

# Don Tillman's Hierarchy of Needs in Graeme Simsion's *The Rosie Project*

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## ABSTRACT

In this research, the writer discusses and analyzes the hierarchy of human needs of Don Tillman in a novel entitled *The Rosie Project* by Graeme Simsion. Don Tillman, the main character may have a perfect life but he has a trouble to fit in socially. This study uses the theory of the hierarchy of needs of Abraham Maslow. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method. The data source used for the research is taken from the novel. Data collection is done by reading the novel, marking the data, grouping the data, and selecting the data. To analyze the data is done by analyzing and describing the data presented. This research shows that Don Tillman has fulfilled his five needs starting from physiological needs, safety, love and belonging, appreciation, and self-actualization. Even though there are obstacles in meeting these needs, especially the need for security and the need for love and belonging, Don Tillman is able to overcome them and successfully fulfill these needs.

**Keywords:** *Physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs, self – actualization needs.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Human cannot be separated from their needs in their daily life. He or she needs to eat, drink, rest, and work. Human will fulfil all their needs to achieve their own satisfaction both physically and mentally. Besides, when their needs are fulfilled, they will be able to maintain their life.

Psychologist Abraham Maslow puts forward five basic human needs called the Hierarchy of Needs. The Hierarchy of needs is a theory which refers to human's behaviors influenced by their motivations in fulfilling their needs. The theory proposed by Abraham Maslow in his paper titled *A Theory of Human Motivation* (1943) and in his book *Motivation and Personality* (Maslow, 1954), to sequences the five levels of human needs in a hierarchical order, namely: 1) physiological needs, 2) safety needs, 3) love and belonging needs, 4) esteem needs, and 5) self – actualization needs. These needs are referring to the ways on how human fulfil their needs starting from the basic needs to achieve the self – goals.

The hierarchy of human needs can be applied not only in the world of work or in human daily life in general, but it can also be applied in literary works, especially in studying a character in literary works as in novels because characters are one of the most important elements in a novel considering that they represent humans in terms of appearance, behavior, and speech. By applying the hierarchy of needs, we can determine the character's motivations and behaviors in fulfilling their needs and achieving their goals as depicted in the novel.

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The novel as a form of literary work can be analysed through various approaches, that includes psychological approach. Psychological approach in literature is used to examine the author or the characters. Psychology is the study of human minds and behaviour. Novel is a work of fiction resulting from human thoughts that tells human life and makes humans as the depiction of its characters. The connection between psychology and literature comes from the thoughts or psychological representations of the author him or herself contained in his or her work or the psychological representations of the characters that are driven from their motives in the novel. The study of psychology contributes in developing characters in literature. Dar (2022) stated that "Psychology helps the author to depict how the characters think, act and why they behave in a certain way". By making the study of psychology as an approach, it can aid readers in comprehending both the author's and the characters' motivations.

Based on the background explained above, the writer wants to conduct a research on hierarchy of needs from *The Rosie Project* novel. It is a romance comedy fiction novel written by Australian author Graeme Simsion. *The Rosie Project* tells a story about a man named Don Tillman who is a brilliant genetics professor. But behind his brilliance, Don struggles with his social skills to fit in, especially to start a committed relationship with women, which he always fails. But Don is a very sensitive and a kind man and when he is told by a friend that he would be a good husband, he feels unsure of himself. With the help from his friends, Gene and Claudia, Don starts a love – seeking project called "The Wife Project" and creates an inquiry form to find a suitable female companion whom he would marry. But he feels that his project had no clear path until he meets Rosie, a PhD student that does not fit his criteria but plays a big role in his life.

This novel is very interesting to read because it tells about the search for true love mixed with light humour that makes this novel very amusing and this novel also relates to the human needs, especially for the main character because Don Tillman may have a perfect life but he has a trouble to fit in socially, which makes the character is suitable for the research on hierarchy of needs. This research will be focused on the main character in the novel named Don Tillman. The writer is interested in analyzing the character Don Tillman to find out how the character can fulfil his needs. Therefore, the statement of the problem for this research is: How are Don Tillman's needs fulfilled in the novel according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs?

Based on the statement of the problem above, the objective of this research is to analyse and describe how Don Tillman's needs are fulfilled by using the theory of hierarchy of human needs by Abraham Maslow.

## **2. METHOD**

This research applies the descriptive qualitative method to represent data that is of a descriptive nature and the writer will be focus more on the description of the hierarchy of needs of the main

character in *The Rosie Project* novel. The source of the data is taken from *The Rosie Project* novel by Graeme Simsion, which publishes in 2014. For the literary approach, the writer uses the psychological approach as the approach to analyse the main character in the novel. The writer finds that the approach is suitable for the research since the research is applying the theory of Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to analyse and describe Don Tillman's fulfilment of his needs as depicted in the novel *The Rosie Project*.

To collect the data, the writer reads the novel to get a better understanding for the research and for the story. Then the writer begins to mark the data to make the data collecting process easier. The next is grouping the data in accordance to the Hierarchy of Needs. Lastly, the writer selects the data to be presented in the research. To analyse the data the writer analyses and describes the data as presented in the research.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the writer will demonstrate the analysis of the hierarchy of needs of Don Tillman, the main character from *The Rosie Project* novel by using Abraham Maslow's theory. Based on the research that has been done, the writer finds that Don Tillman has fulfilled all of five his needs although there are some problems and obstacles in the process of fulfilling his needs, especially in the safety needs and the love and belonging needs.

#### 3.1 Physiological Needs Fulfilment

Physiological needs are the most basic needs that all human must fulfil. These basic needs must be fulfilled in order for human to survive and if human cannot fulfil these basic needs, the body cannot perform well. Physiological needs here include the basic requirements for living, such as, food, air, sleep, house, and clothes.

In this level, the majority data of Don Tillman's physiological needs are in the form of fulfilment for food and water. Since Don works as a genetic professor in a university, it is certainly that he does not find it difficult to fulfil his basic needs. From the results, Don Tillman does not lack in all of his basic needs. It can be seen from the quotation in the novel as he said,

"I attempt to produce a standard, repeatable meal, but obviously ingredients vary in their quality from week to week. Today's seemed to be of an unusually high standard. The lobster salad had never tasted so good." (Simsion, 2014:65).

From the quotation above, it shows that Don Tillman is a very organized person. It can be seen from this data above that he makes scheduled meal for himself for a week. The ingredients for the meals are also arranged in schedule so Don does not have to worry about the shopping. Therefore, his basic need for food has fulfilled because Don Tillman has plenty of food and he is able to eat regularly for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. So, he never felt hungry. In this case, Don Tillman does not lack for food and drink.

Besides fulfilment for food and drink, another proof of Don Tillman's physiological needs fulfilment can also be seen from the quotation as stated,

"I rode home, went to bed, and set the alarm for 2:30 a.m. I canceled the run I had scheduled with Gene for the following morning to retrieve an hour." (Simsion, 2014:116)

This quotation above shows that Don Tillman is about to tell Rosie about his plan of the big research for The Father Project, but Rosie is still working in a bar, so Don goes home and get some sleep instead and will return to Rosie later at 03.00 a.m. to tell his project plan to her. From this quotation, it can be seen that Don Tillman has an apartment for him to live and to shelter. Besides, he can also sleep in his own apartment. This shows that Don Tillman is a human being and he needs sleep to recharge his energy so he does not get exhausted. By that means, Don Tillman has fulfilled the basic needs for his need of shelter and to rest.

Another fulfilment of physiological needs can also be seen from the quotation, as stated, "Fortunately it was not cold and my Gore-Tex jacket had done an excellent job of protecting me. My T-shirt was not even damp underneath." (Simsion, 2014:48). This quotation shows that Don Tillman arrives at the restaurant for his appointment to meet Rosie for dinner. From the quotation above, Don Tillman has already fulfilled his basic needs for clothing. Clothing is also one of the basic human needs. Humans need clothes in order to protect themselves from any dirt and weather that can do harm to the body. Here, Don has many of clothes. He is seen wearing a T – shirt and a jacket. His clothing protects him from the heavy rain. Therefore, he does not feel wet when it is raining.

All the data that are presented above show that Don Tillman does not lack in his all of his basic needs. He has plenty of food and drink, he has an apartment for him to live and to protect himself, he can also sleep in his apartment, and he has plenty of clothes. Therefore, it can be concluded that Don Tillman has fulfilled his physiological needs.

### **3.2 Safety Needs Fulfilment**

After the physiological needs are fulfilled, then it will continue to the next level of the hierarchy, which is the safety needs. Safety needs means that humans have the right to feel safe and secure from all the dangers and threats around them. Some examples of safety needs such as job securities, law, independence, financial stabilities, free from any danger, and health. The data that are found regarding Don Tillman's fulfillments of the safety needs are in the form of the fulfilment of security of body, health, financial stability and employment. It can be seen from the quotation below:

"How often do you train?"

"Three times per week, except in the case of illness, public holidays, and travel to overseas conferences."

"What got you into it?" asked Rosie.

I pointed to my glasses.

"Revenge of the nerds," she said.

"This is the first time I've required it for self-defense since I was at school. It's primarily for fitness." I had relaxed a little, and Rosie had provided an opportunity to slip in a question from the Wife Project questionnaire. "Do you exercise regularly?" (Simsion, 2014:53)

This quotation above shows that Don Tillman explains Rosie about the aikido martial arts that he did earlier in the restaurant when he is attacked by several people. From the passage above, it can be seen that Don Tillman has fulfilled his safety needs in body securities and in health. Don is a very healthy person and he has a healthy lifestyle. Don trains aikido for fitness and for maintaining his health. He explains to Rosie that he trains aikido three times per week. However, from the passage above, he also uses his aikido martial arts for self – defense for the first time after the fighting incident that happened in a restaurant when he was attacked. So, with his martial art skills, he is able to protect himself from any physical threats and dangers.

Another form of Don Tillman's safety needs fulfilment attempt can also be seen below:

"I am thirty-nine years old, tall, fit, and intelligent, with a relatively high status and above-average income as an associate professor. Logically, I should be attractive to a wide range of women. In the animal kingdom, I would succeed in reproducing." (Simsion, 2014:3)

From the quotation above, it is told by Don Tillman that he works as a genetic professor in a university. He also said that he has an above – average income from his job. By that means, he has a job and he is financially stable.

### **3.3 Love and Belonging Needs Fulfilment**

After the physiological needs and safety needs have been fulfilled, then it will continue to the next level of the hierarchy, which is the love and belonging needs. Human tends to seek love and affection from their loved ones, family, friends, and also acceptance from their environment. In the novel, Don Tillman is a very socially awkward person and he does not know how to deal and interact with strangers or even to start a committed relationship with women. The writer finds selected several data about his problem in his social awkwardness, his attempt to seek his belongingness in friends, his belongingness in his family, to his attempt to seek love from the woman that he loves. The problem in Don Tillman's social awkwardness can be seen in the quotation below:

"However, there is something about me that women find unappealing. I have never found it easy to make friends, and it seems that the deficiencies that caused this problem have also affected my attempts at romantic relationships." (Simsion, 2014:3)

From the quotation above, it can be seen that Don Tillman has a problem with his social life. Behind his perfect and brilliant life as a professor, Don Tillman finds himself difficult to make friends and to interact with women. His social awkwardness makes it challenging for him to start a romantic relationship. This situation does not suit with his love and belonging needs.

Another fulfilment attempt of Don Tillman's love and belonging needs can also be seen in the quotations below:

"The message light on my home phone was flashing. It was my parents and brother wishing me a happy birthday. I had already spoken to my mother two days earlier when she made her regular Sunday evening call. These past three weeks, I had been attempting to provide some news in return but had not mentioned Rosie." (Simsion, 2014:308)

From the quotation above, Don has a family consist of a mother, a father, and an older brother. His family always supports him, love him and care for him. His family calls him every Sunday to talk to Don or to know how has he been doing. When it is Don's fortieth birthday, his family calls him and sing him "Happy Birthday". Here, Don has fulfilled his belongingness in family.

Even though Don is a socially awkward person, he still has friends. It can be seen from the data below:

"Gene and Claudia suggested that I also undertake some face-to-face dating to practice my social skills. I could see the value of validating the questionnaires in the field, so, while I waited for online responses to arrive, I printed some questionnaires and returned to the dating process that I thought I had abandoned forever." (Simsion, 2014:32)

From this quotation, Don has two best friends, a couple of husband and wife named Gene and Claudia. Gene and Claudia always support him. They help Don by giving him advices for his dating life and his social problems since Don told them about his "Wife Project" and the questionnaires that he made to find a suitable partner. This means that Don Tillman has fulfilled his belongingness in friends.

Don Tillman's attempt on fulfilling his love and belonging needs will not be complete if he does not receive and give love to the woman that he loves. Don finally fulfils his love and belonging needs after Rosie finally accepted his proposal and then they are getting married. It is seen in the quotation below:

"We are officially married. Although I had performed the romantic ritual with the ring, I did not expect Rosie, as a modern feminist, to want to actually get married. The term 'wife' in Wife Project had always meant 'female life partner'." (Simsion, 2014:322)

This quotation means that Don Tillman attempts to fulfilling his needs for love and belonging by marrying Rosie. Don Tillman does not expect to see Rosie wants to get married with him however, Rosie also has feelings for Don and then they are getting married. From this attempt, Don now is able to give and also receive love to his loved ones. From all the data above, it can be concluded that Don Tillman has fulfilled his love and belonging needs even though he had a problem before in attempting to fulfil it. He has a family, he is now able to make friends and he finally married to Rosie, the woman that he loves.

### 3.4 Esteem Needs Fulfilment

After the physiological needs, the safety needs, and the love and belonging needs have been fulfilled, then it will continue to the next level, namely the self – esteem needs. There are two classifications of esteem needs as mentioned by Abraham Maslow. First is the achievement and the satisfaction for oneself such as desire, self – esteem, achievement to success, and independence. Second is to earn the prestige and respect from others such as recognition and appreciation. Here, the writer found that Don Tillman does not have any problems in fulfilling his self – esteem needs. It can be seen in the quotation below:

“The Grease song finished and everyone clapped. But before we could return to the table, the band started again and the audience clapped in time: Satisfaction. It may have been due to the effect of the gordo blanco on my cognitive functions, but I was suddenly overwhelmed by an extraordinary feeling—not of satisfaction but of absolute joy.” (Simsion, 2014:165-166)

The quotation above shows Don Tillman and Rosie dancing at an event of the Faculty Ball. They do a dance like the one in *The Grease* movie. Everyone at the ball is amazed to see Don and Rosie dancing together. This is also a new experience for Don. After the song is finished everyone clapped at Don. Don feels satisfied and happy to be able to thrive in dancing. This extraordinary feeling boosts up Don's confidence. Everyone at the Faculty Ball compliments him. Here, Don Tillman has fulfilled his self – esteem needs.

Another fulfilment attempt of Don Tillman self – esteem needs can also be seen in the quotations below:

“Rosie laughed and opened two beers. Then she stared at me, in the way that I am not supposed to do to others. “Amazing. You. You're the most amazing person I've ever met. I don't know why you're doing this, but thanks.” She tapped her bottle against mine and drank.” (Simsion, 2014:141)

This quotation above shows that Don is appreciated by Rosie for his help. Rosie is amazed by Don because he is willing to help her to find her biological father even if it is only an unintentional conversation between both of them. Don feels happy to be appreciated by Rosie. From the data that are presented above, it can be concluded that Don Tillman has fulfilled his self – esteem needs. Don has earned respects and appreciation.

### 3.5 Self-Actualization Needs Fulfilment

After the physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, and self – esteem needs have been fulfilled, then it will continue to the last and the highest level of the hierarchy, which is the self – actualization needs. If a person is already at this level, that means he or she is fully aware of themselves, aware of their strengths, weakness, talents, and also the potential within them.

Here, Don Tillman does not have any problems in his self – actualization needs. He has already fulfilled his self – actualization needs. It can be seen in the quotation as stated, “I had skills that others

didn't. My memory and ability to focus had given me an advantage in baseball statistics, cocktail making, and genetics. People had valued these skills, not mocked them." (Simsion, 2014:311).

From this quotation, Don Tillman realizes his own strength, his own intelligence and his own potential. He knows that he is different from others. His ability to quick – learn makes him able to try new things, such as making cocktails and learning about baseball statistics. His skills have been proven by many people as they recognise and value Don for his intelligence and skills.

Another fulfilment attempt of Don Tillman's self – actualization needs can also be seen in the quotation below:

"Here in New York, I am working in the Department of Genetics at Columbia University, and Rosie is in the first year of the Doctor of Medicine program. I am contributing to Simon Lefebvre's research project remotely, as he insisted on it as a condition of providing funding. I consider it a form of moral payback for using the university's equipment for the Father Project" (Simsion, 2014:321)

The quotation shows that Don has a new job in Columbia University. Since he is a genetic professor, he knows his capability and he is now working in the Department of Genetics and also doing research with Simon Levebvre, a professor who works with him at his previous workplace. He realizes that what he did was wrong before for doing unethical research for the Father Project, but now he tries to be more ethical, careful and to be better in his job at his new place.

From all the data that are already presented and analysed, it can be concluded that Don Tillman has fulfilled all of his five needs, from the physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, self – esteem needs, to the self – actualization needs. He already has his basic needs, he has a job with a good financial, he is healthy, he has friends and a wife, and he also earns respects and appreciations that make him a worthy person. He actualizes himself by optimizing his potential and intelligence to be a better person and as a professor. He has fulfilled it all even though there are some problems and obstacles with his attempts, but he manages to make it because of his skills, intelligence, and efforts.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the analysis, the writer finds that the main character of the novel, Don Tillman has fulfilled all of his five needs. In physiological needs, he has his all of basic needs such as foods, drink, house, sleep, and clothes. In safety needs, he has a job, financially stable, healthy, and safe. In love and belonging needs, he has friends, family, and a wife. In self – esteem needs, Don has earned respect and appreciation from what he did. Lastly, in self – actualization, he got a job in the Department of Genetics in Columbia University. He finally fully understands himself and his quality. He knows that he is different from everyone but tries to be himself and does not care about what everyone thinks of him.

It can be concluded that Don Tillman has fulfilled all of his needs even though there are some obstacles in the attempt of fulfilling it, especially in safety needs and love and belonging needs. In safety needs, he makes a mistake in his work that almost get him fired but he is able to learn from his



mistake and is helped by people who works with him, eventually he manages to get his job back and able to fulfill his safety needs. In love and belonging needs, the main obstacles comes from Don himself as he is a socially awkward person which is difficult for him to interact with strangers especially women but with the help from his best friends, Don is able to interact with strangers and even give and receive love to the woman that he loves, therefore he is able to fulfill his love and belonging needs. In the end, Don Tillman manages to succeed in all of it because of his skill, knowledge, and effort.

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