can become the best version of herself by understanding her genuine identity and goals thanks to this self-acceptance. Because self-acceptance enables people to embrace their true selves and reach their full potential, the study comes to the conclusion that it is a basic aspect that promotes and strengthens the attainment of self-actualization.

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