

Psychological motivation of Jim as a runaway slave in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

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Abstract

'Adventures of Huckleberry Finn' is a great novel written in the nineteenth century by Mark Twain, the pen name of Samuel Langhorne Clemens. According to critics, this novel was written to criticise practices of slavery in the United States during his time, especially in states along the Mississippi river banks. This research aimed at explaining the hierarchy of needs of Jim and the motivations of his escape. The method used in this research was qualitative, with humans' hierarchy of needs by Abraham Maslow employed. The analysis showed that the needs of Jim were divided into three phases, i.e., the phase of Jim as a slave, the phase of Jim as a runaway slave, and the phase of Jim as a free man. The results showed that there were four reasons why Jim decided to escape from Mrs. Watson, his master, i.e., 1) the master's anger at Jim, 2) Jim's conscience about himself as the object for capital gain, 3) his freedom as a human, and 4) his own happiness. It is concluded from the research that as a slave, Jim feels that his life needs cannot be fulfilled even when he is already free as long as he can never be reunited with his wife and children, who he thinks will give happiness to him. Based on the theory of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Jim's higher level of need is love-and-belonging need.

Keywords: *slavery; hierarchy of needs; motivations*

INTRODUCTION

Long before the 'Black Lives Matter' campaign started in 2013, racism has already become a big world issue, including in the United States ([Lebron, 2017](#)). Slavery, racism's worst manifestation, had been practiced legally in that country for generations since the first European settlements began until the Civil War lasted in 1865.

In the United States, there had been a lot of cases about racism for centuries where African American people did not get their rights as human beings. Slavery even had become an integral part of the U.S. people, including their twelve presidents ([Andrews, 2017](#)) or a quarter of their all presidents.

On the other side, numbers of American people in many generations have made attempts to fight against racism, for example, Abraham Lincoln (1809-

1865), the 16th president, who opposed and tried to eliminate all forms of slavery that was existing in the United States during the time. He issued the decree called the Proclamation of Emancipation in 1865, or the end of the American Civil War, as an order of abolishing all slavery practices in the entire nation ([Goldin, 1976](#)).

Indeed, slavery in the United States was a past issue but it cannot be just eradicated from the history, primarily of the African Americans. Knowledge on it still become an important thing for today's generations, as issues dealing with racism still exist today, as we can see in the Black Lives Matter campaign.

Documentations about slavery in the past-time America still exist today, including in fictions. As we all know, literary works have been widely used by authors as members of a society to express what they think, feel, and/or see, as stated by [Olsen \(1982\)](#) that an author is an ordinary person who can feel and have sensitivity. He or she commonly expresses his/her feeling through writing. In expressing his/her feeling, an author will use a different method, compared to any other people. One way or another, he/she will fictionalize the facts, such as using allegory, with fictional characters, making symbols, or using different point of view in his/her creative processes.

In this research, it is Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, originally published in 1884-1885, which is studied in relation to the above issue. His novel is an example of prose fiction that brings some issue of slavery in the United States during nineteenth century. This picaresque novel brings stories of low-class people's adventures, which involve some slave escape, as well as slaves' search for freedom.

This novel is one of the important fictional documentations of the American slavery, at least based on these two reasons: 1) this novel was written with the background of slavery around the era of its publication; 2) there is a character named Jim, a Black slave who runs away from the master to seek freedom, who symbolizes the fight against slavery in the past.

Jim is an interesting-to-study character. As a slave of Mrs. Watson, a White widow, Jim has a courage to run away, with motivations that don't only deal with being a free man. For the record, Jim is separated from his son and wife because they are slaves to different masters. When hearing that his master is planning to sell him, he resists and then runs away to a free state to raise money and buy his wife and children.

Jim's case can be studied from sociological or psychological aspects. The pressure that makes Jim run away is caused by some motivation following his discomfort knowing that he is going to be sold. Besides, he really wants to be reunited with his wife and children without being a slave.

It deals with an issue of human's life needs and the fulfillments. Therefore, a psychological theory is needed to understand this case, in term of his motivations, as [Butler \(1973\)](#) says that the use of literary psychological theories do not intend to solve psychological problems but to understand the psychological aspects contained in a work. And, a psychological theory proper to analyze this issue is Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory or a theory of Human Motivation.

Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs / human motivations

The hierarchy of needs is a theory of human needs ranging from basic needs to the highest needs. Hierarchy of needs will always make people meet their needs ([Maslow, 2017](#)). Therefore, Maslow illustrates that humans will never be satisfied with their needs. According to Maslow, once a particular need is fulfilled, another need will occur.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is divided into two categories, i.e., basic needs and needs to grow. Basic needs consist of physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs and esteem needs. Needs to grow, the highest level of needs, contain self-actualization (Maslow cited in [Rafli & Oktaviane, 2018](#)). To reach the highest level, namely self-actualization, every individual must fulfill the lower level, namely the basic needs. Starting from the physiological needs and so on ([Maslow, 2017](#)). A more detailed explanation will be explained as follows:

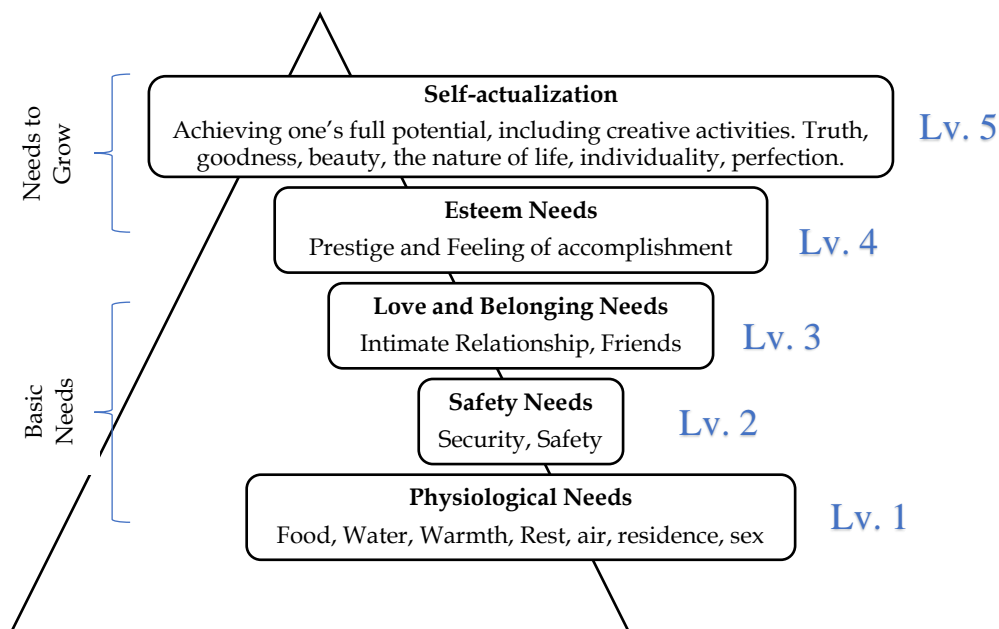


Figure 1. Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs

Basic needs

According to Maslow (cited in [Yunadi et al., 2020](#)) basic needs are the initial needs of individuals who still have shortcomings. It contains physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, and esteem needs.

Physiological Needs

[Maslow](#) (2017) states that physiological needs are the most basic needs of every individual. Needs such as eating, drinking, consuming protein, resting, and having sex.

Safety needs

Safety needs are important needs that must be met after physiological needs. They are the need for individuals to get freedom, protection, dependency, not feel fear, chaos, anxiety, order, strength, protection, and others (Maslow, 2017).

Love and belonging needs

Love and belonging needs are the needs of each individual to encourage someone to make effective and emotional relationships in each individual or group. The goal is to get affection from family, friends, peers, spouse, or children (Maslow, 2017).

Esteem needs

Maslow in Sitepu and Putri (2020) states that esteem needs are individual needs to gain strength, mastery, competence, self-confidence, and independence. At this level, every individual wants to get respect from others. Such as fame and glory of reputation, status, domination, interest, and appreciation.

Needs to grow

Need to grow (Maslow cited in Goble, 2010) are the needs of individuals who have developed. Contains about actualization needs. This need can be reached by each individual if his basic needs are fulfilled.

Maslow (2017) states that self-actualization needs are the highest level of individual needs. At this level, a person must be considered according to his potential. Someone will be able to achieve self-actualization if they can get their own time and obstacles, including internal barriers such as alert, fear, shame, and so on. An individual also needs human dignity that is used to achieve goals and be a good individual. In addition to this in self-actualization, the individual will seek to gain knowledge and understand needs, use positive cognitive abilities, seek happiness and fulfillment of satisfaction to avoid pain.

METHOD

This research is a library research, which uses a qualitative method. The library research applied in this story is done by gathering relevant information from various textual sources. It is in line with a concept stated by Mukhlas (2014) that this kind of research needs references from books, journals, and another supporting data. In this section, the researchers used the primary data and literary book from the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. There were sentences, prose, and words that were relevant to the problem.

Technique of data collection

The data collection in this research used some methods. Those methods were: 1) reading the novel; 2) identifying the data that are relevant to the problem; 3) underlining data that are relevant to the problem; and lastly 4) taking a note to collect the data that were relevant to the problem.

Technique of data analysis

To analyze the data, descriptive qualitative method was used. Descriptive qualitative is a research method that is based on the philosophy of post-

positivism which is usually used to examine natural objective conditions in which the researchers act as a key instrument (Nassaji, 2015).

The first step of analysis was to categorize each of the collected data. In general, the data were divided into primary and secondary data. The primary data comprised all texts collected from the novel, which were related to Jim. They included author's direct narrations, utterances involving Jim, as well as those spoken by other characters that discuss Jim's case. Meanwhile, the secondary data included all references that supported the study. The next step was to analyze the categorized data. This included activities of examining and criticizing the issues found in the data with the theories, which lead to concluding the study.

Technique of data presentation

The data of this research were presented in the form of a quotation, based on the context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Life needs fulfilment of Jim in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Every human being has needs. Needs between different people may be different. One should fulfill his or her certain need before trying to fulfill another one, as said by Maslow in his Hierarchy of Needs theory (Goble, 2010). Based on this theory, the analysis of Jim in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* regarding his hierarchy of needs is divided into 3 (Three) phases, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1. Phases of Jim's life as a slave

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Jim during his time as a slave of a white widow, Mrs. Watson.	Jim as a runaway slave	Jim as a free man.

In the above phases, Jim experiences some changes of needs. The level of the fulfilled needs in each period is different from each other, which will be described in detail in the following analysis. He also has needs to fulfill to make him psychologically and physically satisfied. There is the situation of slavery in the time of Jim in 1802 in the United States. At that time, many black people were made slaves by white people. The majority as tending gardens, domestic helpers, laborers, and craftsmen, which attests to Jim's life need fulfillment.

Phase 1: At the beginning when Jim as a slave for his master

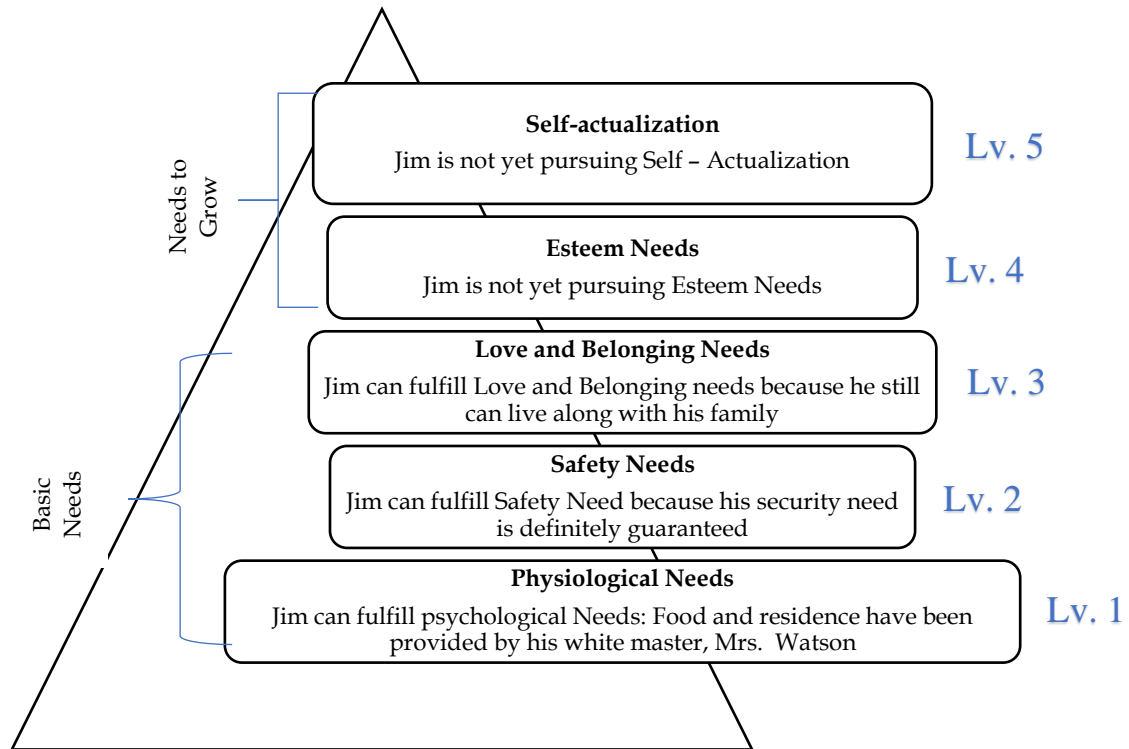


Figure 2. Phase 1 (At the beginning when Jim as a slave for his master)

In Phase 1, during Jim's time as a slave, the live needs that can be fulfilled are physiological needs, safety needs, and love and belonging needs. Jim is a black slave of an old white widow, named Mrs. Watson. Jim's hierarchy of needs during the period that have been fulfilled as a place to live, food to eat, water to drink, clothes to wear, and etcetera. Jim's safety need has also been fulfilled. He belongs to Mrs. Watson who protects him. As her slave, he always follows what she says, asks, or commands. Jim has a fulfilling life that he feels is enough as a slave. All Jim's needs are provided, such as a place to live, eat, drink, clothes, etc. Jim's Safety Needs have also been guarded and fulfill by his master as long as Jim remains an obedient slave, as shown in the quotation.

".... Miss Watson's big nigger, named Jim, was setting in the kitchen door; we could see him pretty clear, because there was a light behind him. ..." (Twain & Wasowski, 2001, p. 22).

In the American slavery era, black people were enslaved in various sectors, to do different works. put in various works. In the story, Jim with his "big" physicality that matches with field works is lucky to only be a house servant. He gets luckier because he is only enslaved by and old widow.

As a result, Jim gets benefits in terms of how he can fulfil his the very basic needs such as to breathe, water to drink, and food to eat. Besides, Jim can also live in a much better place compared to those dealing with fieldworks, such as in plantations. While other slaves must endure difficult lives outside, he conversely can be way more relaxed, like when he is leaning against a tree in the master's garden and then falling asleep, as shown in the following quotation,

“So he set down on the ground betwixt me and Tom. He leaned his back up against a tree, and stretched his legs out till one of them most touched one of mine....”

“... Just then Jim begun to breathe heavy; next he begun to snore.” (Twain & Wasowski, 2001).

The above quotation strongly suggests that being a slave of Mrs. Watson, Jim can fulfill the physiological needs (air, water, food, etc./level 1) and safety needs (clothes, lodging/level 2) as proven in the following quotation which explains that Jim lives comfortably because he could sleep well even though he is under a tree. He is not afraid that something dangerous would happen, because his safety needs have been fulfilled.

“He was thinking about his wife and his children, away up yonder, and he was low and homesick, because he hadn't ever been away from home before in his life...” (Twain & Wasowski, 2001, 135).

From the quotation, it is explained that Jim is never far away from his family. It is proven that when Jim runs away with Huck, he is really low and homesick. Before his escape due to his master's decision of selling him, Jim and his family used to visit and keep in touch with each other, so that their love need was always fulfilled. For the record, Jim's wife and children became slaves of another white family living nearby Mrs. Watson's. Jim feels that his life is quite happy as long as he is not separated from his family.

Phase 2: Jim as A Runaway Slave

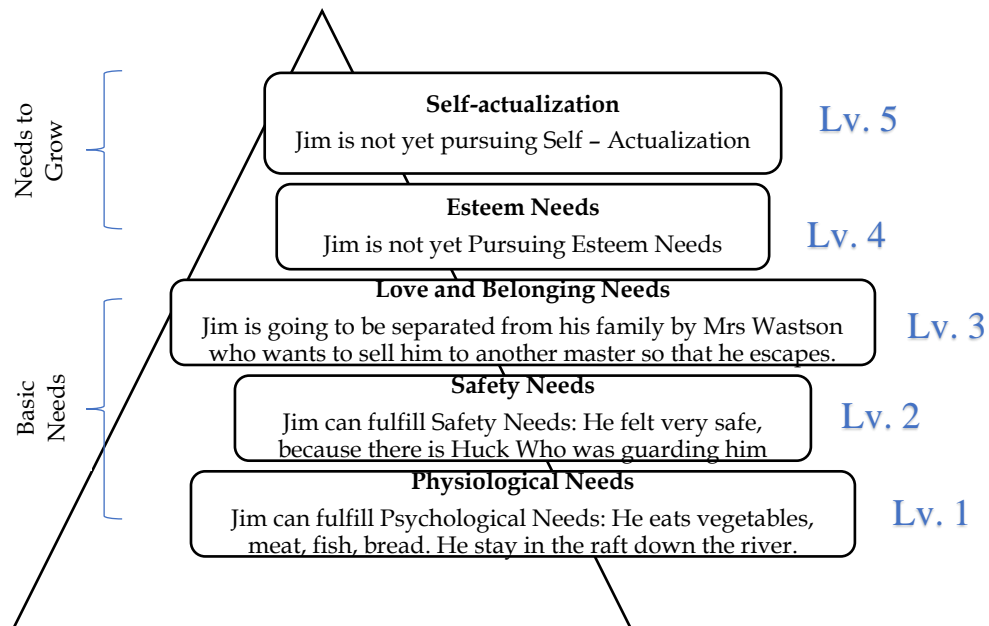


Figure 3. Phase 2 (Jim as a runaway slave)

In the second phase, during Jim's escape, the live needs that can be fulfilled is only physiological and safety needs. Jim runs away from Mrs. Watson after hearing that he is going to be sold by his master to a slave trader. "... I hear old missus tell de widder she gwyne to sell me down to Orleans..." (Twain & Wasowski, 2001, p. 51).

Hearing that conversation Jim is very sad. Jim feels he has been a good slave so far, but why he is going to be traded. Jim knows if he is sold, he will never be able to see his family again. Jim is very sad and afraid if he will never meet his wife and children. Jim knows the risks he would face if he runs away. And, this is a difficult choice for Jim. However, there is no other way for Jim to escape. Thus, Jim can still meet his family. Finally, Jim decides to run away that night.

"What's de use er makin' up de camp fire to cook strawbries en sich truck? But you got a gun, hain't you? Den we kin git sumfn better den strawbries" (Twain & Wasowski, 2001, p. 50).

The quotation explains that Jim has fulfilled his physiological needs, i.e., need of air to breathe, food to eat, water to drink, etc. as show in above quotation saying that Jim can eat fruits and vegetables that are found in the forest. It is especially after he meets with Huck that he can eat meat and fish, which then hide together in a cave in the forest. One day their whereabouts are known by white people, so that they run away using a raft because at that time there are many white people looking for them in the forest.

"...But lawsy, how you did fool 'em, Huck! Dat wuz de smartes' dogdge! I tell you, chile, I'spec it save' ole Jim – ole Jim ain't going forgit you for dat, honey" (Twain & Wasowski, 2001, p. 88).

From the quotation, it is found that that after Jim meets Huck, Jim feels safer because there is Huck who protects him whenever they confront those chasing him. However, even with Huckleberry Finn as his new best friend, he cannot stand living without his family as he cannot not see his them while running away. That is why, Jim tries to run away to a free state, where there is no slavery to work and to earn money in order to buy the freedom of his enslaved family. Jim will strive to earn money until he can gather with his family again to fulfill his love and belonging need.

"He would go to saving up money and never spend a single cent, and when he got enough he would buy his wife, which was owned on a farm close to where Miss Watson lived, and then they would both work to buy the two children" (Twain & Wasowski, 2001, p. 85).

From the quotation, it is shown that Jim is trying to fulfill his love and belonging needs in the manifestation of his family. Therefore, it can be said that Jim's achievement is still at the Safety Needs stage and, on the other side, in the process of fulfilling his Love and Belonging Needs.

Phase 3: Jim as a free man

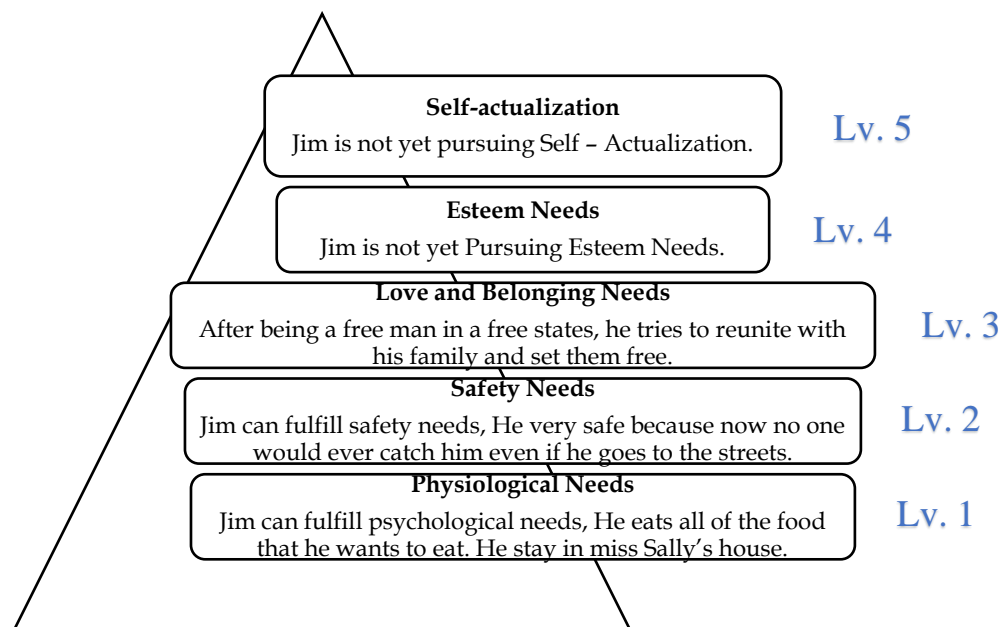


Figure 4. Phase 3 (Jim as a free man)

In the third or last phase, the levels of needs Jim can fulfill are physiological and safety needs. Jim has already got his freedom by the

assistance of Huckleberry Finn. Many people, who grant Jim's freedom, agree that Jim is a good slave and he has the right to live free like white people, as stated in the novel "...and give him all he wanted to eat, and a good time, and nothing to do" ([Twain & Wasowski](#), 2001, p. 237).

From the above quotation, it is explained that as a free man, Jim has fulfilled psychological Needs. Jim can eat with satisfaction and eat all of the food that he wants to eat. He can stay and relax without having to do work like it was when he was a slave. Jim even gets what he wants so far, to be a free man.

"We had Jim out of the chains in no time, and when Aunt Polly and Uncle Silas and Aunt Sally found out how good he helped the doctor nurse Tom, they made a heap of fuss over and fixed him up prime..." ([Twain & Wasowski](#), 2001, p. 237).

The above quotation explains that Jim has fulfilled the safety needs. Jim got his freedom, the thing that he always wants to have. However, all that thing does not satisfy him. Jim still wants to be reunited with his family and get love them. Being a free man is not enough for him.

Jim's motivation to run away in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Four motivations of Jim to run away are found in this research. The first motivation is Mrs. Watson madness. The second motivation is a slave trade that makes him a trade object. The third motivation is to pursue freedom. And the last motivation is to pursue his happiness. The detail explanation is as follows.

Mrs. Watson's anger

As Mrs. Watson's slave, he always obeys whatever his master tells him. But Mrs. Watson always gets angry that makes him feel uncomfortable, as shown in the following quotation. "...dat's Miss Watson, she pecks on me all de time, en treats me pooty rough..." ([Twain & Wasowski](#), 2001, p. 51).

From the quote above, it is explained that Jim is very sad about what his master has been doing to him. Jim always tries to be a good slave, obeying everything his master said. Jim feels that what he is doing is often seen wrongly by his master. This kind of situation makes him feel very depressed.

Jim as an object of a slave trade

The second motivation deals with Mrs. Watson's intention to sell Jim to a slave trader. It happens when Jim hears the conversation of Mrs. Watson with a slave trader discusses about a plan of selling him. Jim cannot accept it. The fact that he is going to be traded makes him choose to run away, as shown in the following quotation.

"I hear old missus tell de widder she gwyne to sell me down to Orleans, but she didn' want to, but she could git eight hund'd dollars for me, en it 'uz sich a big stack o' money she couldn' resis'" ([Twain & Wasowski](#), 2001, p. 51).

From the quote above, it is explained that Miss Watson is going to sell Jim. Jim initially thinks that his master will never sell him, but when there is an

offer of so much amount of money, the master cannot reject it. Jim is hurt to hear it, deciding to run away. If Jim is sold, he thinks he will never see his family again.

Pursuing Freedom

The third motivation is Jim's pursuit of freedom. He wants to be a free man who live comfortably like white people who have their own freedom. Jim wants to go to a free country in Cairo, as shown in the following quotation. "He said he'd be mighty sure to see it, because he'd be a free man the minute he seen it..." (Twain & Wasowski, 2001, p. 56).

From the quotation above, it can be seen that Cairo is a town where Jim can be a free man able to find some job to earn money. Cairo is Jim's destination and motivation to get his freedom. There he can work without having to be a slave.

Pursuing His Happiness

The fourth motivation is Jim's happiness, which can only be achieved by freeing his wife and children, which means that they can live together freely and happily, as shown in the following quotation.

"... he would go to saving up money and never spend a single cent, and when he got enough he would buy his wife, which was owned on a farm close to where Miss Watson lived; and then they would both work to buy the two children" (Twain & Wasowski, 2001, p. 85).

Jim really focuses to get money in order buy his wife and children's freedom, as stated in the above quotation. Jim is indeed a black slave but he has thought and feeling like anyone else. Jim wants to be free with his family because for him to be a slave is a painful thing. Jim's motivation is also due to the fact that he wants to make amends for his daughter, Elizabeth, because Jim once made his child hurt since he has ever acted too rude to her.

"What makes me feel so bad dis time 'uz bekase I hear sumpn over yonder on de bank like a whack, er a slame, while ago, en it mine me er de time I treat my little 'lizabeth so ornery" (Twain & Wasowski, 2001, p. 135).

From the quotation above, it is explained how Jim feels sorry for what he has done. Jim has ever got angry at Elizabeth and now he regrets all that.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research covers the conclusions on the hierarchy of needs of Jim and his motivations of escaping from his white master in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The points of the conclusions are as follows: Based on the analysis of the hierarchy of needs of Jim's character, Jim's life is divided into (3) three phases: 1) The phase when Jim is still enslaved by the master, 2) The phase when Jim becomes an escaping slave, and 3) The phase when Jim becomes a free man. the difference from the three phases above is when Jim was still a slave to Mrs. Watson. He is still able to fulfill physiological needs, safety needs, and love and belonging needs. However, when Jim runs away, he lost his love and belonging needs because Jim was so far apart from

his wife and children. In this case, the researchers concluded that basically every human being only needs two life-need fulfillments, namely; physiological needs and safety needs without thinking about anything else. Relevant to the above conclusions, there are 4 (Four) Jim's motivations to run away. The motivations are: 1) Mrs. Watson's anger, 2) Jim as capital gain, 3) Pursue freedom, 4) Pursue his happiness. From the four Jim's motivations, the researchers found that Jim's motivation was to run away from Mrs. Watson is due to his discomfort with his master who is always angry and will sell Jim. On the other side, as a human Jim also considers himself entitled to freedom like other people. Jim also wants happiness in himself, because happiness is the basis that every human being wants to achieve.

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Conflict of Interest Statement: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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