

The Protagonist's Inner Conflict in the Novel *Assalamualaikum Baitullah* by Asma Nadia: An Abraham Maslow Humanistic Psychology Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the forms of inner conflict experienced by the main character and to analyze these conflicts based on Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs in the novel *Assalamualaikum Baitullah* by Asma Nadia. This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method and literary psychology analysis. The data source of this research is the novel *Assalamualaikum Baitullah* by Asma Nadia, while the research data consist of quotations that represent the main character's inner conflicts. Data collection was conducted through reading and note-taking techniques, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman data analysis model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study indicate that the main character's inner conflicts are represented through five levels of needs in Abraham Maslow's theory, namely physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. Conflicts related to physiological needs are reflected through health problems and biological necessities, while safety needs are represented through anxiety about health conditions, family relationships, and the future. Love and belonging needs are reflected through the loss of affection and emotional support, whereas esteem needs are shown through decreased self-confidence and self-worth. Meanwhile, self-actualization needs appear through the main character's efforts to develop her potential, discover the meaning of life, and rise from various hardships. The findings reveal that the main character's inner conflicts develop gradually according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs and influence the process of her personality development.

Keywords: protagonist, inner conflict, novel Assalamualaikum Baitullah, psychology

INTRODUCTION

Inner conflict is a psychological conflict occurring within a character when they experience an internal struggle while facing a problem. According to Choiriyah et al. (2023:48), inner conflict arises from a struggle between various choices or alternatives, each driven by specific motives, interests, or impulses. This state creates hesitation regarding the course of action or decision to be taken, thereby influencing the character's thought processes and behavior. Nurgiantoro (2015:179) notes that conflict is a crucial element in a literary work, serving as a primary event that drives the narrative forward. Conflict is classified as a functional event—one that plays a significant role in constructing the plot, developing characters, and establishing cause-and-effect relationships be-

tween situations within the story. The presence of conflict not only triggers plot progression but also shapes the dynamics that make the story more vivid, engaging, and meaningful. Through conflict, readers can gain insight into the changes in a character's attitude and personality, as well as their developmental process when confronting the various issues they face.

Novels depict the life journey of one or more characters and their interactions with others within their social environment. Such depictions emphasize the character, temperament, and traits of each individual, allowing readers to understand personality development, conflicts, and transformations experienced throughout the narrative. Beyond serving as entertainment, novels provide a medium for

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authors to convey ideas, life values, social critiques, and moral messages through a series of systematically arranged and interconnected events. Consequently, analyzing a novel through a psychological lens is an effective method for uncovering the motivations, personalities, and inner struggles experienced by the characters. One psychological approach relevant to analyzing the inner dynamics of literary characters is Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory emphasizes that human behavior is driven by the pursuit of fulfilling needs arranged in a tiered structure—ranging from physiological needs, safety needs, and the need for love and belonging, to esteem needs and, ultimately, self-actualization (Sholichah & Sulton, 2026: 225). If any of these needs remain unmet, an individual may experience psychological tension that triggers inner conflict. Thus, Maslow's theory provides a systematic analytical framework for explaining the relationship between need fulfillment and the internal conflicts experienced by characters in a novel.

The novel *Assalamualaikum Baitullah* by Asma Nadia, published in 2025, serves as the subject of this study. The novel chronicles the life journey of the protagonist, Amira, as she confronts various life challenges—such as marital betrayal, the loss of loved ones, and spiritual struggles—that impact her psychological state. The events Amira experiences give rise to complex inner conflicts, ranging from disappointment, despair, and a sense of powerlessness to the process of seeking life's meaning and achieving self-acceptance. These conflicts are closely linked to the fulfillment of basic human needs, as outlined in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. The study of the psychology of literature is grounded in the view that literary works represent human life; they not only depict social reality but also reflect the psychological dynamics of their characters. Endraswara (2013) states that literary works emerge from an author's creative process—influenced by their experiences and psychological state—allowing various psychological phenomena

to be reflected through the characters and events constructed within the story. Aligning with this view, Minderop (2010) explains that the psychological aspects of characters and the conflicts they face constitute a crucial area of study in the psychology of literature, as they reveal the connections between character behavior, mental states, and underlying contributing factors. Therefore, the psychological approach to literature provides an appropriate framework for examining the representation of the protagonist's inner conflicts in the novel *Assalamualaikum Baitullah*.

In this study, the protagonist's inner conflicts are analyzed through the lens of Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory posits that an individual's behavior and psychological state are influenced by the extent to which their needs are met; these needs encompass physiological requirements, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. When one of these needs remains unmet, an individual may experience psychological tension that gives rise to inner conflict. Thus, Maslow's theory serves as an analytical framework to explain the forms of inner conflict experienced by Amira and their connection to her unfulfilled needs. Although research on inner conflict in literature is extensive, studies specifically examining the representation of the protagonist's inner conflict in Asma Nadia's novel *Assalamualaikum Baitullah* through the lens of Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology remain limited. Most prior studies have focused primarily on identifying forms of inner conflict or have employed a general literary-psychological approach without systematically linking the findings to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Therefore, this study aims to make an academic contribution by providing a more comprehensive analysis of the protagonist's inner conflict regarding the fulfillment of needs within Maslow's hierarchy, while simultaneously enriching the study of literary psychology in relation to Asma Nadia's works.

Based on the foregoing, this study formulates



the following research questions: (1) how does the protagonist's inner conflict manifest regarding the fulfillment of physiological needs in the novel? (2) how does the protagonist's inner conflict manifest regarding the fulfillment of safety needs in the novel? (3) how does the protagonist's inner conflict manifest regarding the fulfillment of love and belongingness needs in the novel? (4) how does the protagonist's inner conflict manifest regarding the fulfillment of esteem needs in the novel? and (5) how does the protagonist's inner conflict manifest regarding the fulfillment of self-actualization needs in the novel?

This study aims to systematically, comprehensively, and deeply describe and analyze the inner conflict experienced by the main character in the novel, based on each level of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Theoretically, the study is expected to contribute to the development of the psychology of literature—specifically by expanding the application of Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology theory as a framework for analyzing literary works, particularly contemporary novels. From a practical standpoint, this research is intended to serve as a reference for future researchers interested in examining inner conflict in literature through the lens of the psychology of literature. Furthermore, the study aims to enrich the reader's understanding of the connection between a character's inner conflict and the fulfillment of basic human needs, allowing the conflict to be understood as a representation of psychological dynamics evolving throughout the character's life journey.

METHOD

This is a qualitative study employing a descriptive approach. This approach was selected because the object of analysis—a literary text—requires a process of deep interpretation and meaning-making, rather than an analysis based on numerical data. A descriptive approach is a research method that seeks to describe and explain a subject based on facts discovered systematically and objectively (View of Educational Research Ap-

proaches: Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods, n.d.: 3). Meanwhile, Endraswara (2008) states that the psychology of literature is a field of study focused on revealing the psychological aspects of characters as represented by the author through literary works. Based on this perspective, this study aims to describe and analyze the representation of the main character's inner conflict in the novel *Assalamualaikum Baitullah* by Asma Nadia, utilizing Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology perspective. Consequently, the entire analysis process is conducted through the interpretation of data—specifically excerpts from the novel—without involving statistical measurements or quantitative analysis. The data source for this study is the novel *Assalamualaikum Baitullah* by Asma Nadia, published by Asma Nadia Publishing (472 pages). This novel was selected as the research object because it presents a complex representation of the protagonist's inner conflict through various life experiences—such as betrayal, loss, a crisis of faith, and the search for life's meaning. These events reveal psychological dynamics that are relevant for analysis through the lens of the psychology of literature, specifically Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. The research data consist of linguistic units found within the novel—including narrative excerpts, dialogue, monologues, phrases, and sentences—that depict the inner conflict of the protagonist, Amira. These data were selected based on their relevance to forms of inner conflict and the fulfillment of needs, encompassing physiological needs, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization.

Data collection was conducted using literature review, reading, and note-taking techniques. The literature review established a theoretical foundation regarding the psychology of literature, inner conflict, and Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. Subsequently, the reading technique involved an intensive, repeated reading of the novel to grasp the overall narrative and identify passages depicting the protagonist's inner conflict. The note-taking technique involved recording and categorizing the identified data into a re-

search instrument—specifically, a data corpus table. These data were then systematically classified based on the forms of inner conflict and the need categories within Maslow's hierarchy, thereby facilitating the analysis and the drawing of research conclusions.

RESULTS

The research findings indicate that the protagonist's inner conflict in the novel *Assalamualaikum Baitullah* by Asma Nadia is represented through the fulfillment of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs: physiological needs, safety needs, love and belongingness needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. These five levels of needs reveal the protagonist's psychological dynamics in confronting various life challenges, such as loss, betrayal, disappointment, and the quest for life's meaning. The protagonist's inner conflict arises from the failure to meet needs at various levels of the hierarchy, while the process of fulfilling these needs demonstrates the protagonist's personality development—leading to self-acceptance, recovery from adversity, and the attainment of self-actualization.

1. The Protagonist's Inner Conflict

Research findings indicate that the protagonist's inner conflict regarding the fulfillment of physiological needs in Asma Nadia's novel *Assalamualaikum Baitullah* is represented through various conditions that hinder the satisfaction of her basic needs. Physiological needs encompass the requirements for food, drink, rest, health, and adequate physical well-being—essential prerequisites for human survival. In this novel, the psychological state Amira experiences due to various life challenges impacts the fulfillment of these needs. Prolonged sorrow, emotional distress, and an internal burden cause the protagonist to lose her appetite, suffer physical exhaustion, and struggle to find peace in her daily life.

According to Abraham Maslow, physiological needs constitute the most fundamental level in the hierarchy of human needs. These needs must

be met before an individual attempts to satisfy needs at higher levels. When physiological needs remain unmet, an individual experiences physical and psychological imbalances that can affect behavior and the ability to cope with life's challenges (Maslow in Feist & Feist, 2017). Thus, the inner conflict Amira experiences is not merely driven by emotional factors but is also linked to the disruption of basic need fulfillment caused by the pressures of her life.

This representation of inner conflict is evident in various narrative passages and dialogues illustrating how Amira's psychological state impacts her physiological needs. Such depictions reveal that inner conflict manifests not only as an emotional struggle but also affects the character's physical condition, thereby impeding the satisfaction of basic needs. This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

"Amira often complained of discomfort during marital intimacy." (Asma Nadia: 2025: 5)

This data demonstrates the inner conflict Amira experiences because her physiological needs are not adequately met. This is evident from the discomfort Amira experiences during marital intimacy. This situation creates an internal conflict for Amira; on one hand, she wishes to fulfill her obligations as a wife, yet on the other, she must contend with the discomfort she feels. According to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, sexual relations constitute a basic physiological need that should ideally be met safely and comfortably. However, the excerpt reveals that Amira's physiological need is not optimally satisfied because marital intimacy causes her discomfort. Consequently, this situation indicates an impediment to Amira's physiological needs, triggering an internal conflict that impacts the protagonist's physical and psychological well-being.

"...food that had, for days, felt like thorns passing down her throat..." (AsmaNadia: 2025: 5)



This data illustrates the internal conflict Amira experiences due to the failure to optimally meet her physiological needs. This is evident in her sensation that the food she has been consuming for days feels like thorns passing down her throat. This description demonstrates that the emotional distress she is undergoing has affected her ability and comfort in satisfying her need to eat. Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, eating is a physiological necessity for survival. However, Amira's internal conflict prevents this need from being adequately met, as her psychological state interferes with her appetite and comfort while eating. Thus, the excerpt shows that Amira's physiological needs are hindered by the emotional pressure she is facing.

2. The Protagonist's Need for Safety

The need for safety is the second level in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, following physiological needs. This need encompasses security against physical and psychological threats, health protection, life certainty, economic stability, and assurance regarding the future. Fulfilling the need for safety allows individuals to live with a sense of calm, protection, and freedom from anxiety. Conversely, when this need remains unmet, individuals tend to experience uncertainty, fear, worry, and emotional distress, which can trigger internal conflict.

In the novel *Assalamualaikum Baitullah* by Asma Nadia, the protagonist, Amira, faces various events that threaten her sense of security—whether regarding her health, the stability of her marriage, or the certainty of her future. These threats generate psychological pressure that affects Amira's emotional state, thereby giving rise to internal conflict. This conflict is not always explicitly stated but is reflected in the protagonist's attitudes, emotional responses, and inner struggles. The following excerpt illustrates Amira's internal conflict regarding the fulfillment of her need for safety, viewed through the lens of Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology:

"Is there still a reason to go on living?"

"...as turmoil cast its net of despair ever wider, embracing and gripping her so tightly that the woman's chest felt constricted, leaving her barely able to breathe." (Asma Nadia, 2025: 7)

This excerpt reveals the internal conflict Amira experiences because her need for safety is unmet. This is evident in the question arising in her mind—"Is there still a reason to go on living?"—which indicates that she is in a state of despair and has lost her sense of security regarding her life. The feelings of turmoil, despair, and constriction she experiences illustrate a psychological pressure so severe that it disrupts her inner peace. According to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, the need for safety relates not only to protection from physical threats but also encompasses psychological security, peace of mind, and freedom from fear and anxiety. In the cited passage, Amira no longer experiences peace or certainty in her life; thus, her need for safety remains unmet. Consequently, this situation gives rise to an internal conflict characterized by despair, anxiety, and a loss of hope as she faces various life challenges.

"If you two eventually divorce, this house should be vacated. After all, the house actually belongs to Bram. He bought it before you were married..." (AsmaNadia: 2025: 71)

The data indicates an internal conflict experienced by Amira due to her unmet need for safety. This is evident when Farida asks Amira to vacate the house following the divorce, noting that the property belonged to Bram prior to their marriage. This statement leaves Amira in a state of uncertainty regarding her living situation and the life that awaits her post-divorce. Under Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the need for safety includes protection, stability, and secure housing. However, the threat of losing her home demonstrates that this need has not been satisfied. Therefore, the situation triggers an internal conflict involving anxiety.

ety, uncertainty, and worry about the future she must face.

"Pram flew into a rage. The deserted atmosphere of the parking area emboldened him to slap Amira." "Amira felt pain in her hip and lower abdomen as she tried to get up. Her vision blurred and spun." (AsmaNadia: 2025: 55)

The data reveals an internal conflict experienced by Amira due to her unmet need for safety. This is evident when Pram commits an act of physical violence, slapping Amira so hard that she falls, resulting in pain in her hips and lower abdomen. This situation causes Amira to suffer not only physically but also to lose her sense of security within the marriage. According to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the need for safety encompasses protection against threats, violence, and dangers that could compromise an individual's well-being. However, Pram's violent behavior places Amira in a situation that threatens her safety, thereby leaving her need for safety unfulfilled. Consequently, this situation gives rise to an internal conflict characterized by fear, anxiety, and a sense of powerlessness experienced by the protagonist.

3. The Main Character's Need for Love and Belonging

The need for love and belonging constitutes the third level of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This need encompasses an individual's desire to be accepted, loved, and valued, as well as to be part of a relationship that fosters a sense of belonging. As social beings, humans require affection, attention, and emotional support from family, partners, and their social environment to experience togetherness and emotional closeness. Fulfilling the need for love and belonging plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's psychological well-being and fostering healthy interpersonal relationships.

Conversely, when the need for love and belonging remains unmet, individuals may experi-

ence loneliness, feelings of rejection, a loss of meaning in relationships, and emotional distress that can trigger inner conflict. In the novel *Assalamualaikum Baitullah* by Asma Nadia, the inner conflict experienced by the protagonist, Amira, at this level evolves through various experiences involving a strained relationship with her spouse, a loss of trust, and diminished emotional support from those closest to her. These circumstances lead Amira into an increasingly complex internal struggle, as her needs to be loved, accepted, and part of a harmonious relationship are not optimally met. The following excerpt illustrates Amira's inner conflict regarding the fulfillment of her need for love and belonging, viewed through the lens of Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology:

"Amira had been patient for too long. All this time, she had tried to suppress her suspicions about her husband by giving him the benefit of the doubt." "...with the evidence right before her eyes, this time she decided to take a stand and demand an explanation from her husband." (Asma Nadia: 2025: 4)

This passage demonstrates the inner conflict Amira experiences due to the unmet need for love and belonging. This conflict arises when Amira discovers another woman's undergarment in her home, sparking suspicions regarding her husband's fidelity. Although Amira had consistently tried to give her husband the benefit of the doubt and maintain her trust in him, the evidence she uncovered made it impossible for her to suppress her suspicions any longer, compelling her to demand an explanation. According to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the need for love and belonging encompasses the desire to be loved, to receive affection and trust, and to cultivate harmonious relationships with others. However, the suspected betrayal Amira faced left this need unfulfilled. Consequently, she experienced an internal conflict characterized by disappointment, sorrow, confusion, and a loss of trust in her husband.

"Pram even admitted to having entered into an unofficial marriage (*nikah siri*) with Cynthia." "Now, a gaping wound lay in the deepest recesses of her heart—a wound she knew not how to heal. It was excruciatingly painful." (AsmaNadia: 2025: 37)

These data illustrate the internal conflict Amira experienced due to her unmet need for love and belonging. This conflict became evident when Pram admitted to having entered into an unofficial marriage with Cynthia. That admission shattered Amira's trust as a wife and caused her to lose her sense of belonging within the marital relationship she had worked so hard to preserve. Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the need for love and belonging includes the desire for affection, loyalty, acceptance, and harmonious relationships with others. Yet, Pram's decision to marry another woman left this need unsatisfied, triggering an internal conflict marked by disappointment, grief, a loss of trust, and deep emotional wounding.

"Imagining the loss of the baby she had long awaited—a blessing her husband should have been anticipating right alongside her."

"Amira could only hope to see a hint of the concern a husband naturally feels for his wife, or at the very least, some show of sympathy."

"Or perhaps that no longer applied, ever since she had voiced her intention to divorce..."

"Amira felt the bleeding wound in her heart." (AsmaNadia: 2025: 54)

Amira experiences an internal conflict stemming from her unmet need for love and belonging. This becomes evident when she faces a health crisis requiring her to choose between undergoing surgery and preserving her pregnancy. Amidst this high-pressure situation, Amira hopes for attention, support, and care from Bram, her husband. Instead, Bram responds with indifference, offering only to cover the cost of the surgery without showing any empathy for Amira's emotional state. According to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the need

for love and belonging encompasses the desire for affection, attention, acceptance, and emotional support from those closest to us. However, Bram's cold response indicates that this need remains unfulfilled, triggering an internal conflict characterized by disappointment, sadness, and a sense of being unloved.

4. The Protagonist's Need for Esteem

The need for esteem represents the fourth level in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs; it relates to an individual's desire for appreciation, recognition, and respect regarding their existence and capabilities. This need stems not only from the judgments of others but is also cultivated through a positive self-assessment. Individuals who successfully meet their need for esteem possess self-confidence and a sense of competence, trusting in their own abilities. Conversely, when this need remains unmet, individuals tend to experience self-doubt, feelings of worthlessness, and a loss of confidence, as well as psychological distress that can trigger internal conflict. The internal conflict experienced by the protagonist, Amira, stems from a diminished sense of self-worth resulting from the various events she has endured. The treatment she received from those around her, combined with negative judgments directed at her, caused Amira to feel she had lost her sense of meaning and personal value. This situation impacted her emotional state, triggering an increasingly profound internal struggle. The conflict manifests in her feelings of disappointment and inferiority, as well as her doubts regarding her own abilities and worth. The following excerpt illustrates Amira's internal conflict concerning the fulfillment of her need for self-esteem, viewed through the lens of Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology:

"...no need to feel sorrow over her husband's infidelity or to bear the disappointment, shame, and humiliation of divorce." (AsmaNadia: 2025: 7)

This excerpt reveals the internal conflict Amira experiences because her need for self-es-

teem remains unfulfilled. This is evident in the disappointment, shame, and humiliation she feels due to her husband's infidelity and the divorce she is forced to face. These circumstances caused Amira to lose respect for herself and feel she no longer possessed value—neither as a wife nor as an individual. According to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the need for self-esteem encompasses the desire for appreciation, respect, and recognition—both from oneself and from others. However, Amira's experiences prevented this need from being met, giving rise to feelings of inferiority, despair, and a loss of life's meaning. Consequently, her internal conflict evolved into a desire to end her life as a means of escaping her suffering.

"This time all attention was on Amira. Not surprised, more like waiting for a response. "The eyes around her were filled with curiosity—curiosity they made no attempt to hide."

"Amira felt awkward in her role as a wife; what was she supposed to do when faced with such news about her husband?" (AsmaNadia: 2025: 31)

This data illustrates the internal conflict Amira experiences because her need for self-esteem remains unfulfilled. This becomes evident when the attention of those around her shifts to her following the spread of rumors regarding her husband's infidelity. The situation leaves Amira feeling awkward and humiliated, as her marital life has become a topic of gossip. According to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, the need for self-esteem encompasses an individual's desire to gain appreciation, respect, and positive regard—both from within and from others. However, in this excerpt, Amira suffers a blow to her self-esteem due to the way her social circle views and judges her marriage. Consequently, this situation triggers an internal conflict characterized by shame, a loss of self-confidence, and a sense of being undervalued.

"Is it true that you were the one who refused to attend to your husband?" (AsmaNadia: 2025: 69)

This data illustrates the internal conflict Amira experiences because her need for self-esteem remains unfulfilled. This is evident in Farida's remark—"Is it true that you were the one who refused to attend to your husband?"—which indirectly blames Amira for her husband's infidelity. The statement constitutes a negative judgment that disregards Amira's health condition; she had previously been in pain, rendering her unable to fully meet her husband's physical needs. As a result of this accusation, Amira feels perceived as a wife who failed to fulfill her duties and is held responsible for the breakdown of her marriage. This situation gives rise to feelings of disappointment and hurt, while simultaneously undermining her sense of self-worth.

5. The Protagonist's Need for Self-Actualization

The need for self-actualization represents the highest level in... ..Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which focuses on an individual's effort to optimally develop their full potential, abilities, and qualities. At this stage, the individual no longer concentrates on fulfilling basic needs but instead strives to achieve life goals, discover meaning in life, and realize their self-actualization in alignment with their inherent potential. Self-actualization also reflects an individual's capacity for self-acceptance, creativity, independent decision-making, and the ability to benefit both themselves and their surrounding environment.

Self-actualization can only be achieved once the needs at preceding levels—namely physiological needs, safety, love and belonging, and esteem—have been adequately met. Conversely, if an individual faces obstacles in fulfilling these needs, the process of self-actualization is impeded, potentially leading to inner conflict. In the novel that the inner conflict experienced by the protagonist, Amira, regarding self-actualization is depicted through her



struggle to find meaning in life, accept the trials she faces, and strive to rise up and create a more meaningful existence. This process demonstrates that self-actualization is not merely the attainment of a goal, but an internal journey of recognizing, accepting, and developing one's potential amidst various life experiences. The following excerpt illustrates Amira's inner conflict regarding the fulfillment of her self-actualization needs, viewed through the lens of Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology:

"...discarding the vision of the future she had been designing since she first stepped into elementary school." (Asma Nadia: 2025: 13)

This excerpt reveals the inner conflict Amira experiences because her need for self-actualization remains unfulfilled. This conflict arises when she is compelled to accept her parents' decision regarding her marriage, forcing her to abandon the dreams and future plans she had cultivated since childhood. Consequently, Amira loses the opportunity to develop her potential and realize her aspirations. According to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, self-actualization is the highest-level need, relating to an individual's effort to realize their abilities, talents, and life goals. However, because Amira is forced to sacrifice her future, this need cannot be optimally met. This situation gives rise to inner conflict—manifesting as sadness, disappointment, and regret—stemming from her inability to live a life aligned with her hopes and inherent potential. "Amira began realizing her dream of running her own fashion business."

"The garment workshop Amira had rented closed down after the owner passed away. She felt disheartened, as the results from several other workshops she tried were unsatisfactory." (AsmaNadia: 2025: 27)

The data reveals an internal conflict experienced by Amira as she seeks to fulfill her need for self-actualization. This is evident when Amira begins to realize her dream of owning a fashion business, leveraging her talent and passion for clothing design. This endeavor reflects her desire to develop her potential and achieve her planned life goals. However, the self-actualization process hits a snag when the garment workshop serving as her production partner closes following the owner's death. Despite attempting to collaborate with other workshops, the results fall short of her expectations, leaving her feeling uncertain and hesitant about continuing the business. According to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, self-actualization is the highest-level need, involving an individual's effort to optimally develop their talents, creativity, and abilities. The obstacles Amira faces indicate that her self-actualization process has not yet been fully realized. Consequently, she experiences an internal conflict characterized by hesitation, disappointment, and anxiety, as the dream she is striving for encounters various hurdles that make it difficult to achieve as envisioned.

"In the middle of the night, Amira woke up, spread out her prayer mat, and performed the night prayer—an act she rarely undertook. After praying at length, she proceeded to open the Quran."
"...always being by Sarah's side and helping her... a stark contrast to the moment she saw the young girl lose her reason to hold onto life." (AsmaNadia: 2025: 40)

The data illustrates the internal conflict Amira experiences while striving to fulfill her need for self-actualization. This is apparent in her efforts to draw closer to Allah SWT through night prayers, supplication, and reading the Quran—seeking inner peace and a way to overcome the lingering sense of despair. At the same time, Amira is determined to remain by Sarah's side to ensure she

does not lose hope in life. Based on Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, self-actualization is the highest-level need, characterized by an individual's efforts to discover life's meaning, develop personal qualities, and realize the values they hold dear. Amira's actions demonstrate that she is no longer focused solely on resolving personal issues but is also striving for spiritual self-improvement and seeking to benefit others.

DISCUSSION

Physiological Needs of the Protagonist

The research findings indicate that inquiry-based learning supported by crossword puzzle media has a positive impact on students' ability to write *hikayat* texts. The increase in the average score from 67.08 to 81.40 demonstrates that instruction positioning students as discoverers of information can strengthen their understanding of text content and structure. This model enables students to construct knowledge through questioning, data gathering, discussion, and drawing conclusions; consequently, the writing process does not begin with a blank page but rather stems from the results of an investigation into the text.

These findings align with Maslow's (1984) view that physiological needs are the most fundamental requirements that must be met before an individual can address needs at higher levels. The inner conflict Amira experiences at this stage demonstrates that the disruption of physiological needs—such as the need for food, caused by her psychological distress—affects not only her physical condition but also her emotional stability. Consequently, Amira struggles to cope with the various problems arising in her life. Thus, the failure to meet physiological needs acts as a factor that intensifies the protagonist's inner conflict and hinders her ability to satisfy needs at higher levels.

The Protagonist's Need for Safety

Following physiological needs, the need for safety relates to the desire for protection, stability,

and certainty, as well as freedom from threats that could trigger anxiety or fear. In this novel, threats to her health, concerns regarding the safety of her unborn child, marital discord, and an uncertain future cause Amira to lose her sense of security. These various pressures leave her in an unstable psychological state and give rise to increasingly complex inner conflicts. According to Abraham Maslow (1954), the need for safety is a fundamental requirement that emerges once physiological needs have been met. This need encompasses not only protection against physical threats but also psychological security, life certainty, stability, and freedom from fear and anxiety. If an individual perceives their life as fraught with threats or uncertainty, fulfilling needs at the next level becomes difficult, as their attention remains focused on securing a sense of safety.

According to Feist and Roberts (2017), individuals facing persistent life stressors tend to experience anxiety, uncertainty, and difficulty maintaining emotional balance. Such conditions can alter how individuals view themselves and their surroundings, thereby triggering prolonged inner conflict. Furthermore, Schultz and Schultz (2016) explain that safety is a need that provides individuals with a sense of protection against various threats, whether physical or psychological. When this need remains unmet, individuals become more susceptible to anxiety, fear, and emotional instability. Consistent with this view, Maslow (1954) states that the need for safety includes protection regarding health, life certainty, and stability, as well as freedom from threats that could compromise an individual's well-being. The findings of this study indicate that the inner conflict experienced by Amira stems from a disruption to her need for security, caused by both health issues and various events that introduced uncertainty into her life. Consequently, Amira experienced emotional distress that influenced her thinking, decision-making, and the way she lived her life. These findings align with the views of Schultz and Schultz (2016), who state that individuals require a sense of security and stability to function



optimally in daily life. When this sense of security is compromised, individuals tend to experience anxiety, fear, and psychological distress, all of which can affect their behavior and decision-making processes. Consistent with this perspective, Feis & Roberts (2017) explain that experiences fraught with uncertainty can lead to prolonged emotional tension. Thus, Amira's inner conflict demonstrates that the failure to meet the need for security not only impacted her psychological well-being but also hindered her ability to live a tranquil life and progress toward fulfilling needs at the next level of the hierarchy.

The Main Character's Need for Love and Belonging

According to Abraham Maslow (1954), the need for love and belonging emerges after physiological and safety needs have been met. This need encompasses an individual's desire to form warm relationships, receive affection, gain social acceptance, and belong to a family or social group. Fulfilling this need plays a crucial role in establishing emotional balance, as it allows individuals to feel valued and cared for, while providing a space to share their life experiences. Conversely, when the need for love and belonging remains unmet, individuals are more prone to feelings of loneliness, alienation, and a loss of meaning in their social relationships. Research findings indicate that Amira's inner conflict intensified due to a decline in the emotional support she received from those closest to her. This situation made it difficult for Amira to find inner peace and caused her to sink deeper into the various problems she faced. Thus, the unmet need for love and belonging served as a factor that exacerbated Amira's inner conflict and hindered her ability to satisfy needs at the next level—specifically, the needs for self-esteem and self-actualization.

Findings regarding Amira's inner conflict concerning the need for love and belonging indicate that the failure to meet needs for affection, acceptance, and a sense of belonging is the root cause of her profound emotional distress.

According to Maslow (1954), the need for love and belonging is a fundamental drive that motivates individuals to form warm, mutually accepting relationships and to seek emotional support from others. When this need remains unmet, individuals are prone to experiencing loneliness, feelings of rejection, and alienation, all of which can disrupt their psychological equilibrium. Consistent with this view, Feist, Feist & Roberts (2017) explain that a failure to establish positive interpersonal relationships can lead to feelings of loss, anxiety, and prolonged emotional conflict. The study reveals that Amira's inner conflict intensified as her relationships with the people closest to her—previously her sources of affection and emotional support—began to deteriorate. This situation caused Amira to lose her sense of being loved and belonging, thereby exacerbating her internal struggle and affecting her ability to cope with various life challenges.

The Main Character's Need for Self-Esteem

Research findings indicate that Amira's inner conflict regarding the need for self-esteem arose from a decline in her self-regard, stemming from both her own self-assessment and the treatment she received from her environment. According to Maslow (1954), the need for self-esteem encompasses self-respect, self-confidence, and competence, as well as recognition and respect from others. When this need is unmet, individuals tend to experience feelings of inferiority, a loss of confidence in their abilities, and difficulty in developing their potential. Consistent with this view, Santrock (2018) states that persistent negative self-evaluation can diminish self-confidence and affect an individual's ability to cope with life's challenges. Furthermore, Hergenhahn and Olson (2009) explain that self-esteem is a crucial factor in shaping psychological health, as individuals who feel worthless are more susceptible to emotional distress and internal conflict. Research findings indicate that Amira's internal conflict regarding her need for self-esteem stemmed from a loss of self-confidence and

diminished self-worth, thereby affecting her thinking, decision-making, and ability to bounce back from the various problems she faced.

According to Abraham Maslow (1954), the need for self-esteem is the fourth level in the hierarchy of human needs and comprises two aspects: self-respect (internal self-esteem) and respect gained from others (external esteem). Self-respect is manifested through self-confidence, belief in one's own abilities, and a sense of competence in achieving life goals. Meanwhile, respect from others is expressed through recognition, honor, appreciation, and acceptance of the individual's existence. If these two aspects remain unfulfilled, the individual is more prone to feelings of inferiority and a loss of motivation, and faces difficulties in developing their potential. Research findings indicate that Amira's inner conflict arose from a loss of self-belief following events that altered the course of her life. This situation led Amira to feel she no longer possessed her former worth and capabilities, thereby influencing her mindset, decision-making, and interactions with others. Thus, the unmet need for self-esteem became a factor that intensified Amira's inner conflict and hindered the fulfillment of the highest-level need: self-actualization.

The Protagonist's Need for Self-Actualization

Research indicates that the inner conflict experienced by the protagonist, Amira, is linked to the process of fulfilling her need for self-actualization, a process that encountered various obstacles. In the novel *Assalamualaikum Baitullah* by Asma Nadia, Amira is portrayed as someone with dreams, talent, and a desire to develop her potential. This is evident in her efforts to build a fashion business aligned with interests she had held since adolescence. Amira sought to cultivate her creativity by designing clothing, collaborating with garment manufacturers, and eventually establishing her own brand. However, various issues—such as production delays, a lack of support from her husband, and trials within her marriage—prevented these dreams from unfolding

as she had hoped. Furthermore, the various bitter experiences Amira endured led to an internal struggle regarding the direction of her life. Nevertheless, she did not succumb to her circumstances. She began to draw closer to Allah SWT through night prayers, supplication, and reading the Quran, while striving to rediscover the meaning of life amidst the trials she faced. This process demonstrates that Amira's internal conflict was not merely about failing to achieve her goals, but also about her struggle to rise again, rediscover her potential, and lead a more meaningful life.

According to Abraham Maslow (1954), self-actualization is the highest need in the hierarchy of human needs, characterized by an individual's ability to optimally develop their full potential, talents, creativity, and values. Individuals who reach this stage are not solely focused on material success; they also seek to find meaning in life, accept themselves as they are, and benefit others. Annajih et al. (2023: 47) explain that the process of self-actualization can only be achieved once the needs at preceding levels have been adequately met. The findings of this study indicate that Amira's life journey illustrates a process toward self-actualization that did not happen overnight but unfolded through various challenging experiences. Her internal conflict became part of a maturation process that drove her to improve her quality of life, strengthen her spiritual connection with God, and use her life experiences as a means to grow into a stronger person. Thus, self-actualization in Amira is reflected not only in her success in developing her abilities and realizing her dreams but also in her capacity to accept reality, rise from adversity, and find meaning in life amidst every trial she encountered.

CONCLUSION

First, the protagonist's inner conflict regarding physiological needs in the novel *Assalamualaikum Baitullah* by Asma Nadia reveals that Amira faces obstacles in meeting basic needs related to health, biological functions, and nutrition. Health issues, pain during marital relations, and a loss of appetite



due to psychological stress are factors preventing the optimal fulfillment of her physiological needs. These conditions trigger the inner conflict that affects both Amira's physical and psychological well-being.

Second, the protagonist's inner conflict regarding safety needs indicates that Amira experiences emotional instability due to various threats to her sense of security. These threats manifest through health risks endangering both her and her unborn child, marital discord, the potential loss of her home, and uncertainty about her future. Such events cause Amira to experience anxiety, fear, and indecision, preventing her safety needs from being fully met.

Third, the protagonist's inner conflict regarding the need for love and belonging shows that Amira suffers from a lack of affection, attention, and emotional support from those closest to her, particularly within her marriage. A lack of marital harmony, a loss of trust, and strained relationships with loved ones leave Amira feeling lonely and unaccepted, with nowhere to turn for emotional support. Consequently, her need for love and belonging remains unfulfilled, thereby intensifying her inner conflict.

Fourth, the protagonist's inner conflict regarding the need for self-esteem demonstrates that Amira's life experiences impact her self-regard. A lack of appreciation, diminished self-confidence, and various failures cause Amira to doubt her own abilities and self-worth. This situation resulted in the need for self-esteem not being optimally met, thereby influencing Amira's mindset, decision-making, and ability to cope with various life challenges.

Fifth, the protagonist's inner conflict regarding the need for self-actualization demonstrates that Amira persistently strove to develop her potential despite facing numerous obstacles. Her efforts to build a fashion business, cultivate her creativity, and improve herself through a spiritual approach represented attempts to realize her potential and discover meaning in life. While the trials she endured did hinder the self-actualization process,

these experiences ultimately became part of a journey toward maturity, enabling Amira to rise up, accept reality, and strive to live a more meaningful life. Thus, the inner conflict Amira experienced was not merely a psychological struggle but also a process that fostered her personal growth, aligning with Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychological framework.

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