

TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES AND PSYCHOPATHIC TRAITS IN THE NOVEL *HANNIBAL RISING* BY THOMAS HARRIS: A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE MAIN CHARACTER

Femy Ramadhina ^{a)}, Agnes Setyowati H ^{a*)}, Ni Made Widisanti S ^{a)}

^{a)} Universitas Pakuan , Bogor, Indonesia

^{*)}Email correspondence: agnessetyowati@yahoo.com

Article history : accepted : 30 Juli 2020; revised : 08 Agustus 2020; approved : 28 Agustus 2020

ABSTRACT

This research's titled is "Traumatic Experiences and Psychopathic Traits in the Novel *Hannibal Rising* by Thomas Harris: A Psychological Study of The Main Character". This study aims is to show the effect of childhood traumatic memory on the psychopathic traits of the main character using intrinsic and extrinsic approach. This study also uses descriptive analysis methods and library research technique. The main character in this novel is Hannibal, he is a medical student who experiences post-traumatic stress disorder which is the result of the death of his sister. This resulted in Hannibal having psychopathic traits. His psychopathic trait has both negative and positive side. The negative side is effected by his aunt and led him to some of the murder cases that killed the criminals who killed his sister. The positive side however, despite his psychopathic traits and improper actions, he manage to achieve success in his career which indicates his remarkable accomplishment.

Keywords : memory; trauma psychopathic traits; psychological.

I.BACKGROUNDS

World War II ended with the surrender of Germany to the allies and the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States. However, the misery of the people, both those involved in the war and those affected by it did not end. Besides suffering physically, they also have to endure psychological and sociological pain. The trauma caused by experiencing the cruelty of war and witnessing their families, closest relatives, and people around him being tortured, injured, killed by the war are still haunting them, the traumatic experience causes their psyche to be shaken and disturbed. Quoted from the journal of *Kelingons Trauma Post-Disaster*, the general reaction to a traumatic event and experience is trying to eliminate it from consciousness, but the shadow of the incident remains in memory (Nirwana, 2012) Victims from the group of children are the most vulnerable and suffer the most than adults. They have not been able to save and recover from trauma, so the

chances of becoming further victims are high. As a result, they experience physiological and psychological (psychosocial) trauma due to the loss of one or both of their parents or family, (quoted from Sarwono in the journal *Respon Traumatik Anak-Anak Korban Banjir Bandang Di Wasior Papua Barat* (Traumatic Response of Children of Flash Flood Victims in Wasior, West Papua) by (Mulyadi, 2012)

Children who experience psychological trauma if not handled properly can experience PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) or stress disorder, which is a psychological disorder caused by the experience of witnessing or experiencing firsthand a terrible event, (quoted from Benseller in the journal *Respon Traumatik Anak-Anak Korban Banjir Bandang Di Wasior Papua Barat* (Mulyadi, 2012). Memories that store traumatic events in the past can result in mental confusion and trigger abnormal behavior and psychopathic traits.

Psychological phenomena experienced by people like this do not escape the attention of various groups of people, one of which are writers. Generally psychological issues of this kind are poured into a literary work in the form of short stories, drama, and romance. Sumardjo & Saini (1997: 3-4), states that literature is an expression of the human person in the form of experiences, thoughts, feelings, ideas, enthusiasm, beliefs, in a form of concrete images that evoke enchantment with language tools. Language in literature can be in the form of oral (oral literature) and in the form of writing (written literature such as short stories, novels).

To analyze the psychological aspects of the main character, the present writers uses psychoanalytic theory. According to Endraswara (2003: 196-197), Psychoanalysis is a special term in literary psychology research. There are several prominent figures in world psychoanalysis including Jung, Adler, and Freud. However, it is Sigmund Freud who directly talks about the process of creating art as a result of pressures and heaps of problems in the subconscious which are then sublimated into the form of creating works of art. Many psychological approaches rely on the psychoanalysis that Freud developed after conducting research, that human is dominated by their own inner nature. There is an *id*, an *ego*, and a *superego* in the human being that causes the person to always be at war with himself, restless, anxious, depressed, and so on. Psychopath is a form of behavior deviation that reflects a mental confusion that causes sufferers to do things

that violate rules such as social norms and legal rules according to Kartini Kartono in Kuntjojo (2009: 32).

Psychopathic themes are also commonly adopted in literary works, one of it is the novel *Hannibal Rising* by Thomas Harris that tells the origin of Hannibal Lecter's character traits who became a psychopath because of past childhood trauma and his actions in taking revenge on the criminals who tortured him and his younger sister when they were still very young which results in the death of his younger sister. The genius and skillful main character committed a number of murders without leaving a trace that can get him caught by the authorities.

In this study the problem discussed is the main character's past memory which causes him to experience psychiatric disorders according to psychoanalytic theory, the characteristics of psychopathic disorders, as well as the effects caused by the psychopathic traits of the main character on himself and on those around him.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a library research that uses qualitative descriptive techniques using Sigmund Freud's psychological approach. Data analysis uses descriptive methods, namely describing the text of the story based on the structure of the story structure and didactical elements accompanied by supporting text quotations. Data and information are collected through various sources, both from books and research results (thesis or scientific journals), both authentic and electronic. The purpose of this research is to analyze the personality of the main character in order to show the role of childhood traumatic

memory in shaping someone's psychopathic traits. In addition, this study is also conducted to show that traumatic memories of childhood can result in very fatal things both to the individual itself and the surrounding environment

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In accordance with the objectives of the study, this section presents the results and discussion of research that includes the traumatic memory of the main character that influence PTSD characteristics and psychopathic traits in the main character, and the impact of the main character's psychopathic traits on himself and the surrounding environment.

Researched in terms of his mentality, the main character, Hannibal, experienced post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and psychopathic traits. That is because the influence of his childhood traumatic memories. At first Hannibal lived with his father, mother and younger sister in Lecter Castle in Lithuania, but because of the war between German and Soviet soldiers, Lecter's family took refuge in their own cottage in the middle of the forest.

“Two hard hours brought them to a clearing beneath the canopy of the high forest. The hunting lodge had evolved over three hundred years from a crude shelter into a comfortable forest retreat, half-timbered with a steep roof to shed the snow.” (Harris, 2006: 10)

There are two important events that triggered Hannibal's trauma that caused him to experience PTSD in this time setting. Starting from the tragic death of his

parents due to the German army attack on his family's cottage, as described in the quote below.

“Hannibal, on the floor of the lodge, Mischa partly under him, saw his mother lying in the yard, bloody and her dress on fire.” (Harris, 2006: 36).

Another important event that took place at the Lecter cottage was the captivity and murder of his younger sister by NAZI sympathizers. The criminals consisted of six people who are Vladis Grutas, Zigmas Milko, Bronys Grentz, Enrikas Dortlich, Petras Kolnas, and Kazys Porvik. After they ran out of food, Mischa, who was sick at the time, was chosen by the criminals to be used as food so they could stay alive and the event was witnessed by Hannibal himself which caused his mentality disturbed. The physical and emotional abuse that he experienced triggered Hannibal to experience PTSD. Hannibal, who was about twelve years old at the time, was very weak in physical condition and his soul experienced and witnessed traumatic events that affected his mental condition until he was an adult. This time setting is also mentioned several times each time Hannibal is reminded of the tragic events that happened to him and when Hannibal dreamed at night, these two events led to the emergence of conflicts that arise in the story.

After the traumatic incident, Hannibal lived in an orphanage whose building is a former castle owned by his family. He lived there after the army found him in the middle of the jungle after the end of the war. After he was found, Hannibal felt numb and unable to feel happiness because he was always haunted by his past memories and withdrew from the people around him. That is one of the symptoms of PTSD.

Hannibal never socializes with his friends or talks with them. He is also reluctant to harm those who harass him, making him anti-social. He always withdraws from those around him and prefers to be alone. *Id* in the character of Hannibal is seclusion, silent, and attack anyone who disturbs him. His adjustment to the outside world is not good. Hannibal is a person whose soul is closed, not good at socializing or lacking association and socializing with others. The bond between *Id*, *Ego*, and *Superego* is out of balance because of the trauma he experienced in the past.

It is said that after being saved, Hannibal often had nightmares which were fragments of his childhood's traumatic memory. He dreamed about the event when the criminals brought Mischa to be killed. It made him scream when he was dreaming, made him feel anxious and scared. This is a symptom of PTSD, which is excessive stimulation that results in excessive response or inability to sleep and feelings of fear, including tremors that indicate anxiety.

Hannibal often falls silent when thinking about something and sometimes he does something unwanted when he remembers something unpleasant. One day while Hannibal was accompanying Lady Murasaki arranging flowers, he was silent and pensive, carried away by his mind as he saw the air in a boiling teapot.

“Hannibal heard it, heard the water boiling, looked at the surface of the boiling water and his face changed and the room went away.”
(Harris, 2006: 77).

Hannibal recalled the times when the criminals who had held him captive and cooked Mischa in his sister's bathtub. Fragments of memory that left an imprint on his mind always haunted him even after several years the incident had passed. This is also one of the symptoms of PTSD, which is the reappearance of images of events where a person relives a traumatic event and the impulsive behavior that appears includes aggressiveness.

After years of being haunted by a continuous nightmare and an impending trauma, he intends to end his fear by intending to search for the criminals one by one and get revenge. Hannibal used the serum used by Inspector Popil to interrogate a convicted criminal. He got the serum by reasoned to be used in his school's laboratory. After injecting the serum into his body, the fragments of his lost memory returned through his dream, unfortunately in his memory the criminals did not mention their names, but Hannibal recalls one event when one of the criminals he called the Cooker died carrying their dog tags in Lecter's cabin because of an attack, while the other five ran away. After this event, Hannibal began his search and did everything possible to avenge them even though his actions violated the prevailing norms and laws.

The explanations above shows PTSD experienced by Hannibal and what triggers it. Hannibal who directly experienced a traumatic event in the form of physical and psychological violence made his mental condition disrupted. He, who was always haunted by his traumatic memory, finally decided to end it by finding people involved in the traumatic event and taking revenge. That made him a man full of anger and revenge.

Hannibal's post-traumatic stress disorder caused by his childhood traumatic memory and revenge is a trigger for the emergence of psychopathic traits in him. Of all the events and Hannibal's character traits told in this novel, most are included in the psychopathy-checklist. The first characteristic of behavior in Hannibal is anti-social. He became a closed child and was difficult to communicate with.

As it is explained indirectly by the author through his behavior that Hannibal is very good at lying and manipulating, even the lie detector cannot detect his lie. He is also often interrogated by police on suspicion of murder, but because of his intelligence he can get away with it. One of the incidents that showed Hannibal's expertise in lying was when he was interrogated about the death of Paul Mommund. In this case Hannibal shows the symptoms of a psychopath indicating that he is good at lying and manipulating.

"You killed Dortlich in your family's woods." Hannibal's face did not change. He wiped the tip of the needle.

"His face was eaten," Popil said.

"I would suspect the ravens. Those woods are rife with them. They were at the dog's dish whenever he turned his back." (Harris, 2006:261)

The above quotation describes Hannibal who denied his actions of killing Dortlich in the Lecter family cottage. He is very good at controlling himself not to look tense and panicked. He denied all the

murder charges that were directed at him, he also felt that killing those who killed his sister was an act that did not violate the rules and the law. A psychopath has the ability to exploit others with consistent deception or lies. In manipulating others, psychopaths usually use their charm or intelligence.

Other symptoms of psychopathic traits seen in Hannibal are in the conflicts that occur in the story. Conflict in this case is an intrinsic element that influences the events experienced by the main character in *Hannibal Rising*. The first conflict in this story shows symptoms of psychopathic traits of Hannibal when Hannibal killed Paul Mommund, the butcher who was a former war criminal, mocked Lady Murasaki.

From the events above seen at a relatively young age of thirteen years, Hannibal can kill in a cruel and merciless way. He had even planned the murder by drawing a sketch of the severed head of Paul Mommund. Hannibal has no empathy and thinks of the consequences he would have for the actions he did.

The next conflict is an external conflict between Hannibal and Dortlich. Hannibal interrogated Dortlich to find out the whereabouts of the other criminals but Dortlich chose silence and because of that Hannibal tortured him to reveal the truth. Hannibal also did this to release the pain from within himself. He killed Dortlich merciless even though he had begged for mercy from Hannibal. Not only that Hannibal also ate parts of Dortlich's cheeks, with the thought of avenging his sister who was killed to be eaten by these criminals, making him a cold-blooded killer as well as cannibal. His attitude that has no fear of the

consequences is one of the characteristics of a psychopath in the psychopathy-checklist.

Another conflict in this story is when Milko, one of Mischa's killers, tried to kill Hannibal in his school's Laboratory, the conflict between Hannibal and Milko ended with Milko's death. This incident reflects the lack of empathy that Hannibal has, he is very cruel and kills someone easily without mercy.

After the killing of the two criminals, Hannibal went to Grutas' house with instructions he got from Milko. Hannibal was looking forward to meeting Grutas because his face was always visible in every harasser he faced. Hannibal tried to kill Grutas by going directly to his house. But he did not succeed because Grutas had his men that prevented his plan. Even so, Hannibal managed to escape.

After the incident, Grutas kidnapped Lady Murasaki to be used as bait so that Hannibal could be killed. Hannibal, who is smart is not easy to be fooled, he came to Kolnas with a bloodied bag. He framed Kolnas by saying that the contents of the bag were the head of his child, Hannibal wants Kolnas to tell him Lady Murasaki's true whereabouts.

Hannibal did not intend to kill Kolnas because he had a child and the child reminded him of Mischa, but Kolnas who felt framed by Hannibal made him very angry. They finally got into a fight and Hannibal managed to kill Kolnas easily. From these actions it can be seen that Hannibal does not have a sense of caring for others, manipulative and impulsive which are symptoms of psychopathic behavior. Grutas provoked Hannibal by saying that Hannibal also

participated in eating his younger sister, Mischa, but he was unconscious and could not remember the incident. Hannibal who did not believe in that immediately killed Grutas by carving the letter M on his body, "M" which means Mischa. He could not think straight and controlled himself, his mind is filled with anger and revenge. With this event, finally, Hannibal's revenge wishes were fulfilled and his long nightmare ended with Grutas' death.

After the event at Grutas' houseboat, Hannibal was detained by inspector Popil at the Paris police headquarters. Hannibal, who was still detained because of his actions, looked very calm and relaxed as if nothing terrible had happened before. Psychopaths tend to dominate others and have no remorse for their mistakes. It's the same as Hannibal who doesn't feel sorry or scared after committing murder.

The latest murder that occurred in this story is set in Canada, where Bronys Grentz is. He came with the intention of killing Grentz as his remaining sister's killer. But at that time Hannibal didn't kill because of his anger or because of the nightmare that haunted him, he kills as entertainment in his vacation and equate it to skiing, in other words he kills only for his pleasure and satisfaction, causing Hannibal to not have empathy for others.

Empathy includes the ability to feel the emotional state of others, to feel sympathetic and to try to solve problems, and to respect towards other people's perspectives. Psychopaths do not have empathy, They do not feel that their behavior is inappropriate. The lack of organization and personal integration make them can never be morally responsible and always have conflict with social and legal norms. The existence of chronic problems

in the early days experienced by Hannibal which caused him to experience post-traumatic stress disorder because of his childhood traumatic memory made him a cold-blooded killer and a cannibal at the present time. There is also a factor in the emergence of psychopathic traits, which is people with psychopathic personality have a childhood background that does not provide opportunities for optimal emotional development. That makes Hannibal's psychological condition very unstable, he is controlled by his *Id* so he ignores the norms and values that apply in society and which have been instilled by his family (*superego*).

His superego is more often controlled by *Id*, so Hannibal often takes spontaneous and improper actions. The manifestation of the *ego* in Hannibal can be seen from his behavior which is reflected by the psychological disorders he experiences. The bond between the *Id*, the *Ego*, and the *Superego* is out of balance due to the trauma he experienced and the desire for great revenge.

Hannibal's psychopathic traits have an impact on himself. Starting with his changing lifestyle, he began to commit murder just for his own pleasure and satisfaction without thinking about the norms prevailing in society. Hannibal also lost his loved ones. However, it is important to note that not only the negative impact that he felt, but also the positive impact. Hannibal's life did not deteriorate like most natural killers after his behavior or improper actions was revealed. In stark contrast, he became a success man after all the crimes he committed due to the circumstances of his environment at that time assumed

that the things done by Hannibal were not wrong because what he killed was a criminal, so he was only considered as a small part of *Cause Célèbre* and there was no strong evidence that leads to him.

The impact of Hannibal's psychopathic traits on the surrounding environment is on Lady Murasaki, her life changed dramatically since she met Hannibal. She lived her life filled with worries about Hannibal, she worried that Hannibal would be arrested at any time because of his cruel actions.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion, Hannibal Lecter who is the main character in the novel *Hannibal Rising* by Thomas Harris suffers from psychiatric disorders, PTSD and Psychopaths. Hannibal behavior abnormalities can not be detected from the outside appearance, but if observed from the movements and actions, he has the tendency that differs him from other normal people. Thus, it can be concluded that the traumatic psychological memories of Hannibal's childhood plays a major role in shaping his psychopathic traits. The traumatic memory causes the main character to experience post-traumatic stress disorder, then it encouraged him to commit the cruel act of killing the criminals who were the cause of his merciless trauma to avenge him. From his behavior and actions it can be clearly seen that he is a psychopath. Even so, his behavior not only had a negative impact but also a positive impact on the main character and the surrounding environment.

REFERENCES

Endraswara, Suwardi. (2003). *Metodologi Penelitian*

Sastra. Yogyakarta: Media Pressindo.

Harris, Thomas. (2006). *Hannibal Rising*. London:

William Heinemann.

Kuntjojo. (2009). *Psikologi Abnormal*. Accessed Juni

02,2020. Retrieved from

<http://ebukunt.files.wordpress.com>

Mulyadi. (2012). "*Respon Traumatik Anak-anak*

Korban Banjir Bandang di Wasior Papua

Barat". Jurnal Sosiohumaniora. Vol. 14(1): 12-

23. Retrieved from <http://jurnal.unpad.ac.id>

Nirwana, Herman. (2012). "*Konseling Pasca Trauma*

Pasca Bencana". Jurnal Pendidikan islam:

Ta'dib. Vol. 15(2): 123-162. Accessed Februari

27,2019. Retrieved from

<http://ecampus.iainbatusangkar.ac.id>

Sumardjo, J. dan Saini K. M. (1997). *Apresiasi*

Kesusastraan. Jakarta: Gramedia

