

Murder Motives Committed by Tanaka Makoto in the Novel “*Seibo*” by Akiyoshi Rikako

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KEYWORDS

Abraham Maslow, hierarchy of needs, humanistic psychology, seibo

ABSTRACT

This study examines the murder motives committed by Tanaka Makoto in the novel “*Seibo*” by Akiyoshi Rikako. The analysis was conducted using Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory. The data were collected through the library research method and further analyzed using the hermeneutic technique. The data were then explained through descriptive qualitative analysis. The results indicate that certain needs in Makoto’s character were hindered and unmet, leading to her acts of murder. These needs include safety and love and belongingness.

INTRODUCTION

Every literature work, including novels, can generally be studied with various aspects, one of which is psychology. This is possible because novels imply human’s ways of thinking and behavior in real life that can be analyzed psychologically (Oemiati et al., 2024:413). For example, motivation. Robbins and Judge (2015:222) define motivation as a process of achieving one’s goals influenced by strength, direction, and persistence. Motivation appears because of the tension that occurs when there are important unmet needs (Dessler, 2016:346). Both definitions are in line with the theory of motivation in the form of hierarchy proposed by Abraham Maslow. Maslow in Alwisol (2018:213) stated that human needs at the higher level can only be met if the lower level needs have been fulfilled. The levels or hierarchy in Maslow’s theory in Amalia and Yulianingsih (2020:151) are arranged into four levels of basic needs, (1) physiological needs, (2) safety needs, (3) love and belongingness needs, and (4) esteem needs.

Seibo (聖母) by Akiyoshi Rikako is one of the novels that contains motivational elements in its story. *Seibo* tells the story of Tanaka Makoto, a high schooler who is traumatized by the rape she experienced back when she was 14 years old. Makoto, who was still in junior high school at the time, had given birth to a child as a result of that incident. The child was later named Kaoru. Kaoru was eventually raised by Makoto’s mother, Honami, because Makoto was depressed over that incident. When Makoto became a high schooler, a boy teased Kaoru, and triggering Makoto’s past trauma. Makoto then murders some naughty boys in her town.

The murder committed by Makoto occurred because of basic needs that failed to be fulfilled. This is in line with Maslow’s opinion in Feist et al. (2013:262), that when basic needs are not met, the urge to commit murder to fulfill them can occur. Maslow in Griffin (2012:93) also said that a person will feel discomfort when their basic needs fail to be met.

The author is interested in analyzing the motive for Tanaka Makoto’s murder action in the novel *Seibo* by Akiyoshi Rikako, because it illustrates how psychological conflicts due to past trauma can trigger needs and

form extreme behavior, such as murder. The study was conducted using Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs theory approach to explain the unmet needs of Makoto that led her to commit murder.

METHOD

The type of research used is descriptive qualitative research. Qualitative research methods were used to examine natural object conditions where the researcher is the key instrument (Sugiyono, 2019:124). The qualitative approach focuses on meaning, reasoning, definition of situations in a particular context, and relates to everyday life (Rukin, 2019:6). In line with Rukin's statement, Yusuf (2014:329) said that qualitative research also emphasizes concepts, characteristics, symptoms, symbols, and descriptions of a phenomenon presented in a narrative manner. In qualitative descriptive research, data is presented in text form. Data sources are described in a conical manner, getting more and more detailed so that readers can feel like they are there (Semiawan, 2010:60). Meanwhile, data is collected in the form of words and images, not in the form of numbers (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018:11).

The theory used in this study was Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs theory. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs theory is divided into four levels of basic needs. Basic needs at the first level are physiological needs. This need is related to the natural needs of the human body (Sa'diyah et al., 2024:103). Food, drink, oxygen, shelter, and rest are part of this need (Maslow in Alwisol, 2018:216). Physiological needs are very strong, so that all other needs will be ignored and motivation will be focused only on meeting physiological needs first (Maslow in Alwisol, 2018:216). For example, someone who is hungry will try to find ways to eat, not looking for friends or self-esteem (Feist et al., 2013:257).

After physiological needs are met, the second basic need will appear, namely safety needs. Safety needs are a form of long term life defense that includes the need for security, protection, law, boundaries, stability, and freedom from fear and anxiety (Maslow in Alwisol, 2018:216). One of the impacts of unfulfilled safety needs is the emergence of trauma. Symptoms of trauma are indicated by a desire to seek protection from systems or people who are considered stronger and can provide a sense of security, and often show excessive reactions such as fear, panic, and other destructive traits (Maslow in Setiawan, 2014:103).

The third basic need is the need for love and belongingness. Included in this need is not only about receiving love from others, but also the need to give love to others (Maslow, 2013:9). Fehr and Russell (1991:426) stated that love can be studied as a relationship, as an attitude, as an experience, and so on. The sense of love can be obtained through partners, family, environment, and other inter individual relationships (Sa'diyah et al., 2024:106). Baumeister and Leary in Sabiela et al. (2017:256) said that to fulfill the needs of love and belongingness, stable positive affective interactions are needed and uphold each other's comfort. This means that love and feelings of belonging can only be received between individuals who are in good relation with each other.

The last level of basic needs is the need of esteem. This need is divided into self-esteem and to get respect from others (Maslow in Feist et al., 2013:258). The need to get respect from others can be classified as the need to be recognized for ability, achievement, credibility, and the desire to have a reputation and gain appreciation (Maslow in Setiawan, 2014:150). Self-confidence, self-ability, and freedom are some examples of self-esteem (Trivedi & Mehta, 2019:40). The fulfillment of esteem needs will result in feelings that oneself is worthy, useful, and needed in the world, as well as increased self confidence (Maslow, 2013:10).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis shows that Makoto's motive for committing murder is to fulfill the need for safety in the form of freedom from fear and anxiety. Another motive is the fulfillment of the needs of love and belongingness in the form of providing affection to others, in this case is her daughter, Kaoru.

Physiological Needs

Data 1

団地の中をひとり見回って満足すると、帰路についた。ぽつぽつとマンションやアパートが並ぶエリア。そのなかの、比較的新しめのマンションに入っていく。「ただいまー」自宅の玄関を開ける。奥から母親が、スリッパの音をぱたぱたとさせながらやって来た。「おかえり、真琴。日曜なのにご苦労様。お夕飯、食べてないでしょ?」「うん」「すぐ温めるから」(Rikako, 2018:59)

Danchi no naka wo hito to toori mi mawatte manzokusuru to, kiro ni tsuita. Potsu potsu to manshon ya apaato ga narabu eria. Sono naka no, hikakuteki atarashime no manshon ni haitte iku. "Tadaimaa." Jitaku no genkan wo akeru. Oku kara hahaoya ga, surippa no oto wo pata pata to sasenagara yatte kita. "Okaeri, Makoto. Nichiyou nanoni gokurousama. Oyuuhan, tabetenai desho?" "Un." "Sugu atatameru kara."

After wandering around the complex, she walked home. The area where Makoto lived had several flats and apartments. She entered one of the apartments that looked new compared to the others. "I'm home." She opened the door to her apartment unit. Her mother hurried in her house slippers towards her. "Welcome home, Makoto. Even though it's Sunday, you must be tired, right? You haven't had dinner yet, have you?" "Yes." "I'll warm it up."

Makoto, who has just arrived home after volunteering at city hall, returns to her new apartment where her family lives. Makoto's arrival is warmly welcomed by Honami, her mother. Honami immediately warms up dinner for Makoto.

Data 1 shows that Makoto's physiological needs, in the form of food and drink, have been met. Honami's reaction to preparing food as soon as Makoto arrived shows that Makoto is not lacking in these needs. The data also shows that Makoto has a decent place to live, which is also part of physiological needs. This is shown by Makoto's residence in the form of an apartment that still looks new. Because this first level needs have been met, it can be concluded that the motive for Makoto's murder did not come from physiological needs.

Safety Needs

Data 2

「思い出させない」母は言い切った。「お母さんが忘れさせてみせる。環境を変えましょう。引っ越しをして、転校もして、新しい生活を始めるの。二度と真琴に辛い思いをさせない。今度こそちゃんと、真琴を守ってみせるから。だからお願い。赤ちゃんに、未来を与えてあげて」(Rikako, 2018:340)

"Omoidasenai" haha wa ii kitta. "Okaasan ga wasuresasetemiseru. Kankyō wo kaemashou. Hikkoshi wo shite, tenkou mo shite, atarashii seikatsu wo hajimeruno. Nido to Makoto ni tsurai omoi wo sasenai. Kondo koso chanto, Makoto wo mamotte miseru kara. Dakara onegai. Akachan ni, mirai wo ataete agete."

"You won't remember," her mother interrupted. "I will prove that you will forget. Let's change the environment. Move house, change schools, then start

a new life. I won't let Makoto feel depressed again. Furthermore, I will prove that I can protect Makoto. Therefore, I beg you. Let's give this baby a future."

The scene in data 2 occurs after Makoto made a suicide attempt and finally admits to her parents that she has been raped by Hideki. Depressed and frightened Makoto, locked herself in her room again. A few days later Makoto felt nauseous. Tests showed that Makoto was pregnant. Makoto hated herself and did not want to give birth to the child. Makoto was afraid that she would remember the incident if she saw her child later. Contrary to Makoto's wishes, Honami wanted Makoto to give birth anyway. Honami found it difficult to fight for a child due to her polycystic ovary syndrome. According to Honami, the child Makoto is carrying is a miracle that must be preserved. Honami assured Makoto that she would not remember what happened to her when she saw her baby. Honami guarantees this by promising a new environment and situation, so Makoto will not feel depressed. Honami also promised to protect Makoto and the baby.

The data shows that Makoto has received safety needs in the form of protection from Honami, especially after Makoto's rape. The safety that Honami promised was an attempt to create a safe environment for Makoto. This means that the motive for Makoto's murder was not a lack of protection.

Data 3

小さい頃から秀樹にいじめられていた自分の姿が、薫に重なった。そして秀樹の姿が、男児に。娘もいつか、同じ日に遭うのではないか。真琴は戦慄した。男児がまた接触してくるかもしれないと想像すると、胸はざわついた。恐怖は心に巣食い、真琴を揺さぶり続ける。(Rikako, 2018:346)

Chiisai koro kara Hideki ni ijimerareteita jibun no sugata ga, Kaoru ni kasanatta. Soshite Hideki no sugata ga, danji ni. Musume mo itsuka, onaji hi ni au no de wa nai ka-. Makoto wa senritsushita. Danji ga mata sesshokushitekuru kamoshirenai to souzou suru to, mune wa zawatsuita. Kyoufu wa kokoro ni sukui, Makoto wo yusaburi tsudzukeru.

The figure that Hideki teased as a child became Kaoru. Then, Hideki's figure as the boy. Perhaps her daughter will experience the same thing as her... . Makoto was horrified. Her chest churned at the thought of the possibility that the boy would one day touch her child again. Fear lodged in her heart, and shook Makoto relentlessly.

When Makoto picked Kaoru up at the daycare, Kaoru was crying. Kaoru said a naughty boy in her class bit her. Makoto discovered that the bite mark of Kaoru's friend was on Kaoru's upper thigh. At the daycare, Kaoru was wearing long pants, which meant that the boy had forcefully pulled down Kaoru's pants and then bit Kaoru's thigh. This made Makoto remember her past trauma. The boy's incident was similar to Makoto's, who was teased by Hideki and eventually raped by Hideki. Makoto was very afraid that Kaoru would experience the same thing as Makoto. Her heart was shaken. This was the beginning of Makoto's first murder.

Data 3 shows that after years of living quietly and safely, Makoto's fear and anxiety resurfaced when she learned that Kaoru was being teased by her friend. The incident traumatized Makoto and made her anxious every time she met a naughty boy. Makoto views naughty boys as potential rapists in the future. Makoto fears that over time, Kaoru will experience something similar to what she experienced in the past. Makoto needs to overcome her anxiety about Kaoru's safety, so she decides to permanently eliminate the source of her anxiety by killing the naughty boys in her town.

Love and Belongingness Needs

Data 4

落ち着いた毎日を取り戻すまでは、色々なことがあった。けれども薫の存在が、過去を少しずつ忘れさせてくれた。ゆっくりと心の傷を癒してくれた。もう真琴は死にたいと考えなくなった。真琴が薫に未来を与えたのではない。与えられたのは自分の方だったと思い知った。だから薫のことはこの手で守ってやるのだ—と真琴は誓った。(Rikako, 2015:343)

Ochitsuita mainichi wo torimodosu made wa, iro iro na koto ga atta. Keredo mo Kaoru no sonzai ga, kako wo sukoshi zutsu wasuresasetekureta. Yukkuri to kokoro no kizu wo iyashitekureta. Mou Makoto wa shinitai to kangaenakunatta. Makoto ga Kaoru ni mirai wo ataeta no de wa nai. Ataerareta no wa jibun no hou datta to omoishitta. Dakara Kaoru no koto wa kono te de mamotte yaru no da-to Makoto wa chikatta.

There were many things that happened until Makoto was able to have a peaceful everyday life. However, Kaoru's existence made Makoto forget her past little by little. The wound in her heart gradually healed. Makoto no longer wanted to die. In fact, it was not Makoto who gave Kaoru a future, but she felt that she was the one who got a future from Kaoru. That was why she wanted to protect Kaoru with her hands. Thus, Makoto vowed.

Data 4 shows Makoto's condition after giving birth to Kaoru. Initially, Makoto felt neither hatred nor affection towards Kaoru. But gradually, with the amount of love Kaoru gave Makoto, Makoto melted and loved Kaoru. Kaoru replaced Makoto's inner hurt with affection for Kaoru. Makoto had previously agreed to give birth to Kaoru because Honami persuaded her that they should give the baby a future. Instead of giving Kaoru a future, Makoto feels that Kaoru is the one who gives Makoto a new future, and a reason to keep living and moving forward. Kaoru's existence has become so meaningful and precious to Makoto that she is determined to protect Kaoru with her own hands.

The data shows how Makoto has gotten the needs of love and belongingness in the form of receiving affection from Kaoru. In return, Makoto wants to reciprocate this by giving affection to Kaoru by protecting her with her own hands. One such form of protection is to ensure Kaoru is safe from a naughty boy whom she considers a potential rapist, by killing him. After committing the first murder, Makoto thought this need would be fulfilled, but upon seeing another naughty boy, the need resurfaced, resulting in his murder becoming a serial killer.

Esteem Needs

Data 5

「まあ、田中ならかなり上を狙えると思う」佐藤が、生徒の成績や模試の結果が綴じられたファイルをめくる。「国公立の医療系は理科の発展科目が必須だが、田中は得意だしな。特に生物は好きなんだろう？正直、俺は田中の進路の心配はほとんどしてない。お前はよくできるし、しっかりしてるし、努力家だから」。佐藤が、からかうように褒めちぎる。(Rikako, 2018:267-268)

"Maa, Tanaka nara nari ua wo neraeru to omou" Satou ga, seito no seiseki ya moshi no kekka ga tojirareta fairu wo mekuru. "kokkouritsu no iryoukei wa rika no hatten kamoku ga hissu da ga, Tanaka wa tokui dashi na. Toku ni seibutsu wa suki nandarou? Shoujiki, ore wa Tanaka no shinro no shinpai wa hotondo shitenai. Omae wa yoku dekirushi, shikkari shiterushi, doryokuka dakara." Satou ga, karakau youni homechigiru.

"But if it's Tanaka, you can definitely target top-class universities." Satou opened the file containing the list of students' grades and test results. "The Faculty of Medicine at the state university requires you to take Applied Science as a compulsory course, but Tanaka is quite good at it. Especially, you like Biology, right? To be honest, I'm not that worried about your career and schooling. You're pretty smart, responsible, and hardworking." Satou praised her as if he was teasing her.

Data 5 happens when Makoto has a career consultation with her homeroom teacher, Satou. Satou praises and believes in Makoto's abilities. According to Satou, Makoto's career choice is nothing to worry about. Makoto is a smart student, especially in Biology, so Satou advises Makoto to enter a state university and apply to the Faculty of Medicine.

In this data, Satou shows his appreciation for Makoto by praising Makoto as a smart, responsible, and hardworking student. Satou even advised Makoto to apply to the Faculty of Medicine at a state university. This shows Satou's full confidence in Makoto's abilities. Satou's support can be interpreted as a form of Satou's appreciation for Makoto's qualities, so it can be concluded that Makoto's esteem needs in the form of appreciation from others have been fulfilled. This shows that the motive for Makoto's murder was not to fulfill this need.

Data 6

これまで混沌と真琴の心を覆っていた闇が、夜明けを迎えたようにすうっと晴れていった。母の娘で良かった—改めて今、そう感じる。「そうだね。もう、これでおしまい」。真琴は母の目を見つめながら、ゆっくりと頷いた、—玄関先で、チャイムが鳴る。全てから解放された真琴はとても神聖な気持ちで、薫を抱きしめたまま、客人を迎えるためにドアへと向かった。(Rikako, 2018:357–358)

Kore made konton to Makoto no kokoro wo ootteita yami ga, yoake wo mukaeta youni suutto harete itta. Haha no musume de yokatta-aratamete ima, sou kanjiru. "Sou dane. Mou, kore de oshimai." Makoto wa haha no me wo mitsumenagara, yukkurito unazuita..., Genkan saki de, chaimu ga naru. Subete kara kaihou sareta Makoto wa totemo shinsei na kimochi de, Kaoru wo dakishimeta mama, kyakujin wo mukaeru tame ni doa e to mukatta.

The darkness that had shrouded Makoto in depression, brightened as the dawn began to break. She was grateful to be her mother's daughter. That was how she felt again now. "Yes. With this it is all over." Makoto nodded while looking into her mother's eyes..., The doorbell of her apartment rang. Makoto, who had been relieved of all her burdens, walked to the front door while holding Kaoru with a clear feeling.

The scene in the quote above is set after Makoto is safe from police suspicion. Makoto's mother, Honami, has implicitly admitted that it was Honami who manipulated the bodies of Makoto's murder victims, so that Makoto would not be suspected as the perpetrator. Honami had also killed Hideki, Makoto's rape perpetrator who had been released from prison, and manipulated the location of the murder, making it appear as if Hideki was the perpetrator of the serial murders all along. Honami made Hideki's murder look like a suicide. Therefore, the police no longer suspected Makoto as the serial killer, but Hideki, and considered the case solved by the perpetrator committing suicide. Makoto is no longer shrouded in fear. Her feelings became light. Makoto is grateful to be Honami's child, as Honami would do anything to protect Makoto. Makoto can now go back to living in peace. No longer afraid that the detective will come. This is illustrated by Makoto who without hesitation walked to the front door when the bell rang.

The data shows that Makoto has achieved the need for self-esteem. This proves that the need for self-esteem was not the motive for her murder, but was the result of Makoto's fear of police suspicion being overcome. The feeling of freedom from threats and protection from Honami became the foundation for Makoto to appreciate and accept herself again.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis that has been done, it can be concluded that Makoto's motive for committing murder is to fulfill safety needs in the form of freedom from fear and anxiety, and the need to be owned and loved in the form of providing affection. Makoto's need to give affection arises as a reciprocal of the affection she receives from Kaoru. This need triggered Makoto's feelings of fear and anxiety for Kaoru's safety, causing Makoto to commit acts of murder to fulfill them.

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