

Psychological Elements In Modern Poems “Bintang Hati”

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Abstract

This research paper discusses the psychological elements found in modern KOMSAS poetry. This study employs a qualitative method, specifically text analysis. Four modern poems from the *Bintang Hati* anthology are the focus of this study, namely: (1) *Kijang yang Lelah*, (2) *Pesan Ibu Beribu-ribu*, (3) *Senja di Palang Besi*, and (4) *Bintang*. This research applies Maslow's psychological theory of human needs, which encompasses aspects such as physiological needs, safety, love, self-esteem, and self-actualization. The findings of this study indicate that psychological elements in KOMSAS poems significantly help readers gain a deeper understanding of the meaning the author intends to convey.

Keywords: Poetry, Psychology, Maslow's Needs, KOMSAS.

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1.0 Introduction

In Malaysia, the most popular literary component among teenagers is KOMSAS, which is a mandatory teaching and learning module in the Malay Language subject. KOMSAS was introduced by the Curriculum Development Center, Ministry of Education Malaysia, in March 2000, to be studied by students from Form 1 to Form 5 in all secondary schools. One of the earliest studies on the role of literature in influencing psychology is the work of Lazar (2002) in his book "Literature and Language: Teaching, Answer Guide for Teachers and Trainers," which explains several benefits of learning literature. First, it motivates students. Second, it provides knowledge about cultural backgrounds. Third, it offers insights into language acquisition. Fourth, it broadens students' awareness of language. Fifth, it develops students' interpretative skills. And sixth, it educates students holistically. Therefore, literary appreciation is the core or priority in literature learning. To understand character development in literature education, students should be able to appreciate literary works. This study aims to understand how psychological elements in poetry not only enrich the meaning of a literary work but also serve as a medium for emotional expression and self-understanding for readers. Psychology is a field aimed at understanding human behaviour, describing or explaining human actions, assisting and predicting behaviour, controlling behaviour, and ultimately shaping and influencing human conduct (Mohd Salleh Lebar, 1994:3-4). Modern KOMSAS poetry highlights many positive aspects through its meaning, themes, tone, values, and lessons. It provides teachings and moral guidance, indirectly serving as a medium to inspire and motivate readers, especially teenagers, to pursue and achieve their life goals.

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Arba'ei Sujud (2011:139) stated that literature is not merely a form of writing without direction but plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's character. Carefully chosen words in poetry can also stimulate the reader's psychology. Maisarah Yaacob (2014) asserted that high-quality literary works can educate readers and ultimately produce a refined and well-rounded audience. An effective educational process can encourage students to contemplate goodness, moral integrity, courtesy, truth, linguistic politeness, artistic beauty, resilience, and an appreciation for life and humanity.

2.0 Research Problem

The first research problem is the perception that the role of adolescent literature is highly limited. This contradicts the statement by Noor Ain Ramli (2018) in her research titled "*Pendidikan Sastera Melayu Memperkukuhkan Pembinaan Karakter Pelajar*" (Malay Literature Education Strengthens Student Character Development). Noor Ain Ramli explains that literature is a reflection of society and culture; therefore, it is essential for all adolescents to study literature to understand human behaviour and humanity through the appreciation of Malay literature.

In reality, the soul must be nurtured to absorb positive elements. According to research by Geri Giebel Chavis (2011:11-12) in her book "Poetry and Story Therapy: The Healing Power of Creative Expression," words hold power and can create impactful imagery for readers. This can undoubtedly educate and provide readers, especially adolescents, with an opportunity to develop positive character and behaviour. Geri Giebel Chavis (2011) also highlights three key components in the process of deeply understanding poetry: Exploring poetry, discussing stories as a stimulus for personal development and relationship-building, using diverse methods and example tools. This study further explains that in order to help readers fully grasp the meaning within a poem, new explorations must be undertaken to ensure the continuous development of literary knowledge.

Therefore, this study seeks to address the gap by exploring the ways in which adolescents engage with literature and the extent to which this engagement contributes to their character development and personal growth. By doing so, it aims to build upon existing theories while contributing new insights specific to the Malaysian context. This research also hopes to provide practical recommendations for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers on how to harness the power of literature more effectively in shaping the next generation.

3.0 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- i) To identify psychological elements present in modern KOMSAS poetry.
- ii) To analyze the psychological elements found in modern KOMSAS poetry.

4.0 Methodology

This study is textual in nature, analyzing documents, specifically poems found in the KOMSAS book, using a qualitative approach. The textual research will incorporate literary elements present in KOMSAS poems. Furthermore, the researcher applies the approach of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory. A total of four (4) poems from the anthology *Bintang Hati* are the focus of this study. *Bintang Hati* is a KOMSAS anthology component in the language subject used by Form 3 students in secondary schools across Malaysia. The poems included in this anthology are *Kijang yang Lelah*, *Pesan Ibu Beribu-Ribu*, *Senja di Palang Besi*, and *Bintang*. The researcher has used literary elements as variables in this study. The literary elements focused on include theme, meaning, charm, tone, values, and moral lessons. The following is the Conceptual Framework used in this research:

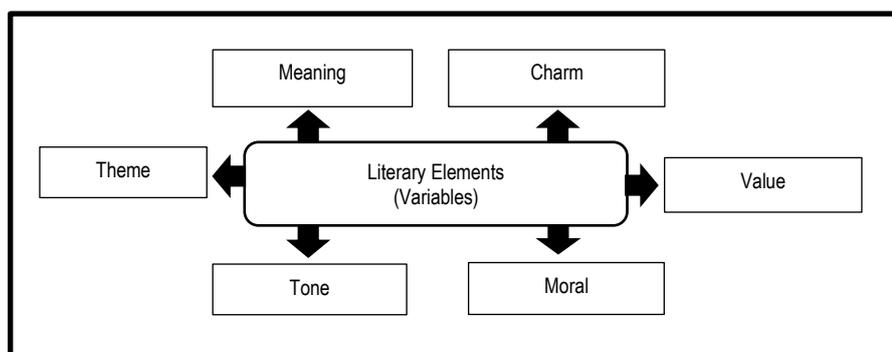


Fig. 1 Literary Element
(Source: Author)

Next, the selected poems will be analyzed using the Human Needs Theory approach by Abraham H. Maslow (1970). The psychological needs identified by Maslow are divided into five (5) main components: physiological needs, safety needs, love and

belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. However, after conducting the analysis, only four human needs were found to be present: (i) Safety needs in the poem Pesan Ibu Beribu-Ribu, (ii) Love and belonging needs in the poem Bintang, (iii) Self-esteem needs in the poems Kijang yang Lelah, Pesan Ibu Beribu-Ribu, and Senja di Palang Besi, (iv) Self-actualization needs in the poems Pesan Ibu Beribu-Ribu and Bintang. Below is Maslow's hierarchy of needs framework:

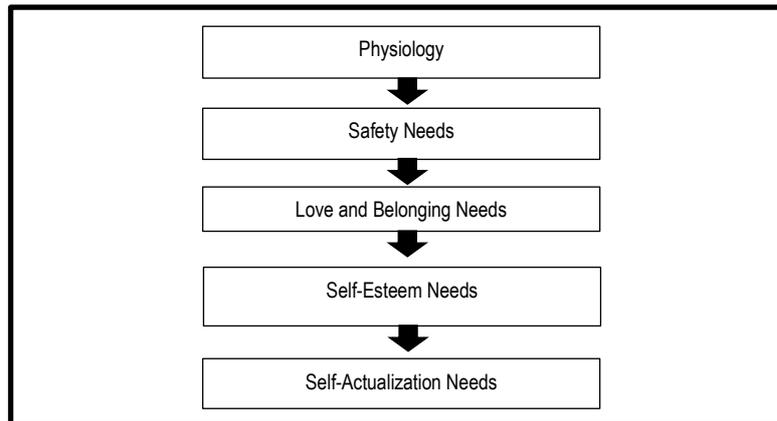


Fig. 2 Framework of the Theory of the Hierarchy of Human Needs
(Abraham H. Maslow, 1970: 35-46)

4.0 Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study have been organized according to the poems and the psychological elements based on Abraham Maslow's theory.

4.1 Analysis of Self-Esteem Needs in Kijang Yang Lelah

The psychological need found in this poem is self-esteem. The character of the Old Deer, who is brave in taking action and facing challenges, reflects a positive self-concept. This aligns with the characteristics mentioned by Ee Ah Meng (1993:179), who states that the willingness to take risks and optimism in facing challenges are traits of a positive self-concept. High self-esteem or a positive self-concept is illustrated in the fourth stanza of this poem, as follows:

Table 1. Elements of Maslow's Psychological Needs in the poem *Kijang yang Lelah*

| Elements of Maslow's Psychological Needs in the poem <i>Kijang yang Lelah</i> | |
|---|--|
| Maslow's Needs | Matter |
| Self-Esteem Needs | <p><i>Bimbang tersadung akar dan jerat, Sang kijang lebih berhati-hati menapak, Meski dalam peribadi yang keruh, Diredah belantara yang mula teduh, Nun jauh di batas nuraninya, Dia tetap menjinjing tekad dan tabah, terus mengorak penuh berhemah, dengan akal dan hati, dia tidak lagi gundah, menyusun gerak dan langkah.</i></p> <p>(Quoted from the poem <i>Kijang yang Lelah</i>, verse 4)</p> |

The character of the Old Deer, who remains spirited and brave despite being weak and in pain, demonstrates an unyielding attitude, refusing to give up even when facing numerous obstacles and challenges. This reflects the importance of resilience in overcoming life's trials and tribulations. Additionally, the deer's determination and perseverance in carrying out tasks for the benefit of all, without oppressing others, is also highlighted.

4.2 Psychological Need for Safety in Pesan Ibu Beribu-Ribu

The psychological need highlighted in this poem is safety, specifically emotional security. This is portrayed through the character of the child, who initially ignores the advice given by their mother. However, after a tragic incident befalls the child's best friend, they begin to realize the truth behind their mother's words. As a result, the child starts to heed their mother's guidance.

The emotional safety needs of both the child and the mother in this poem are ultimately fulfilled. This aligns with Nurhamizah Hashim (2015:99), who explains that emotional security involves protection from feelings of sadness, disappointment, grief, fear, guilt, humiliation, and anxiety

Table 2. Elements of Maslow's Psychological Needs in the poem *Pesan Ibu Beribu-Ribu*

| Elements of Maslow's Psychological Needs in the poem <i>Pesan Ibu Beribu-Ribu</i> | |
|---|--|
| Maslow's Needs | Matter |
| Safety Requirement | <p>Ibu, kuyakini kau mengenali, yang mana permata, yang mana kaca, yang mana budaya, yang mana buaya, berilah pesanan beribu-ribu, malah berpuluh ribu, aku tidak akan jemu, ini janjiku kerana aku tahu, sempurna seorang ibu, dengan pesanan beribu-ribu.</p> <p>(Quoted from a poem <i>Pesan Ibu Beribu-Ribu</i>, verse 5).</p> |

The poem *Pesan Ibu Beribu-Ribu* illustrates the need for emotional safety through the character of the child, who initially refuses to listen to their mother's repeated advice. The child grows weary of hearing the same warnings over and over again, until a tragic event involving their close friend serves as a wake-up call, prompting a change in behaviour. The child's attitude begins to shift after discovering that their friend's beloved partner—whom they had admired and cherished—had deceived them. The partner was eventually caught and imprisoned, leading the friend to realize they had been betrayed. This revelation evokes sympathy and sadness in the child, who deeply empathizes with their friend's pain. As a result of this incident, the child begins to feel regret and recalls their mother's wise words about choosing good friends wisely.

The fifth stanza highlights the child's growing confidence in their mother's wisdom, leading to a commitment to follow her advice. This shift signifies the fulfillment of emotional safety needs, as trust and stability are reinforced. The poem underscores the maternal role in fostering emotional well-being, emphasizing that a mother's guidance is essential in shaping a child's psychological resilience and moral judgment.

4.2.1 Analysis of Maslow's Psychological Needs in *Pesan Ibu Beribu-Ribu*

The concept of self-esteem or positive self-concept is evident throughout the poem, particularly in the portrayal of the mother as a responsible figure in nurturing and educating her child. The child's obedience and receptiveness to the mother's guidance signify the mother's success in instilling strong moral values. This dynamic reflects the development of self-esteem, where parental influence plays a crucial role in shaping a child's psychological and emotional growth.

This interpretation aligns with Ee Ah Meng (1993:179), who asserts that individuals who successfully fulfill their self-esteem needs demonstrate intelligence, competence, responsibility, and openness. These attributes are fundamental in fostering a positive self-concept, which contributes to emotional resilience and personal development. Thus, the poem underscores the significance of parental guidance in fulfilling a child's psychological needs as outlined in Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Table 3. Analysis of Maslow's Psychological Needs Elements in the poem *Pesan Ibu Beribu-Ribu*

| Elements of Maslow's Psychological Needs in the poem <i>Pesan Ibu Beribu-ribu</i> | |
|---|-------------|
| Maslow's Needs | Matter |
| Self-Esteem | Entire Poem |

The poem illustrates self-esteem development through the mother's unwavering love and guidance. Her dedication instills moral values, fostering the child's self-worth and emotional security. Initially resistant to her advice, the child later realizes its truth, leading to self-reflection and personal growth. This transformation signifies the fulfillment of self-esteem needs, aligning with Maslow's hierarchy, which highlights the role of parental influence in shaping resilience and self-actualization. The self-actualization need is evident in the poem, reflected in the mother's relentless efforts to guide and support her child toward success. A mother's ultimate achievement lies in successfully nurturing and educating her child to thrive in life. According to Abraham H. Maslow (1970:153-171), individuals who have fulfilled their own needs experience joy and satisfaction in helping others achieve their goals. In this poem, the mother has yet to reach

full self-actualization, as she continues striving to ensure her child excels academically and associates with ethical, well-mannered peers. Her ultimate aspiration is for her child to succeed and contribute meaningfully to society.

Table 4 Elements of Maslow's Psychological Needs in the poem *Pesan Ibu Beribu-Ribu*

| Elements of Maslow's Psychological Needs in the poem <i>Pesan Ibu Beribu-Ribu</i> | |
|---|--|
| Maslow's Needs | Matter |
| Self-Improvement | Suatu senja, seorang temanku merintih, kerana kehilangan kekasih, kini baru disedarinya, pilihan musang berbulu amab, biarpun menyamar cekap, ada masa termasuk perangkap, Si Bedul sudah ditangkap, Si Bedul di dalam lokap. (Quoted from a poem <i>Pesan Ibu Beribu-ribu</i> , verse 3) |

4.3 Analysis of Maslow's Psychological Needs in *Senja di Palang Besi*

The self-esteem need is evident in the poem, reflected in the character of the prisoner who deeply regrets his past actions. His remorse presents a positive outlook to society, as he acknowledges his mistakes. The prisoner's positive self-concept is demonstrated through his acceptance of himself, recognition of past wrongdoings, and appreciation for personal growth.

Table 5 Elements of Maslow Psychological Needs in the poem *Senja di Palang Besi*

| Elements of Maslow Psychological Needs in the poem <i>Senja di Palang Besi</i> | |
|--|-------------|
| Maslow's Needs | Matter |
| Self Esteem | Entire Poem |

The first form of self-esteem or positive self-concept in this poem is reflected throughout its stanzas. The prisoner's remorse for his past actions offers a valuable perspective to society, serving as a cautionary lesson to prevent others from making the same mistakes. Life in prison is often associated with isolation and loneliness, emotions that can be deeply painful. However, the prisoner in this poem undergoes a process of self-awareness and acceptance, realizing that his punishment is a consequence of his actions. His positive self-concept is evident in his ability to acknowledge his mistakes, accept himself with a more constructive outlook, and appreciate personal growth.

4.4 Analysis of the Psychological Need for Love and Belonging in *Bintang*

The modern poem *Bintang* highlights the fundamental need for love and belonging, particularly within the parent-child relationship. A harmonious family bond is essential for an individual's well-being and plays a crucial role in shaping one's identity, particularly in influencing children's attitudes toward their parents. This poem depicts the deep, unconditional love of a child for their father, emphasizing the significance of familial affection and emotional connection.

The first stanza of the poem *Bintang* conveys the deep love a child holds for their parents, along with the aspiration to bring joy and happiness to their father. This reflects the child's desire for a harmonious and perfect family life. The theme of love and affection among family members is further emphasized in the following stanzas, where the poet's mother reassures them that such efforts are unnecessary, as their family is already content and happy as they are. The poet is depicted as a guiding star in the lives of their parents, bringing light and meaning to their existence. This stanza ultimately highlights the strong bond of love and mutual affection within the family. Additionally, the unwavering trust and faith of the mother in her child further reinforce the emotional security provided by the parents, fulfilling the psychological need for love and belonging as outlined in Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

4.4.1 Analysis of Maslow's Psychological Needs in *Bintang*

The primary psychological need reflected in this poem is self-actualization. The mother's character in *Bintang* demonstrates the fulfillment of this need, as she has achieved a state of contentment and gratitude for her life and her happy family. According to Abraham H. Maslow, individuals who reach this stage have attained a deep understanding of life's meaning. This aligns with the mother's character, who is depicted as having successfully fulfilled this need. The second stanza of the poem clearly illustrates this self-actualization, as the mother expresses happiness and gratitude for their life, believing that their family is already complete and fulfilled. The mother's acceptance and appreciation of her circumstances reinforce her sense of fulfillment, affirming that she has achieved self-actualization as described in Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Table 6 Elements of Maslow's Psychological Needs in poem *Bintang*

| Elements of Maslow Psychological Needs in the poem <i>Bintang</i> | |
|---|--------|
| Maslow's Needs | Matter |

Self Esteem

Tapi kata ibu,
Itu tidak perlu,
Ayah sudah ada bintang,
Begitu juga ibu,
Rumah sudah bercahaya,
Begitu juga jiwa mereka,
Bintang itu adalah aku,
Bintang hati ayah dan ibu
(Quoted from a poem *Bintang*, verse 2)

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study acknowledges several limitations. It is limited to four selected poems from the *Bintang Hati* anthology and focuses solely on the application of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The qualitative, interpretative nature of the analysis may introduce subjectivity, and the exclusion of other psychological theories limits the depth of psychological exploration. These limitations suggest opportunities for future research to adopt broader theoretical frameworks and a wider range of literary texts.

The interdisciplinary study of literature and psychology offers a broad and insightful exploration of human experiences, emotions, and cognitive processes. By integrating psychological elements within literary works, readers gain a deeper understanding of the internal struggles and emotional depth of the characters, thereby fostering a richer appreciation of the text. Literature serves as a powerful medium through which complex psychological themes, such as identity formation, trauma, mental illness, and human motivation, are explored, allowing individuals to engage with the intricate workings of the human mind. Psychological approaches to literary analysis provide valuable insights into the motivations, behaviors, and transformations of characters, enriching the overall interpretation of a work. In addition to enriching literary interpretation, literature has a profound influence on individual development, particularly among adolescents who are in the process of constructing their identity and worldview. At this critical stage, exposure to psychological themes in literature can shape their perceptions, ethical considerations, and decision-making processes. Many literary works tackle issues such as self-discovery, peer pressure, and moral dilemmas, providing young readers with valuable insights that resonate with their own experiences. By engaging with texts that explore psychological struggles, adolescents can develop resilience, emotional intelligence, and a greater understanding of human nature.

This study opens several avenues for future research. Firstly, expanding the analysis to include more poems from different KOMSAS anthologies would provide a broader understanding of psychological elements in Malaysian poetry. Secondly, incorporating other psychological theories such as Freud's psychoanalysis, Carl Rogers' humanistic psychology, or even Jung's archetypes could offer deeper and more diverse perspectives. Furthermore, future research could adopt a reader-response approach to explore how different audiences, particularly students, emotionally and cognitively engage with the psychological themes in these poems. Comparative studies between KOMSAS poetry and other Southeast Asian literary texts could also enrich cross-cultural insights into how psychological themes are expressed poetically.

Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

This paper contributes to the growing body of research in the field of psychological literary criticism, particularly in the study of modern Malaysian poetry within the KOMSAS syllabus. Previous studies on KOMSAS poetry have predominantly focused on themes such as cultural values, moral lessons, and linguistic features. However, few have explored the psychological dimensions embedded within these works, particularly in relation to Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

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