



## SHARING AFFECTION BETWEEN A FATHER AND HIS CHILD IN ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S SHORT STORY *A DAY'S WAIT*: A HUMANISTIC APPROACH BASED ON MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS BY ABRAHAM MASLOW

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### ABSTRACT

The short story *A Day's Wait* by Ernest Hemingway portrays the affectionate relationship between a father and his sick child, reflecting the fulfillment of basic human needs according to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. This study aims to analyze the father's expression of affection using Maslow's humanistic theory approach and to examine the implications of fulfilling the child's psychological needs in parenting. A qualitative method was employed, involving a literature study and content analysis of the story and supporting literature. Data were collected through a systematic literature review, including relevant quotations from the story and theoretical sources. The analysis identified main themes linked to Maslow's theory. The results show that the father's affection fulfills not only the child's physical needs through medical care but also psychological and emotional needs through presence, communication, and consistent support. Meeting these needs helps the child overcome fear and undergo a holistic healing process. This study contributes to the language and literature fields by enriching the understanding of short story analysis through a humanistic psychology perspective, while emphasizing the importance of emotional aspects in literary interpretation and parenting within a cultural context

**Keywords:** Affection; Father; Child; Hierarchy of needs; Abraham Maslow.

### A. INTRODUCTION

Language is an essential part of human communication. Therefore, it is important to understand various aspects of language to communicate effectively with others (Sahputri, 2024). Through language, affection can be expressed. Affection is a fundamental aspect of human life that greatly influences an individual's psychological and emotional development, especially during childhood. The relationship between parents and children forms the primary basis for



developing a sense of security, self-confidence, and the ability to face life's challenges. In this context, the role of a father as a protective and loving figure has a profound impact on fulfilling the child's basic needs and promoting their psychological development.

In human life, individuals may experience various trials, both heavy and light. When confronted with severe and distressing challenges, a person's spirit may waver between hope and prayer (Muhid, 2019). Ernest Hemingway's short story *A Day's Wait* highlights the emotional relationship between a father and his sick child, providing a profound depiction of how affection manifests in situations filled with anxiety and uncertainty. Typically, a story contains characters or actors. There may be only one character or several. The character with the most significant role in a story is called the main character (Jumino, 2016).

Literary works are portrayals of life expressed through language and reflect relationships formed by humans, whether between individuals or between oneself and inner self. This aligns with Pradopo's assertion that literary works are the product of an author's imagination based on reflections of various events in society (Hasanah & Khasanah, 2022). Literary works can be analyzed from various perspectives, one of which is the humanistic psychology approach. Psychology derives from the words *psyche*, meaning soul, and *logos*, meaning knowledge. Considering that a person's soul can be studied and investigated through their behavior, psychology is often described as the study of human behavior (Tuminah, 2019).

*A Day's Wait* provides a concrete illustration of how these needs interact and how the role of a father in caring for and providing security is crucial in supporting a child's well-being. The sick child in the story experiences fear stemming from a misunderstanding of his own condition. This fear can be understood as an unmet psychological need, namely the need for safety and protection. Meanwhile, the father acts as a provider of security and emotional support, attempting to fulfill these needs through attention, supervision, and patience (Hemingway, 1956).

Maslow's humanistic approach is highly appropriate for examining this father-child relationship because it emphasizes the importance of comprehensive need fulfillment for individuals to achieve psychological well-being and self-actualization. In the story,



physiological needs such as medical care and rest are met by the father and doctor. However, the need for safety and deeper belonging remains a challenge due to a lack of knowledge and open communication between father and child. This indicates the complexity of need fulfillment within parenting contexts, where attention to psychological and emotional aspects is equally important as physical needs.

Furthermore, the story also illustrates how the child's self-esteem and effort to maintain control over himself constitute a part of the needs that must be met for the child to overcome his fear and undergo a successful healing process. The child attempts to suppress his own fear so as not to trouble his father, reflecting a desire to feel valued and maintain dignity. This attitude corresponds to the esteem level in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which requires recognition and respect from the surrounding environment for individuals to feel confident and empowered.

Moreover, *A Day's Wait* demonstrates the importance of effective communication within family relationships, especially in addressing the child's fear and anxiety. When communication is open and understanding, the child feels psychologically supported and is able to express his feelings, ultimately accelerating holistic healing. Conversely, misunderstandings and minimal communication can worsen the child's psychological condition, as experienced by the child protagonist who had to wait for his own death due to misinterpreted information.

In the context of education and developmental psychology, understanding Maslow's humanistic theory can assist parents, educators, and health practitioners in designing holistic parenting approaches. This approach emphasizes the gradual and integrated fulfillment of the child's psychological needs, beginning from basic needs to self-actualization, so that the child can grow into a physically and mentally healthy individual. Hemingway's story, though short and simple, presents a vivid depiction of the complexity and depth of these relationships.

Therefore, further research and study regarding the aspect of affection in parenting sick children with a humanistic approach can provide significant contributions to the literature on developmental psychology and parenting. This study can also offer practical guidance for



parents and professionals to be more sensitive to children's psychological needs, especially in pressured and uncertain situations such as illness.

Thus, this research aims to analyze how affection between a father and his sick child is portrayed in Ernest Hemingway's *A Day's Wait* using Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory approach. This analysis is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the importance of fulfilling psychological needs in parenting processes and how it impacts the well-being and development of the child.

### **1. Affection in Childcare**

Affection is a primary element in child-rearing that plays a vital role in the psychological, emotional, and social development of children. According to Bowlby (1988), the emotional attachment formed between parents and children serves as a foundation of psychological security, enabling children to develop well. Genuine and consistent affection from parents can build children's self-confidence and emotional resilience in facing various life challenges. In the context of the father as a caregiving figure, studies show that a father's affectionate involvement positively impacts the child's mental well-being and behavior. A father's affection not only provides a sense of security but also facilitates the development of independence and self-esteem in the child.

In *A Day's Wait*, the father's affection is reflected through his attentive and sacrificial attitude in caring for his sick child. Despite minimal verbal communication, the father's physical and emotional presence becomes a source of comfort and security for the child (Hemingway, 1933). This aligns with the view that expressions of affection do not always need to be verbal but can also be manifested through caring actions and attentive presence.

### **2. Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory**

Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory, proposed in 1943, classifies human needs into five hierarchical levels, ranging from physiological needs to self-actualization needs (Maslow, 1943). This hierarchy illustrates a gradual process of fulfilling needs, where lower-level needs must be met before higher-level needs can be realized. Maslow's theory explains that humans



must satisfy their most basic needs before progressing to higher levels and ultimately achieving self-actualization (Kusumawati et al., 2024).

According to Maslow's hierarchy theory, once basic needs are fulfilled, individuals move on to satisfy needs at the next level. Whether a person's needs are met influences their behavior and attitudes; some needs cannot be forced if they are incompatible with the individual. This indicates that a person's behavior is influenced by the fulfillment of their needs. Unmet needs can cause a person to feel burdened (Kurniawati & Maemonah, 2021).

The humanistic theory states that every human being is unique and has the potential to grow. Each individual is free and inclined to grow and develop toward self-actualization. The theory further explains that human needs are hierarchical, consisting of safety, recognition, and self-actualization levels. It elaborates on a learning system that humanizes individuals, aiming to achieve self-actualization, self-understanding, and optimal realization of a person's potential (Tuminah, 2020).

Physiological needs include basic requirements such as food, drink, and rest. Safety needs involve protection from physical and psychological threats. Social needs relate to belonging and emotional attachment, while esteem needs concern respect and recognition. The highest level, self-actualization, is the process of achieving full potential and optimal self-development (Maslow, 1970).

In the context of child-rearing, Maslow's theory is highly relevant in explaining how the needs of a sick child must be fulfilled not only physically but also psychologically and emotionally. According to Berk (2013), fulfilling children's basic needs such as health and safety affects their ability to feel socially and emotionally comfortable, which in turn supports the development of self-esteem and self-actualization.

### **3. Fulfillment of Physiological and Safety Needs in Sick Children**

When a child is ill, physiological needs become the primary priority that must be met for the child to survive and recover. Medical treatment, medication administration, and adequate rest are essential steps in fulfilling these needs (Geldard & Geldard, 2008). However, besides



physical needs, safety needs are also critical, especially the feeling of security from threats of illness and the accompanying uncertainty.

According to Piaget (1952), children around nine years old begin to develop concrete thinking abilities but still heavily depend on an accurate understanding of their surrounding world. Ignorance or misunderstanding about health conditions, as experienced by the child character in Hemingway's story, can trigger deep anxiety and fear. Therefore, fulfilling psychological safety needs through clear explanations, parental presence, and a calming atmosphere is an important factor in the child's recovery process.

#### **4. Social and Esteem Needs in the Father-Child Relationship**

Social needs, which include belongingness and emotional attachment, are crucial in shaping the child's identity and emotional stability. Warm and affectionate interactions in the father-child relationship can strengthen attachment and provide essential emotional support (Lamb, 2010).

Furthermore, esteem needs, which relate to recognition and appreciation, influence how children perceive themselves and their environment. According to Harter (1999), children who feel valued and positively regarded have higher self-confidence and better ability to cope with stress. In *A Day's Wait*, the child's effort to suppress fear and avoid troubling his father reflects esteem needs and self-control as part of maintaining personal dignity amid hardship (Hemingway, 1933).

#### **5. The Role of Communication in Fulfilling Children's Psychological Needs**

Effective communication between parents and children is key to fulfilling the psychological and emotional needs of the child. Open and empathetic communication allows children to honestly express their feelings, fears, and needs, enabling parents to provide appropriate responses.

In the context of a sick child, clear communication about the health condition and treatment process helps reduce the child's anxiety and fear. Hemingway's story illustrates how a lack of



deep verbal communication caused the child to harbor his own fears. However, the father's attentive presence still provided significant feelings of security. This demonstrates that nonverbal communication and emotional presence also play a major role in fulfilling the child's psychological needs (Burgoon, 1994).

## 6. Self-Actualization and the Emotional Healing Process

According to Maslow (1970), self-actualization is the process of reaching one's highest potential and full psychological balance. In children, this process is related to the ability to accept oneself, express emotions healthily, and develop into a complete individual. *A Day's Wait* illustrates the initial process toward self-actualization when the child begins to release emotional tension through crying after receiving an explanation and a sense of security from his father. This highlights the importance of fulfilling psychological needs as a prerequisite for emotional development and personal growth in children.

Various studies and theories support the significance of affection in parenting, especially in the context of holistically fulfilling children's needs. Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory provides a comprehensive framework to understand the physical, psychological, and emotional needs that must be met for children to develop optimally. The father-child relationship in *A Day's Wait* portrays a real implementation of fulfilling these needs through affection, communication, and care, which impacts the child's well-being and holistic healing process.

## B. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research method. Qualitative descriptive research is used to understand and describe phenomena or events by collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data in the form of words, images, or narratives, without using numbers or statistics (Soegiarto & Darmawan, 2025). This research employs a qualitative method, incorporating a literature study and content analysis approach. This method was chosen because the aim is to understand and interpret the meanings and values of affection between a father and his child in Ernest Hemingway's short story *A Day's Wait*.



The qualitative approach allows the researcher to explore psychological and communication aspects within a humanistic context through in-depth analysis of the story text. The objective approach is a literary analysis method focusing on the elements of the work itself, rather than the social context in which the work was written. Renowned literary critic Terry Eagleton explains that the objective approach can reveal how the text functions as a literary work, the linguistic devices it uses, and how the text is constructed to create meaning (Ali et al., 2024). According to Sukmadinata in Rosita et al. (2022) as cited in Stefani & Tuminah (2024), qualitative research aims to describe and analyze phenomena, events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and thoughts of individuals or groups. Qualitative research has two main objectives: first, to describe and reveal; second, to describe and explain.

The research subject is the short story *A Day's Wait* by Ernest Hemingway, which serves as the primary object of analysis. The focus is on the father and child characters and the affectionate interactions between them, especially in the context of parenting a sick child. The primary data source is the original text of Hemingway's *A Day's Wait*. Supporting data include literature related to Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory, child developmental psychology studies, family communication theories, and other relevant literature on affection and child-rearing, which serve as secondary data to strengthen analysis and discussion.

Data collection was conducted through a literature study by reading, noting, and classifying information found in the story text and supporting literature. This process involved identifying main themes related to affection, psychological needs, communication, and father-child relationships. Data were systematically gathered with a focus on quotations and events in the story relevant to the research variables.

Data analysis employed qualitative content analysis techniques. The analysis steps included:

1. Deeply reading the story text to understand the context and narrative content;
2. Identifying and coding parts of the text related to themes of affection, communication, and psychological needs based on Maslow's theoretical framework;
3. Grouping these codes into categories corresponding to the hierarchy of needs and father-child interactions.



4. Interpreting the meanings and relationships among categories to build a holistic understanding of the dynamics of affection in the story;
5. Integrating the analysis results with supporting theories to scientifically explain the findings.

To ensure data validity and reliability, this study applied several triangulation techniques:

1. Data source triangulation, combining analysis of the main story text and relevant theoretical literature;
2. Theory triangulation, using Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory as the main framework, supplemented by communication and developmental psychology theories to enrich data interpretation;
3. Method triangulation, although the study is qualitative, data collection through literature study and content analysis ensures systematic and in-depth analysis;
4. Peer debriefing, where the researcher discusses with peers or academic supervisors to obtain feedback and ensure objectivity in data interpretation.

By applying these validation techniques, the study is expected to produce credible, valid, and scientifically accountable findings.

### **C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Ernest Hemingway's short story *A Day's Wait* depicts a deep, affectionate relationship between a father and his child in a situation filled with anxiety and uncertainty due to illness. Clinton and Hattie, as cited in Sopiah (2020), state that parental involvement includes the role of parents in creating a healthy relationship by encouraging, guiding, leading, and inspiring their children. Several factors can influence a child's attachment to their parents, one of which is the family environment. The father, as a member of the family environment, also plays a role in influencing attachment (Putri Herlina, 2023).

The father's affection is not only evident through physical care but also through fulfilling the child's psychological needs, in accordance with Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory.

#### ***Fulfillment of Physiological Needs***

The child's basic physiological needs during illness are reflected in the efforts of the father and doctor to ensure the child's physical condition is maintained. When the father realizes his child has a fever, he immediately takes action:

*"When I put my hand on his forehead, I knew he had a fever."*

The father then administers medicine as instructed by the doctor:

*"Take this with water."*

These actions represent a practical manifestation of affection in fulfilling the most basic needs, namely, the child's health and survival. This need fulfillment forms the primary foundation in Maslow's hierarchy, which must be met before psychological needs can be addressed.

### ***Fulfillment of Safety Needs***

The need for security becomes crucial as the child experiences great fear of his own illness. The father attempts to calm and provide psychological security through presence and reassurance:

*"Your temperature is all right," I said. "It's nothing to worry about."*

This reassurance demonstrates affection in the form of emotional protection, helping the child overcome the fear that burdens his mind. A sense of safety is vital for the child to feel calm and for the healing process to proceed optimally, corresponding to the second level in Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

### ***Fulfillment of Social Needs (Belongingness and Emotional Relationship)***

The father's continuous presence alongside the child, despite the child's efforts to be alone, reflects the fulfillment of social needs:

*"You don't have to stay in here with me, Papa, if it bothers you."*

The father's response:

*"It doesn't bother me."*

This brief dialogue reveals the father's affection and commitment to accompany his child, providing the belongingness and emotional recognition the child requires. Although the child hesitates to trouble his father, the father patiently shows that his presence is a form of love and support. This aligns with the third level in Maslow's hierarchy—the need for relationships and belongingness.



### ***Fulfillment of Esteem Needs***

The child in the story strives to maintain his self-esteem by restraining his fear and not showing weakness to his father:

*“I’m all right.”*

He chooses to stay awake and refuses to appear weak:

*“I’d rather stay awake.”*

The child’s effort to be independent and strong reflects esteem needs, where he desires to be respected and not to burden his loved ones. The father respects this attitude and continues to accompany him with understanding. Fulfilling esteem needs is essential for the child to feel confident and in control of himself, corresponding to the fourth level in Maslow’s hierarchy.

### ***The Process Toward Self-Actualization***

Self-actualization, as the highest level in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, is reflected in the child’s emotional healing process that occurs after his fear and anxiety are released. When the father explains the misunderstanding about the body temperature:

*“It’s like miles and kilometers. You know, like how many kilometers we make when we do seventy miles in the car?”*

This explanation opens a new understanding for the child, dispelling his fear and allowing him to release his emotional tension. The next day, the child easily cries over small, insignificant things, marking the process of self-acceptance and healthy emotional release:

*“The next day it was very slack and he cried very easily at little things that were of no importance.”*

This process is part of self-actualization, where the child begins to accept his condition, manage his emotions, and develop into a more complete and psychologically healthy individual.

From the quotations in *A Day’s Wait*, it is clear how the father’s affection is manifested not only through physical care but also through fulfilling the child’s psychological and emotional needs. This affection plays a crucial role in meeting all levels of needs according to Maslow’s hierarchy—from physiological, safety, social, esteem, to self-actualization needs. This demonstrates that affectionate parenting is key to supporting holistic, healthy development in children, especially when facing difficult situations such as illness and fear.



## D. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion of Ernest Hemingway's short story *A Day's Wait*, it can be concluded that the affection between a father and his child plays a very important role in fulfilling basic human needs, ranging from physiological needs to self-actualization needs as described in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. The father's affection, manifested through attention, supervision, emotional presence, and empathetic communication, helps the sick child feel safe, valued, and psychologically supported. The story affirms that fulfilling basic human needs is not limited to physical aspects, such as medical care and biological needs, but also highly depends on the fulfillment of psychological and emotional needs, including safety, social attachment, esteem, and ultimately self-actualization. The father's affection in the story provides a strong foundation for the child to overcome difficult times, conquer fears, and begin a holistic healing process. The moral message that Ernest Hemingway conveys through this story is that parental love and care, especially from the father, are vital elements that strengthen the child's mental and emotional resilience when facing situations full of pressure and uncertainty. Furthermore, the story highlights the importance of effective communication and understanding of the child's psychological needs to properly address fear and anxiety. Thus, *A Day's Wait* is not merely a tale about illness and waiting, but also a profound reflection on the power of affection in supporting holistic human growth and well-being.

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