

SELF-ACTUALIZATION EXPERIENCED BY THE MAIN CHARACTER IN THE SCENARIO *AKU JATI AKU ASPERGER*

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The issue of fulfilling the psychological needs of individuals with Asperger's is often overlooked in film and literary representations, even though this topic is essential to understand the unique process of self-actualization. This study aims to analyze the fulfillment of needs of the character Jati based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and to identify the characteristics of a self-actualizer reflected in his behavior in the scenario *Aku Jati Aku Asperger*. The study employed a qualitative method with a content analysis approach, where the scenario served as the primary data source and was analyzed in depth using Maslow's human needs theory. The findings reveal that Jati fulfills physiological needs through regular routines, such as eating, bathing, and maintaining cleanliness according to a strict schedule. Safety needs are expressed through his meticulous organization of objects and daily activities to create a sense of control. At the social level, despite difficulties in interpersonal interaction, Jati demonstrates empathy through symbolic actions, such as placing a white rose on the railway as an expression of grief. Meanwhile, in esteem needs, Jati emphasizes his competence through skills in creating zines and maintaining order in his learning environment. His self-actualization characteristics are evident in realistic awareness, creativity, independence, and a focus on truth, all of which are expressed in ways different from social norms

Keywords: *Asperger; Character; Hierarchy of Needs; Maslow; Self-actualization*

1. INTRODUCTION

Film is a powerful narrative medium for representing human experiences and shaping social perceptions of identity, health conditions, and neurological differences (Christyastari & Rusmawan, 2023). Through a combination of visuals, dialogue, and narrative structure, film serves not only as entertainment but also as a means of cultural communication and social education. The representation of characters with certain conditions, such as autism or Asperger Syndrome, has a direct impact on how society understands and treats these groups. Recent studies show that film can influence public attitudes toward mental health and neurodiversity issues more effectively than other media (Iramadhani et al., 2024). Thus, film analysis needs to be placed within an aesthetic, ethical, and sociopolitical framework.

In the realm of neurodiversity, the representation of autism in the media often shapes public discourse that influences perceptions, policies, and social practices (Juwita, 2021). A systematic review found that films and television contribute to the social construction of autism, both in the form of reinforcing stereotypes and in building empathetic understanding (Nathasya, 2024). Films not only portray individual experiences but also function as discursive arenas where society renegotiates the meanings of "normality" and "difference" (Setiawan, 2014 and Munawaroh & Guatri, 2023) Therefore, reading films also means reading how a society understands, accepts, or stigmatizes neurological differences. This makes the analysis of films featuring autistic characters an important effort in understanding the relationship between culture, psychology, and representation.

In the Indonesian context, the scenario *Aku Jati, Aku Asperger* offers a unique space to examine the identity journey of a character with Asperger Syndrome. This story provides an

insight into how an individual strives to fulfil basic needs, build self-esteem, and achieve self-actualization despite significant limitations. While international research on autism in film is rapidly developing, Indonesian literature rarely links the representation of autistic characters with motivational psychology theory. Recent studies even emphasize the importance of direct involvement of the autistic community in media production to ensure more authentic representations that go beyond stereotypes (Prasetyo, 2024). This highlights a research gap that can be addressed through in-depth analysis of Indonesian film scenarios.

Theoretically, this study uses Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology framework, specifically the concept of the hierarchy of needs. Maslow proposed that humans have five basic needs: physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization, which develop gradually. Although Maslow's classic model has often been criticized for its universal and linear nature, recent developments show that this concept can be expanded to include cultural and social context variations (Setiawan, 2014). Recent research has also added the concept of co-actualization, which is self-actualization that arises in interactions with others. Thus, Maslow's theory remains relevant as a heuristic lens for reading Jati's journey in fulfilling his basic needs to reach his peak experience.

In media studies, the representation of autism faces two main challenges: the tendency for films to portray autistic characters stereotypically, and the lack of authentic voices from the autistic community itself. Recent research has found that many popular works still emphasize the "savant genius" narrative, thereby obscuring the diversity of real autistic experiences. Additionally, other studies emphasize the need for the involvement of autistic people in the writing and production of films to reduce representational bias (Tarumasely, 2024). This context makes research on *Aku Jati*, *Aku Asperger* relevant, as it is important to see whether the film's narrative is able to break away from dominant stereotypes and present a more authentic space for self-actualization (Perdana & Umamy, 2025).

By examining the needs and self-actualization of the main character, this study not only enriches the literature on film psychology but also contributes to the discourse on neurodiversity representation in Indonesia. This analysis is expected to reveal how the narrative structure, dialogue, and actions in the script represent the struggles of autistic individuals to gain recognition and dignity. The significance of this research also lies in its practical aspects, namely providing recommendations to filmmakers, screenwriters, and cultural policymakers to be more sensitive to issues of neurodiversity. In addition, this study can strengthen public awareness that people with Asperger's are not merely passive subjects, but individuals with real potential for self-actualization. Thus, this research has complementary theoretical and practical value.

Based on the above description, this study aims to (1) describe the fulfilment of Jati's needs according to Maslow's hierarchy, (2) reveal the process of self-actualization experienced by the main character in the scenarios *Aku Jati*, *Aku Asperger*, and (3) identify the characteristics of self-actualizers that appear in the character. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with a content analysis and hermeneutic approach. Primary data in the form of scenario texts will be enriched with secondary literature from humanistic psychology, studies of autism representation in the media, and cultural communication theory. With this approach, the study is expected to provide a more comprehensive picture of how film representation can open up space for self-actualization for people with Asperger's in the Indonesian cultural context.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of the process of self-actualization of the main character in the scenario *Aku Jati*, *Aku Asperger*. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for the exploration of meaning, symbols, and subjective experiences represented through the film text. According to (Alfathoni, 2020), qualitative research emphasizes contextual interpretation and exploration of socio-cultural phenomena, making it suitable for analysing representations

of identity and psychological needs in literary works and films. The research data sources consist of primary and secondary data. The primary data is in the form of the script for the film *Aku Jati, Aku Asperger*, which was chosen because it contains the narrative of a character with Asperger Syndrome and allows for analysis related to the fulfilment of needs and the process of self-actualization. Meanwhile, secondary data includes relevant scientific literature and previous research, both discussing Abraham Maslow's theory and studies of neurodiversity representation in media and film studies. This secondary data serves to strengthen the analytical framework and enrich the interpretation of the research results.

Data Types and Sources

Data analysis was conducted in two stages. First, content analysis aimed to identify, classify, and describe the actions, dialogues, and narratives of the character Jati based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, ranging from physiological needs to self-actualization. Second, hermeneutic reading, which focuses on interpreting the symbolic and contextual meanings of the film's narrative, so that the analysis is not only descriptive but also interpretive. To ensure validity, this study uses source triangulation by comparing the script text and secondary literature, as well as theory triangulation by utilizing the perspectives of humanistic psychology, media representation, and cultural communication. Flick (2018) asserts that triangulation enhances the credibility of qualitative research because it enriches the analytical perspective.

Data Collection Tools and Method

Data collection was carried out using two main techniques, namely documentation and literature study. Documentation was carried out by reading, reviewing, and noting important parts of the scenario related to the fulfilment of basic needs, psychological conflicts, and the characteristics of the main character's self-actualization. Literature review was conducted by compiling academic references in the form of books, journal articles, and the latest scientific publications (2020–2025) discussing Maslow's theory, humanistic psychology, film studies, and the representation of autism or Asperger's in the media. These two techniques complement each other, resulting in rich data for analysis.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

a. Fulfilling the Needs of Jati Figures According to Maslow's Hierarchy

Based on scenario analysis, the fulfilment of Jati's needs can be explained through Maslow's hierarchy of needs with a focus on psychological and symbolic dynamics. At the physiological level, Jati exhibits a very strict and ritualistic routine to maintain basic needs such as eating, bathing, and sleeping on time. The scene where Jati stares at the mirror in the bathroom emphasizes this:

"Jati looked at himself in the mirror, his hair wet and his body covered only by a towel wrapped around his chest. The small bathroom felt tidy. A laminated poster displayed a schedule. TEXT: Toilet Cleaning Schedule."

This habit is not merely about maintaining cleanliness, but also reflects self-control and systematic environmental management. This is important for individuals with Asperger's, where certainty and physical structure provide a sense of comfort and reduce stress, so that their physiological needs are met not only biologically but also psychologically.

In terms of security needs, Jati strives to create predictability through the arrangement of objects and the environment. For example, when he arranges family photos with precision:

"Now Jati gazes at the rows of family photos neatly arranged on the wall. JATI (V.O.) Everything that is organized creates balance. That's why I like rules. Everything becomes clear and certain."

This activity shows that for Jati, visual control and symbolic order become mechanisms for calming anxiety. By maintaining routines and symmetrical layouts, Jati feels safe and stable, which is consistent with the need for security in Maslow's hierarchy, especially for individuals who are sensitive to uncertainty.

In social situations, Jati struggles to interpret other people's emotions, but still shows empathy through symbolic and logical actions. For example, when reprimanding Kiara and Daru:

"I can tell when someone is angry, but I don't know why they are angry... Blowing on itchy eyes is wrong because it can aggravate the irritation. Besides, Kiara has the flu, so if you blow on her eyes, Daru could get sick. Then who would wash the dishes on Monday?"

In addition, symbolic actions such as placing white roses on the railroad tracks above the site of the twin locomotive accident:

"After its twin, CC201 8348, had an accident. I realized they were wrong, I had mixed feelings but it was hard to explain."

This shows that Jati is able to express empathy and sadness in a way that is consistent with his personal understanding and comfort level. This interaction reflects a unique form of social fulfilment, which does not always involve conventional verbal communication.

In terms of self-esteem, Jati expresses competence through orderliness, discipline, and his unique skills, such as collecting train tickets and wiping down objects in his room:

"A hand wiped each item one by one. Jati's eyes looked at the camera as he wiped them with focus..."

This action builds self-confidence and self-recognition, because Jati feels successful in maintaining order and performing activities with high precision. However, frustration arises when his routine is disrupted, for example when Kiara falls because of his push, which emphasizes the conflict between the need for self-recognition and limitations in social interaction. This conflict shows that Jati's self-esteem depends on a balance between internal order and external social dynamics.

b. The process of Self-Actualization of Jati's

Jati's process of self-actualization is evident in the behaviour that reflect the utilization of his unique potential and the achievement of internal control over his environment. Jati has a deep interest in trains and order, which serve as a medium for self-expression and the construction of his daily life structure. His activities, such as compiling a train-themed zine, organizing his daily schedule, and calculating time with precision, signify a search for meaning and the development of his abilities to the fullest, characteristics of an individual who is moving towards self-actualization. For example:

"Following a schedule makes life predictable. On the sink are three glasses containing toothbrushes, each labelled TEXT: JATI, KIARA, DARU. Jati takes his toothpaste and slowly squeezes it onto his toothbrush without spilling any. INSERT VISUAL GRAPHIC: A ruler measures the precise amount of toothpaste on the toothbrush."

This scene shows Jati emphasizing precision and consistency, which give him a sense of control and intrinsic satisfaction. The precision of this ritual also serves as Jati's way of dealing with the unpredictable outside world an adaptation strategy that strengthens self-actualization through mastery of routines and the environment.

In addition, Jati displays creativity in solving social and environmental problems, which is a form of self-actualization in the social sphere. He uses logic and planning to adjust his behaviour towards others, for example when reprimanding Kiara or arranging Buncis' meal schedule:

"Buncis, you have 3 minutes left to eat. Now it's Mbak Kiara's turn to have breakfast... That's the consequence for Buncis. Buncis, you have 2 minutes and 30 seconds left to eat. Now it's Mbak Kiara's turn to eat."

This action demonstrates self-reflection, creative adaptation, and the application of personal rules to maintain social balance, while also confirming Jati's understanding of consequences and responsibilities. Although Jati's interactions may seem rigid or unconventional, they are a form of self-actualization that is consistent with his unique way of processing the world.

Jati's self-actualization is also reflected in his search for peak experiences. Activities

such as rearranging torn zines or keeping to a precise schedule are not mere routines, but provide intrinsic satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment:

“Jati watched the digital clock silently, just as it changed to 6:45. Jati came out of the bathroom. There was a small timer on the sink, next to the digital clock. Jati flipped the timer, which began counting down, and started brushing his teeth... I don't believe that time is money, but having a schedule ensures that there is no chance for change.”

Here, Jati's self-actualization process is evident through his control over time and environment, where satisfaction arises from order and predictability. These simple activities provide a sense of security, tranquillity, and psychological fulfilment, showing that self-actualization is not always related to external achievements, but also to internal fulfilment through discipline and order.

Jati's self-actualization is reflected through the establishment of personal values and symbolic emotional expression. For example, when placing white roses as a sign of mourning for a train accident:

“White roses are flowers used to express grief. I am grieving over the rejection of CC 2018349.”

This action confirms that Jati is able to channel his deepest feelings through symbols and rituals, demonstrating self-awareness and the expression of personal values, which are at the core of self-actualization according to Maslow.

Finally, Jati's ability to navigate complex social situations, such as interacting with Kiara and Daru at home or managing his behaviour on the bus, demonstrates the integration of internal needs and external demands. Despite social friction, Jati maintains his routines and principles, reflecting adaptive self-actualization consistent with his unique identity.

c. Self-Actualizer Characteristics in Jati's Character

Based on observations of Jati's behaviour, several characteristics of self-actualizers as described by Maslow are clearly evident.

1. Realistic Awareness

Jati demonstrates a clear understanding of the social situation around him without getting caught up in emotional bias. For example, when he observes Bekri, Ambar, and Comal, Jati judges them to be “stupid” because they are trapped in unrequited love:

“I think Bekri is stupid because he likes a girl named Ambar who likes someone else... Ambar is just as stupid. She likes Comal, who is more interested in two-dimensional women.”

This observation reflects Jati's realistic thinking style, in which he assesses social behaviour logically and straightforwardly, even though it differs from the emotional norms of most people. This finding is in line with the opinion (Rahmahtrisilva, 2021) which states that individuals with Asperger's tend to process social information through logical analysis rather than emotional empathy, so that their assessments are often considered different from most people. Another study (Nathasya, 2024) also reveals that people on the autism spectrum place greater emphasis on consistency and logical clarity in understanding social interactions. Thus, Jati's attitude is not a form of indifference, but rather an expression of a realistic and consistent way of thinking about social situations.

2. Ability to Overcome Frustration

Despite experiencing disruption when his zine was torn apart by Jenar, Jati did not immediately give in to his emotions. He tried to preserve his work and then rearranged the zine with Daru's help (Radiansyah et al., 2025). This shows that Jati was able to channel his frustration into a process of recovery, albeit with harsh and rigid emotional expressions. In this context, Jati demonstrated a problem-focused coping mechanism by redirecting his emotions to complete his work. In line with this, (Iramadhani et al., 2024) explained that emotion regulation is an important process in helping individuals adjust to stressful situations and reduce the negative effects of frustration.

3. Independence

Jati's independence is very evident in his daily routine. He manages his own meal

schedule, gets dressed, and even does cleaning work at the cemetery without relying on anyone else:

“Jati looked at the garden under the tree covered with dry leaves... INSERT VISUAL GRAPHIC: Calculation of the area and total time required as well as the sweeping route. Jati began sweeping along the route, followed by pulling out weeds and watering the flowers.”

This routine is not only a form of regularity, but also a manifestation of strong self-control. This is in line with the opinion (Sunarty, 2016) which states that independence in individuals develops when a person is able to manage their own activities without always depending on others. Similarly, (Tarmasely, 2024) states that independence is closely related to self-regulated learning, which is the ability of individuals to manage their behaviour, motivation, and strategies in carrying out their activities consistently.

4. Creativity

Jati's creativity does not always manifest itself in conventional art forms, but in his unique way of organizing objects, keeping track of time, and channelling his interest in trains through Zine:

“There was an A5-sized folded piece of paper, a zine with the words TEXT: All About Trains by Jati written on it. Jati opened the first fold, which contained detailed illustrations of trains. Jati coloured his trains seriously.”

This zine is a medium of personal expression that showcases Jati's imaginative side within the framework of order that he likes. This is in line with the opinion (Kurniawan et al., 2025) which states that creativity is not only present in the form of great works of art, but also in the ability of individuals to find new and original ways to express themselves. (Rohmah et al., 2023) emphasizes that creativity is the result of interaction between individuals and their environment, where personal interests can be a source of original ideas. In the context of children with special needs, research by (Kusuma et al., 2025) found that visual media such as pictures and illustrations can be an effective means of channelling creativity while also helping to regulate emotions. Thus, the zine created by Jati is not only an expression of his imagination, but also a medium for integrating his specific interest in trains with his cognitive and emotional skills.

5. Focus on Truth and Justice

Jati consistently enforces the rules, even though this often causes conflict with others. For example, when Kiara tried to feed Buncis before it was time, Jati insisted:

“You have 2 minutes and 30 seconds left to eat. Now it's Kiara's turn to eat.”

This confirms Jati's integrity and personal principles, even though he is considered rigid by his social circle.

Overall, Jati displays the characteristic traits of a self-actualizer with his own unique twist. He achieves self-actualization not through major social achievements, but through consistency in routine, maintaining order, and personal creative expression. Although often at odds with the norms of the majority, this pattern is proof of how Jati develops himself according to his own potential and world.

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the fulfilment of Jati's needs in the Aku Jati Aku Asperger scenario reflects the complex journey of an individual with autism spectrum disorder in actualizing himself. At the physiological and safety needs level, Jati is able to fulfil his daily routine in a disciplined manner through a regular schedule, self-care, and control of his environment, which gives him a sense of stability and security. Meanwhile, at the social needs level, Jati faces difficulties in establishing interpersonal relationships, but still shows empathy and social awareness in a unique way that is different from most people. At the level of self-esteem, Jati strives to build self-confidence through unique skills, regularity, and achievements that are meaningful to him, even though he still often experiences conflicts with his surroundings, which do not fully understand his needs. This shows that Jati's process of self-actualization is not only influenced by his own efforts,

but also by social acceptance and environmental support.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that literary works and screenplays featuring characters with special conditions such as Asperger's be used as a medium for learning and social reflection in understanding the diversity of human needs. For educators and psychology practitioners, the results of this study can be used as a reference to see the importance of creating a safe, structured, and inclusive environment so that individuals with special needs can develop optimally. Meanwhile, for the wider community, this research encourages increased empathy and appreciation for differences in thinking and behaviour, so that acceptance of individuals like Jati can help them achieve better self-actualization.

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