**Beyond Survival: A Psychoanalytic Exploration of Human Needs in Toni Morrison’s *God Help the Child***

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**Abstract**

Drawing on a psychological study, the paper tackles the Afro-American Toni Morrison’s God Help the Child (2015). The psychological approach draws upon the psychoanalytical theory of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), the founder of psychoanalysis. The psychological approach explores the character’s motivation and behaviors. Furthermore, Abraham Maslow’s theory comes about as an alternative to psychoanalysis and behaviorism beliefs. Maslow’s theory is called the hierarchy of human needs. Maslow’s hierarchy is displayed as a pyramid, including physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization. Thus, the paper aims to analyze the hierarchy of needs by Maslow (1908–1970) of the main character, i.e., Lula Ann/Bride in God Help the Child, and to identify Bride’s dominant need. As a result, the paper has reached five findings: (1) Bride fulfills her physiological needs with the help of her mother. (2) She fulfills her safety needs of freedom from anxiety and hatred when she leaves her oppressed mother. (3) Bride satisfies her love and belongingness needs when she falls in love with Booker, her boyfriend. (4) Bride’s esteem needs are positive and she has self-confidence when she is accepted by others. (5) She fulfills her self-actualization needs when she wants to be a good mother. Hence, Bride’s human needs are fulfilled by other people.

***Keywords****: Abraham Maslow, God Help the Child, human needs, Toni Morrison*

1. **Introduction**

Toni Morrison (1931–2019) is an Afro-American writer. Morrison is noted for her examination of the black experience in American society. She is the winner of the Noble Prize for literature. All of her works are about racism, sexism, oppression, and family relationship. In other words, the central theme of Morrison’s works is the black American experience. In her works, characters struggle to find themselves. She has written eleven novels such as *Beloved* (1987), *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Playing in the Dark* (1992), *Love* (2003), *Home* (2012), and *God Help the Child* (2015). The researcher selects *God Help the Child* among other Morrison’s works because it is a psychological novel. Moreover, it focuses on the behavior and mind of the characters.

Many studies have been done on Morrison, whether independently or in comparison with other authors. A study like *Polyphony of Toni Morrison’s God Help the Child* (2016) by Jihan Zayed aims to study the novel in light of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism. Among the studies devoted entirely to Morrison’s novel is *Black Women Oppression in Toni Morrison’s God Help the Child* (2019) by Vina Hidayati. It uses black feminism to discover the social phenomena of black women’s oppression and struggle. In addition, a study like *An Analysis of Toni Morrison’s God Help the Child from the Perspective of Trauma Theory* (2020) by Liting Wang, aims to focus on the theme of the trauma of black offspring, especially the impact on the growth of black children in their childhood. Moreover, in *An Impact and Reminiscence on Toni Morrison’s God Help the Child* (2022), Josephine Princey and Shaifali Puri focus on the stigmatization of Afro-American women by white American standards. The study has concluded that Morrison depends on postcolonial and feminist theory to display the suffering of black people in the novel. In doing so, the perspective of the current study shows how Morrison depends on psychological theory to analyze and understand the mind and behavior of the main character in the novel.

# The paper seeks to answer two questions: (1) How does Bride display the fulfillment of Maslow’s hierarchy in Morrison’s *God Help the Child*? (2) Which one of Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs is the most dominant in the novel? Largely speaking, the psychological approach draws upon the psychoanalytical theory of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), the founder of psychoanalysis. It aims to understand the text, writer, and reader. The main notion of the psychological approach is the existence of human unconsciousness feelings, impulses, and desires about which one is unaware. However, it affects human emotions and behaviors. The psychological approach explores the character’s motivation. Moreover, it is used to analyze and describe the reader’s response to the text. Therefore, human beings have needs in their life. Needs mean necessities for human beings to continue their life. Humans cannot avoid their needs. These needs may be objective, subjective, or physical. Objective needs, for example, are the need for food. Thus, many differences in human needs must be fulfilled.

1. **Theoretical and Historical Framework**

Abraham Maslow (1908–1970), an American psychologist, sees that human needs are divided into five levels called the hierarchy of human needs, and they must be fulfilled and satisfied. Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs is a theory of human motivation. The four lower levels of hierarchy needs are grouped as deficiency needs (D-needs) related to physiological needs, safety needs, love and belongingness needs, and self-esteem needs. The top level is known as growth needs related to self-actualization needs. Deficiency needs must be met, while growth needs shape behaviors. Wilda Yunita states: “The basic concept is that the higher needs in this hierarchy only come into focus once all the needs that are lower down in the pyramid are mainly or entirely satisfied. Growth forces create upward movement in the hierarchy, whereas regressive forces push prepotent needs further down the hierarchy” (20). Physiological needs are at the basic level such as the needs for thirst and food. If both the physiological and safety needs are well gratified, then love and belongingness needs will emerge. The fourth level of the hierarchy of human needs is esteem needs that lead to feelings of worth, self-confidence, strength, and capability of being useful in the world. Finally, the last level is self-actualization; it is a peak of the hierarchy of human needs.

Maslow’s hierarchy is displayed as a pyramid consisting of five levels. The lowest levels of the pyramid of human needs are made up of the basic needs, while, the complex needs are at the top. Once lower-level needs are met, a person moves on to the next level of human needs. As a person progresses up the pyramid of needs, needs become social and psychological. According to Maslow, “[m]otivation theory is not synonymous with behavior theory […]. [B]ehavior is almost always motivated, it is also almost always biologically, culturally and situationally determined as well” (5). Motivation refers to the direction, initiation, and persistence of behaviours. It is a temporal state that is not be confused with emotion or personality. In other words, motivation is the willingness and desire to do something. Maslow argues that human needs are understood concerning a hierarchy of needs. It is worth mentioning that human beings are social beings who cannot escape others’ help to fulfill and satisfy their needs. For instance, humans fulfill their love and belongingness needs through others such as family and friends. As a result, humans need others to fulfill their needs. So, they cannot live alone.

Hence, deficiency needs are termed D-needs. They motivate a person when he/she is unmet. The first level of Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs is physiological needs. For Maslow, physiological needs are “the needs that [are] usually taken as the starting point for motivation theory are the so-called physiological drives” (7). They are an efficient indication of needs or lack in the body. Physiological needs include the need to breathe, drink water, regulate homeostasis, eat, and dispose of bodily wastes. Every person requires all previous needs because they are the main needs of the human being. Maslow argues that most people in society meet physiological needs. Therefore, when these needs are met, the next need(s) on the hierarchy emerge(s) as a dominant force in directing and controlling behaviour. The main aim of physiological needs is to maintain the normal and healthy functioning of the body.

It can be seen that physiological needs are fundamental to all humans. They are the earliest to develop in terms of the human lifespan. Therefore, human actions are motivated by physiological needs that progress from basic to complex. Physiological needs are vital to survival. Maslow states that physiological needs “serve as channels for all sorts of other needs […]. These physiological needs are the most prepotent of all needs” (36). The second level of the hierarchy of human needs is safety needs. According to G. Boeree, “when physiological needs are largely taken care of, this second layers [*sic*] of needs come into play. You will become increasingly interested in finding safe circumstances, stability, protection […]. You become concerned […] with your fears and anxieties” (183). Safety needs represent security in the environment. They are triggered in emergencies. Therefore, higher needs are unimportant when a person’s life is endangered. A person’s behaviour reflects his/her attempts to remain secure. For example, a child needs safety and security. Inconsistency, unfairness, or injustice in the parents makes a child feel unsafe and anxious. This treatment makes the world look unpredictable, unsafe, or unreliable. Maslow points out: “Parental outbursts of rage or threats of punishment directed to the child, calling him names, speaking to him harshly […] or physical punishment […] elicit such total panic and terror in the child” (*A Theory of Human Motivation* 19). He adds: “In some children, this terror may represent also a fear of loss of parental love, it can also occur in completely rejected children, who seem to cling to the hating parents more for […] safety and protection than because of hope of love” (*Ibid* 20). Any child prefers a safe and organized world; he/she needs a parent to protect him/her from harm.

The third level of the hierarchy of human needs is love and belongingness needs. For Maslow, “if both the physiological and the safety needs are fairly well gratified, then there will emerge the love, affection, and belongingness needs, and the whole cycle described will repeat itself with this new center” (*Ibid* 26). A person hungers for affectionate relations with others; or a place in his/her group, and he/she will seek to achieve his/her goals. Maslow sees that a person who does not have friends, a beloved, children, or a wife, he/she “feels sharply the pangs of loneliness, of ostracism, of rejection, of friendlessness, of rootlessness” (*Motivation and Personality* 43). A person can exhibit his/her love and belongingness needs in his/her desire to marry, have a family, and be a part of society. As a result, any good society must satisfy these needs. In other words, love, acceptance, and belonging are social needs. The need for emotional relationships, family relationships, social groups, friendship, and religious organizations drives human behaviours. Maslow asserts: “Love needs involve both giving and receiving love” (*Ibid* 45). To avoid depression, loneliness, and anxiety, it is significant for people to feel accepted and loved by others. Hence, they need to love and be loved.

At the fourth level in Maslow’s hierarchy is the need for respect and appreciation. Esteem needs play a prominent role in motivating behaviour. At this level, it is important to gain the appreciation of other people. Esteem needs include self-esteem and personal worth. A person needs to sense that he/she is valued by other people and feels that he/she contributes to the world. Harbert Petri and John Govern state that esteem needs “can be broken down into subcategories— a need for self-esteem and a need for esteem from others” (336). On the one hand, A person who can satisfy esteem needs by achieving positive self-esteem feels confident in his/her abilities. On the other hand, a person who has negative self-esteem feels inferior. According to Kendra Cherry, “[t]ogether, the esteem and social levels make up what is known as the “psychological needs” of the hierarchy” (*para* 16). The need for self-esteem motivates a person to strive for achievements, confidence, independence, strength, and freedom. While, the need for esteem from others involves a desire for recognition, reputation, status, and appreciation by others of a person’s abilities and a feeling of importance. Thus, when esteem needs are fulfilled, a person has feelings of self-worth and self-confidence and sees him/herself as having a purpose in the world. While a person who has low self-esteem has little self-worth.

The deficiency needs are seen as “basic”, and self-actualization needs are seen as “growth needs” or “being”. The peak of the hierarchy of human needs is self-actualization needs. At this level, a self-actualizing person is self-aware, concerned with personal growth, less concerned with others’ opinions, and interested in fulfilling his/her potential. Maslow says: “What a man *can* be, he must *be*” (*A Theory of Human Motivation* 29). These needs vary from one person to another. For Maslow, “[for example,] one individual may take the form of the desire to be an ideal mother” (*Ibid* 30). At the self-actualization level, a person’s behaviour is motivated by various conditions, than the other needs at the lower level. These needs are values such as beauty, goodness, honesty, and truth, and they provide meaning to the life of the self-actualized person. For Maslow, there are different characteristics of a self-actualizing person: He/she embraces the realities and facts of the world (including him/herself) rather than avoiding or denying them, a person is spontaneous in his/her actions and ideas, he/she is interested in solving problems of his/her self and others, solving problems is a key focus in his/her life, he/she feels a closeness to others and appreciates life, and a person objectively sees all issues. According to Petri and Govern, “[a] self-actualized person is a very positive one […]. [He/she is] motivated to grow all that [he/she is] capable of becoming” (337). Hence, self-actualization is a process of developing and growing. Hence, psychology is the science of behaviour and mind. So, a literary text is a psychological activity where the writer uses his/her deep feelings, creative power, and inspiration. One of the novels that describe the struggle to fulfill the hierarchy of human needs is Toni Morrison’s *God Help the Child.*

1. **Survival and Psychoanalytic Exploration**

*God Help the Child* (2015) tells the story of the Afro-American girl, Lula Ann. She has black skin. Lula Ann is the daughter of light-skinned parents. When she is born, her mother, Sweetness, is surprised because of Lula Ann’s black skin. Lula Ann’s blackness causes problems for her parents. So, their marriage falls apart. Lula Ann’s father blames Sweetness for their daughter’s dark skin and treats his daughter as strange. He refuses to get involved in the life of his daughter; he never touches her. So, he decides to leave his wife and daughter. Sweetness becomes alone with the full responsibility for her helpless daughter. Roxane Gay states: “*God Help the Child* is the kind of novel where you can feel the magnificence just beyond your reach […]. The story carries the shape of a far grander book” (*para* 8). The novel offers the psychological of Lula Ann, as a child and an adult, in detail. Her personality represents the confusion of human life, where in her childhood to adulthood Lula Ann faces many issues to fulfill and satisfy her hierarchy of human needs.

In order to understand what needs Lula Ann, the protagonist; must be fulfilled, the researcher applies the hierarchy of human needs by Maslow, *i.e.*, physiological needs, safety needs, love and belongingness needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. As mentioned earlier, physiological needs are the starting point for fulfilling and satisfying human needs. Thus, they are the basic and strongest needs because they come first in a person’s search for satisfaction. In *God Help the Child*, Lula Ann is a girl from a poor family. Her father leaves his wife, Sweetness. So, she takes responsibility to fulfill her living expenses. It is difficult for Sweetness, as a black woman, to find a suitable job. In other words, she has no opportunity to increase her economic status. So, she and her daughter remain to be poor. Although Sweetness’ skin is brighter, her status cannot save her from other people’s unfair treatment since she is seen as poor.

After Lula Ann’s father leaves his family, he begins to send just fifty dollars a month. Sweetness says: “My night job at the hospital got me and Lula Ann off welfare. Which was a good thing. I wish they [American society] would stop calling it welfare” (14). The word “welfare” in American society refers to poor people. It gives black people the impression that white people pay taxes to poor black people. Sweetness works as a nurse. She cannot get any opportunity for increasing her wealth, status, and power throughout her job. As a result, her low-paid salary and the welfare from her husband do not pay off her basic life needs. At the same time, Sweetness must pay the rent on time. She provides for her baby economically. Lula Ann is ill-treated by her parents because they are ashamed of her blackness. They refuse her because she has black skin, blue eyes, and curly hair. Lula Ann’s skin disgusts her mother when she is breastfeeding at the hospital. As a result, Sweetness stops breastfeeding her baby when she returns home. She cannot look at her child. Sweetness says: “It’s not my fault. So you can’t blame me […]. It didn’t take more than an hour after they pulled her [her daughter] out from between my legs to realize something was wrong […]. She was so black she scared me. Midnight black, Sudanese black” (12). This action leaves little Lula Ann with no secure attachment or emotional closeness.

It can be seen that caring for a child involves covering his/her basic needs like shelter, sleep, and food. So, Sweetness provides shelter and food for her helpless child, but she cannot cover her daughter’s emotional needs. Lulu Ann says: “She [her mother] had to bathe me. Rinse me” (29). Moreover, Susann Volker *et al* state: “The infant’s early experiences of behavioural contingency might strengthen confidence in acting effectively and […], the security of self-regulation. Independently of experiences of emotional closeness, the individual may develop a high level of autonomy”. Volker *et al*. add: “[The individual]will be able to solve problems and to cope with fear without social support. The experience of emotional closeness, on the other hand, may strengthen the ability to relate to others and thus to gain social support” (934). The excerpt shows the importance of emotional needs. The experience of emotional needs helps one to have relationships with others. In this case, Lula Ann is deprived emotionally and physically, not economically. Therefore, it is not a problem for Lula Ann, as a child, to meet and fulfill her physiological needs, including her needs for water, food, and shelter from her mother. She does not struggle to fulfill them.

After physiological needs are fulfilled and satisfied, safety needs begin to rise, such as protection, dependency, stability, security, and freedom from fear and anxiety. The most significant phase in the life of the infant is childhood. The parents should provide their child with love and establish feelings of safety. They are the only ones who can establish this security. During childhood, Lula Ann receives unfair treatment from her parents. Her mother believes that she will be humiliated and marginalized because her black skin is seen as the lower racial group. So, Sweetness hurts Lula Ann’s suffering and pain. Instead of being a caring and loving parent, she distances herself from her child. For her, “[n]ursing her was like having a pickaninny sucking my teat” (13). The word “pickaninny” reflects the depth of how disgusted Sweetness feels by her baby. Moreover, Sweetness insists on hiding her daughter. She refuses to walk outside with her black child because she does not want to be accused or judged to have an affair with men by others because of her daughter’s black skin. So, Sweetness leaves her daughter to a teenage cousin when she works. She feels ashamed due to their contrasting skin color. Sweetness says: “I didn’t take her outside much anyway because when I pushed her in the baby carriage, friends, or strangers would lean down and peak in to say something nice and then gives a start or jump back before growing. That hurt” (14). The unsecured attachment between Lula Ann and her parents is the main reason for child abuse. Lula Ann feels powerless due to the rejection of her family. As a result, she feels insecure. In other words, Lula Ann is powerless to challenge her mother. She is abandoned by her family. So, she thinks following her mother’s orders is the only chance to get her mother’s attention. Lula Ann needs to be loved and accepted. So, she makes acceptance her goal in life.

Lula Ann suffers from physical and psychological violence. Physical violence reflects any actions intended to injure the body of the victim. Mostly, the victim(s) who face(s) physical violence experience(s) physical losses and trauma due to being injured. While psychological violence includes harsh actions or words of body language to humiliate or insult the victim(s). So, Lula Ann experiences physical violence from her mother. As stated in the following quote by Lula Ann: “I didn‘t make a sound, didn‘t even raise a hand to protect myself when she [her mother] slapped my face then punched me in the ribs before smashing my jaw with her fist then butting my head with hers”. Lula Ann goes on to say: “[Her mother] was panting when she dragged and threw me out the door. I can still feel her hard fingers clenching the hair at the back of my neck, her foot on my behind and I can still hear the crack of my bones hitting concrete” (30). The excerpt shows the physical violence that happens to little Lula Ann. It describes Sweetness’ behaviour toward her child. She injured her body. The injuries include slapping Lula Ann’s face, and actions that damage her body. Lula Ann receives the injuries from Sweetness since she is afraid. Moreover, Lula Ann remembers the way her mother used to punish her: “I made little mistake deliberately, but she had ways to punish me without touching the skin she hated— bed without suppers, lock me in my room— but her screaming at me was the worst” (29). Lula Ann’s inner feelings toward her mother, Sweetness, reflect Judith Herman’s words: “In the abusive family environment, the exercise of parental power is arbitrary, capricious, and absolute” (71). It is seen that Sweetness hurts her daughter physically and emotionally. Lula Ann is a victim of violence. Her parents commit neglect and abuse her. Therefore, she feels that she is submissive and inferior. According to Herman, an author in psychology, “Trauma in childhood forms and deforms the personality. The child trapped in an abusive environment is faced with formidable tasks of adaptation”. Herman adds: “She must find a way to preserve a sense of trust in people who are untrustworthy, safety in a situation that is unsafe, control in a situation that is terrifyingly unpredictable, [and] power in a situation of helplessness” (70). In this case, Lula Ann suffers from fear, distrust, lack of self-confidence, and isolation.

In addition, Sweetness wants to give up her child for adoption or leave her on the steps of the church. She holds a blanket over her defenseless baby’s face and presses it. Sweetness is disgusted by her child’s skin that she wants to kill her. According to Roger Luckhurst, Morrison, through the text, creates an “emphatic unstellment [*sic*] in the reader” (91). This empathy makes the reader(s) feel Lula Ann’s sorrow. As a result, Lula Ann cannot fulfill her safety needs during childhood. In other words, she cannot find peace or love in her childhood; she is rejected, hated, and ostracized by her family. It can be said that Sweetness does not establish a comforting and secure childhood for her daughter. For Volker *et al.*, “[w]e assume that maternal sensitivity during early face-to-face interactions is related to later emotional closeness, whereas the contingency of maternal reactions towards the infant’s signals is related to later security of attachment” (921). They mean that the way the mother deals with her child will affect his/her emotional life as he/she matures. So, face-to-face interactions between the mother and her child develop an emotional closeness later in his/her life. So, Sweetness does not provide her daughter with security.

When she grows up, Lula Ann decides to live in California and move away to eliminate the unfair treatment she receives from her family, the source of her miserable childhood. She struggles to be free. Lula Ann lives alone in a city far away from her oppressed mother. For Herman, “in the setting of childhood abuse or neglect, dissociation is thought to be a self-protective survival technique in which a child a child (or adult) slips into dissociate state in order to escape fully experiencing trauma that is unbearable” (1). Lula Ann isolates herself to escape from the horrible surrounding environment. She cannot forgive her mother as she grows up because memories chase her throughout her life. She tries to find a safe environment to live in. Moreover, she decides to change her name to Bride. It is seen that the old name, Lula Ann, reminds her of her miserable childhood and her oppressed mother; while the new name, Bride, is a new start for a new life. She also works as a cosmetics distributor. Bride becomes successful and independent, although her past haunts and complicates her present life.

It can be concluded that Bride’s safety needs are fulfilled. The kinds of Bride’s safety needs are dependency, security, and freedom from fear and anxiety. Moving to a safer place to start a new life away from her past is another trial to recovery trial. If the physiological and safety needs are well gratified, then there will emerge affection, love, and belongingness needs. As mentioned earlier, when Sweetness gives birth to Lula Ann, her life changes dramatically because her husband leaves her. She considers her child a heavy burden. Sweetness cannot love her: “I hate to say it, but from the very beginning in the maternity ward the baby, Lula Ann, embarrassed me. Her birth skin was pale like all babies', even African ones, but it changed fast. I thought I was going crazy when she turned blue-black in front of my eye” (13). Sweetness feels alienated from her black baby. She does not let her come near her, not emotionally or physically. Throughout Lula Ann’s childhood, Sweetness sets boundaries and limits for their relationships. For example, Sweetness prevents her from calling her mother or Mama, instead, she asks her to call her Sweetness: “I told her to call me “Sweetness” instead of “Mother” or “Mama.” It was safer. Being that black and having what I think are too-thick lips calling me, “Mama” would confuse people” (14). Sweetness finds it difficult to love her child. As a result, Sweetness and Lula Ann are separated from each other emotionally and physically. They do not talk. Sweetness’s parenting does not include closeness, emotional security, and love. Moreover, she does not give her daughter advice to handle the rough reality.

So, when Bride grows up, she treats her mother the same way in return. According to Maslow, “love needs involve both giving and receiving love” (*Motivation and Personality* 45). Bride does not care for her oppressed mother. Sweetness realizes this when Lula Ann moves away: “What you do to children matters. And they might never forget […]. She sends me money and stuff, but I ain’t seen her in I don’t know how long” (36). Hence, there is no love in Sweetness and Bride’s relationship. Suffice it to say that Bride/Lula Ann is born in a world where she does not experience love and affection. There is a gap between Bride and her parents. This gap grows bigger, leaving Bride with loss and longing: “Bride quickly dashed a bright memory of Sweetness humming some blues song while washing panty hose in the sink, little Lula Ann hiding behind the door to hear her. How nice it would have been if mother and daughter could have sung together” (67). The song represents their broken-up relationship. According to Linda Mydland, “Lula Ann is left with one parent physically absent from her life and the other physically present yet emotionally absent” (47). Sweetness never touches her daughter. Lula Ann says: “I used to pray she would slap my face or spank me just to feel her touch. I made little mistakes deliberately, but she had ways to punish me without touching the skin she hated” (29). So, Lula Ann cannot relate to other people because of the absence of love and support in her miserable childhood.

An incident proving that Lula Ann craved her mother’s love and attention is when she is asked to testify in court against Sofia Huxley, a teacher accused of sexual harassment, she testifies against an innocent teacher to please her mother. In this case, she gets her mother’s attention for a short while. She feels loved. Lula Ann says: “So my mother would hold my hand […]. And look at me with proud eyes, for once […]. She even liked me” (108). Sweetness is content with Lula Ann for the first time because Lula Ann does what her mother requires her to do: “I glanced at Sweetness, she was smiling like I’ve never seen her smile before […]. As we walked down the courthouse steps, she held my hand, my hand. She never did that before and it surprised me as much as it pleased me because I always knew she didn’t like touching me” (29). Lula Ann is a victim; she tries to please her mother to know her touch. As a result, she loses her self-acceptance because she is not taught to build pride and confidence. For Herman, “the child victim often becomes a superb performer. She attempts to do whatever is required of her […]. She […] need[s] to find favor in her parents’ eyes” (76). Lula Ann is a child to understand that what she does will ruin Sofia’s life; all she needs is her mother’s love and attention.

Moreover, instead of providing her daughter with the security, protection, and love she needs in life, Sweetness learns her daughter to avoid trouble and act as if she is invisible. She justifies her shortcomings: “[H]er black skin would scare white people or make the laugh and trick her […]. See if it hadn’t trained Lula Ann properly she wouldn’t have known to always cross the street and avoid white boys” (35). So, the family should provide their child with nutrition and love to show normal and healthy development. Sweetness does the opposite with her poor child. Bride cannot handle future difficulties.

Lula Ann is also rejected by her society, especially during her childhood. She experiences stereotypes and bullying in her life. For example, at school, she is stereotyped by her friends. Lula Ann says: “I was six years old and had never heard the words “nigger” or “cunt” before, but the hate and revulsion in them didn‘t need definition” (45). As the school is the first place for a child to interact and communicate, Lula Ann knows the social stigma about her blackness from her friend. In this case, the social stigma spread by adults affects the mindset of children. Social stigma argues black people are shunned and marginalized. Bride is called Cunt or Negro by her friends; they call her by these terms to humiliate her. So, she feels that she does not belong in society. She also experiences bullying at school: “One day a girl and three boys heaped a bunch of bananas on my desk and did their monkey imitations. They treated me like a freak, strange, soiling like a spill of ink on white paper” (37). She experiences psychological violence because her friends insult her at school. They treat her like a strange. So, she suffers from loneliness and humiliation.

Further, as a grownup, Bride’s stereotype continues in her workplace. Although Bride and her white close friend, Brooklyn, love each other, and their friendship depends on mutual support and understanding, Brooklyn, a white friend, compares their beauty. Brooklyn says: “I shouldn‘t be thinking this. But her position at Sylvia, Inc., might be up for grabs. How can she persuade women to improve their looks with products that can‘t improve her own? There isn‘t enough YOU, GIRL foundation in the world to hide eye scars, a broken nose and facial skin scraped down to pink hypodermis” (26). This statement reflects Brooklyn’s thinking about Bride. She expels Bride from the definition of women’s beauty. For Brooklyn, Bride’s blackness does not reflect the ideal and real of a woman. Brooklyn sees that Bride should not work in the cosmetics field because her physical appearance looks worse. Moreover, she thinks that Bride is not suitable to be the manager of the cosmetics company. However, Bride does not realize that Brooklyn has a lot of envy and she wants her position in the company, Sylvia Inc. Brooklyn considers herself charming because she is a white woman. So, black people are seen as uneducated, rude, lazy, or cruel. Moreover, white people see themselves as dominant and black people are seen as submissive who cannot determine their identity. So, Bride suffers from the image created by the dominant. In addition, her mother learns her daughter to behave in an inferior manner, and not cause any trouble or draw unwanted attention to both of them. It is seen that Lula Ann suffers from discrimination because of her blackness.

Another incident shows how Bride is rejected by a white-dominated society. She is rejected by her old white lover and his family. Her old white boyfriend says to his parents: “Isn‘t she [Bride] beautiful? […]. Look at her, Mother? Dad? His eyes were gleaming with malice. But they [his parents] outclassed him with their warmth—however faked—and charm. His disappointment was obvious, his anger thinly repressed”. Bride says: “His parents even drove me to the train stop, probably so I wouldn‘t have to put up with his failed racist joke on them. I was relieved, even knowing what the mother did with my used teacup” (33). The phrase “is n’t she beautiful?” is sarcasm. They insult and humiliate her. The action of her old boyfriend and his oppressed family is a form of psychological violence. She is seen as an object for jokes. Her blackness is funny to be laughed at and mocked.

It is noted that Lula Ann does not find love in her childhood. As a grownup, Bride begins to search for safety, love, and care. She satisfies her safety needs by moving away from her oppressed mother. Actually, Bride searches for other people who help her to overcome her sufferings. At the age of twenty-three, she meets Booker, a white man. She falls in love with him. When she meets Booker, her life gets a new meaning. For Booker, Bride is different; she is not like other girls. Bride never asks him about his previous life. Booker thinks that she is his rescue. For Bride, Booker is different from the others she meets in her life. He is a respectful and loyal person; he is unlike anyone she has in her life. Booker represents a turning point for Bride.

As mentioned earlier, Bride is emotionally deprived. So, she hungers to love. When she meets Booker, finally, she has one person to guide and support her. Then, Bride decides to share and recall her miserable childhood, which is inflicted by her oppressed mother, with him. She tells him how he is humiliated and rejected as a child. He acknowledges her suffering and pain. Finally, the secure base is established for Bride. Booker makes Bride feel safe, curried, and in a sense owned. Bride says: “When I told Booker about it [her childhood], I laughed at first, pretending the whole thing was just silly. Welled, he held my head in the crook of his arm and pressed his chin in my hair” (44). Booker’s reaction and his empathic response to her old experience overwhelm her. Booker says: “It’s just a color. A genetic trait— not a flaw, not a curse, not a blessing nor a sin […]. Scientifically there is no such thing as race […]. [S]o racism without race is a choice” (101). Bride finds someone that can help her overcome her past. For Herman, “when the truth is finally recognized, survivors can begin their recovery” (1). Bride learns to hide her real emotions because her mother educates her to avoid trouble issues. According to Mydland, “the lack of communication between the two [Bride and Sweetness], the caregiver and child has [*sic*] caused Lula Ann to develop into [a] self-doubting person because of the unpredictable responses of Sweetness” (53). There is no communication between them. So, Bride decides to develop and establish a meaningful relationship with Booker. Suffice it to say that Booker is the only one to help Bride to recover. Bride’s struggles end by telling her story to Booker. She expresses her feelings freely. In other words, Bride, finally, can tell Booker about her traumatized experience. Booker is the key to Bride’s freedom from the past. He gains her trust and makes her open up.

It can be seen that when Bride finds love, she can heal from her childhood trauma. With Booker, she finds inner peace. For Herman, “[s]haring the traumatic experience with others is a precondition for the restitution of a sense of a meaningful world. In this process, the survivor seeks assistance not only from those closest to her but also from the wider community. The response of the community has a powerful influence on the ultimate resolution of the trauma” (51). Bride’s relationship with Booker can be seen as a means of recovery. She is given a chance for self-realization and healing. According to Randa Donia and Nermin Haikal, “voicing the trauma Bride suffers from is the only way that helps her to achieve full recovery” (29). Moreover, Bride tells Booker about Huxley. He encourages her to overcome her fear about her miserable childhood: “You’re not responsible for other folks’ evil”, and he advises her to “correct what [she] can; learn from [she] can’t” (44). Hence, Bride frees from her miserable childhood and false testimony that has a burdened all her past life. Morrison says: “Having confessed Lula Ann’s sins, she felt newly born. No longer forced to relive, no, outlive the disdain of her mother and the abandonment of her father” (114). From the explanation above, it can be concluded that Bride fulfills love and belongingness when she meets Booker. In her relationship with Booker, he can provide Bride with the stability and security she seeks. He helps her to heal her miserable past.

It can be said that a person has a desire or a need for a stable, firmly based, and high evaluation of him/herself, for self-esteem, self-respect, or for the esteem of other people. These needs will be divided into two sets: First, the desire for mastery, strength, achievement, adequacy, mastery and competence, confidence in the face of the world, and for freedom and independence; second, the desire for prestige and reputation, fame and glory, status, attention, recognition, dominance, dignity, importance, or appreciation. Satisfaction of self-esteem needs leads to feelings of worth, strength, capability, and self-confidence in being useful in the world. The person who fulfills his/her self-esteem needs, he/she does not depend on others and he/she is always ready to develop and reach their higher needs.

Bride also has the desire and need for a stable base, and it is a high evaluation of herself, for self-respect, or self-esteem, self-worth, and the esteem of other people. Hence, the first esteem need is self-respect or self-esteem. In this case, Bride wants freedom and independence. This is reflected when Bride decides to live alone away from her oppressed mother. Freedom to be anyone and freedom to do something that he/she wants. Moreover, Bride becomes independent when she applies for a job at Sylvia, Inc. Then, she becomes the manager at this cosmetics company. Moreover, she launches her own cosmetics line named YOU, GIRL: Cosmetics for Your Personal Millennium. So, Bride’s self-confidence is fulfilled. Hence, Bride’s esteem needs increase, and she gets a big motivation to change and build up her life. It can be concluded that her self-esteem is fulfilled. The second esteem need is the esteem of others. The esteem of other people is important for Bride. Although her self-esteem or self-respect is fulfilled, she wants care and appreciation from others. Thus, Booker appreciates her. She also gets the attention of others because she becomes a successful cosmetics distributor. Bride, finally, is accepted by herself, Booker, and society.

One of the issues that prove that Bride is a self-actualizing person is that she begins to embrace the facts and realities of the world. She becomes proud of her skin; Bride refuses to wear any makeup. She feels her inner beauty away from her blackness. Bride decides to take control of her life. For Herman, people who control their life known as “fortunate survivors” (70). She describes those survivors as people who “have found a way to take control of own their recovery and thus have become the subjects of their own quest for truth rather than the objects of inquisition” (70). Her friend tells her to be herself: “A panther in snow […]. Just you girl” (31). Herman writes how a child who experiences childhood abuse “must build a new life within a radically different culture from the one they left behind […]. Perhaps for the first time she can discover her own ambitions” (196–7). In addition, Bride becomes able to solve problems. She decides to take responsibility for her previous actions. For instance, when Bride knows about Huxley’s release, she wants to make Huxley’s life better. She offers her “two envelopes-the slim one with the airline gift certificate then the fat one with five thousand dollars. About two hundred dollars for each year if she had served a full sentence” (22). Bride wants to make up for Huxley by offering her money. She does this as a well-meaning act. Bride knows that she destroys Huxley’s life.

Finally, Bride’s ambition is to create a new life that she never has. She becomes pregnant. She tells Booker: “I’m pregnant and it’s yours” (122). Bride and Booker want to create a good life, or they want to re-live the childhood they do not have, through the unborn child. Both help each other to recover. She challenges the past through success and achievements. People in Bride’s current life see her as a successful and beautiful one. She succeeds in making white people accept her existence. Bride forgives her past pain to escape from feeling suffered: “Having confessed Lula Ann’s sins she felt newly born” (114). She is no longer chased by the nightmare, either her suffering from her family or her guilt toward Sofia. Her pain is healed. Bride wants a happy future with Booker. Together hope to be good parents and to love and protect their unborn baby. They decide to give their baby a happy life to start. Finally, her self-actualization needs are fulfilled when her healing process is fulfilled.

1. **Conclusion**

It can be concluded that esteem needs have two kinds, *i.e*., self-respect and respect from others, and Bride satisfies both of them. In achieving her self-esteem, Bride has confidence, independence, and freedom. With respect from others, Bride gets big support and appreciation from Booker. He makes her feel loved and respected. Even if all these needs are satisfied, it may still (if not always) expect that new needs will soon develop. Maslow says: “What a man *can* be, he *must* be” (*A Theory of Human Motivation* 29). This need may call self-actualization, namely, the tendency for him/her to be actualized in what he/she is potential. The clear appearance of these needs usually rests upon some prior satisfaction of the physiological, safety, love and belonging, and esteem needs. As explained above, Bride can actualize herself. She passes all the processes, gradually, and reaches her hopes. She decides to leave her miserable childhood in the past to lead a normal and healthy life in the present. For Linda, “[Bride] has mourned her past and enters a new stage in life” (70). She changes her name to Bride to start a new life and to be visible. She leaves her miserable past behind her by changing her name. She is proud of what she manages despite her upbringing. The name and job are not the only change to Bride, she begins to wear white clothes. Her friend advises her to “wear white [...]. Only white and all white all the time” (30). White clothes make her black skin more noticeable. Bride becomes successful in turning negative situations into positive ones. So, instead of covering and hiding her black skin, she uses it to establish her identity. She draws attention to herself by wearing these white dresses because white makes her dark skin appear darker. Her dark skin is her mother’s shame becomes Bride’s pride. Moreover, she decides to get a job where her dark skin is valued and seen as unique.

To sum up, Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs is fulfilled by others. In this case, Bride, the main character in *God Help the Child*, fulfills and satisfies her human needs with the help of others. She fulfilled her physiological needs without obstacles with the help of her mother; because she is a child. Hence, it does not matter for her to fulfill these needs. At the other levels of human needs, such as safety, love and belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization, Bride gets the obstacles in fulfilling her needs because her parents do not care about her. She attempts to fulfill these needs until she reaches her dream to be a great mother, not like her mother. Therefore, the most dominant hierarchy of human needs for Bride is love and belongingness. Bride’s aim is to be loved and accepted, and she wants to feel that she is included in society. Therefore, she is loved by Booker and decides to give love and attention to her unborn child because she is deprived of love in her childhood.

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