



THE EFFECT OF CHILDHOOD TRAUMA IN JOSEPH MOLDOVER'S NOVEL *EVERY MOMENT AFTER* (2019)

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Abstract

This article is an analysis of the issue of the effect of childhood trauma in Joseph Moldover's novel entitled *Every Moment After* (2019). The issue at hand is the extent to which this novel depicts the consequences that arise and affect a person's personality after experiencing childhood trauma, as well as the contribution of literary elements such as characters, conflicts, and settings that rely on text-based interpretations to reveal these consequences. The goal of this analysis is to examine how well the novel depicts the effect of childhood trauma on a person's daily life and affects their mental health and mental illness. The analysis is based on Sigmund Freud's (1957, 1990) literary theory of repression and the unconscious mind. The result of the study, there are two impacts that develop after suffering childhood trauma that affect their mental health, such as anxiety and guilt. Anxiety that is owned by the character makes him afraid of dealing with other people, so it interferes with the character in interacting with other people. The guilt that the character also has makes him someone who always blames himself and even makes the character want to end his life. Therefore, this analysis shows how childhood trauma greatly affects a person's life and makes them have some mental illnesses.

Keywords: Effect, Childhood, Trauma, Mental Health, Mental Illness

A. INTRODUCTION

Murders and shootings are among the most heinous crimes committed on the globe. Murders and shootings can cause mental trauma in people. This is due to the fear of seeing the tragedy and witnessing a loved one or close friend die because of the gunshots and deaths. Trauma generally interferes with a person's growth and causes his or her character and habits to change. Many of them are unable to deal with their trauma. However, many victims who were traumatized were able to heal from the murders and shootings.

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Changes in a person's habits and behavior are typically indicative of something that occurred in the past. Someone can observe it from childhood to adulthood. Childhood is an essential time in a person's life since it is at this time that noble individuals learn the attitudes and acts of those around them. If he or she has a lot of terrible childhood memories, he or she will be traumatized in adulthood; this is known as childhood trauma. If a kid has terrible childhood memories, he or she will suffer changes in behavior and habits as he or she grows from childhood to adolescence. This can cause a person's alterations to become so severe that they develop an unconscious mental disease.

Nowadays, many people are starting to show a reaction to a problem about childhood trauma. Someone who has a childhood trauma has a considerable adverse effect on himself and others. The effects of childhood trauma will affect a person's mental health. The causative factor usually comes from the surrounding environment, family, and even association. Every human being cannot be separated from health because it involves the demands of human existence itself. The focus on health includes not just physical health, but also environmental, mental, and spiritual health. Mental health is still receiving little attention. Syafitri wrote in her journal, based on WHO data, the global number of individuals suffering from depression and anxiety grew by 18% (2005-2015), with an estimated 264 million people suffering from anxiety and more than 300 million suffering from depression. The World Health Organization also ranks unipolar depression illness ninth among the 20 main diseases (Syafitri, 2017:2). In the novel *Every Moment After*, the forms of mental health that can be seen as a result of the trauma are anxiety (shame) and guilt.

Childhood trauma is described as threatening physical or aggressive behavior on a kid's bodily, integrity, self-esteem, safety, or viability, as well as other physical safety that is important to the child (Herman; 1992:88). Based on Herman's opinion in his journal, childhood trauma is defined as a traumatic event or shocking emotional event experienced by children. This is supported by the opinion of Gina. Gina explained in her journal, emotional trauma, also known as psychological trauma, is the outcome of a major stress event that ruins a kid's life and renders the youngster powerless in this dangerous environment (Gina Ross; 2010:1).

People who grow up in an unsupportive early childhood are more likely to be able to link negative experiences that occur to them. They tend to conceal and repress their negative experiences. If this situation occurs regularly, it will have an impact on their psychological development and cause trauma.

The novel that the researcher analyzes shows that someone who has childhood trauma will affect their life and personality. This literature review is meaningful about mental health and mental illness that is very important in someone's real life. Through this novel, the researcher will show that mental health is really important and it will change someone's personality and behavior. In this study, the effect of childhood trauma in the novel focuses on two characters, Cole and Matt who are the protagonist characters, and as the children who have mental illnesses such as anxiety and guilt, which are the effects of childhood trauma.

The research of the novel *Every Moment After* (2019) has not been found yet. But, the research about the effect of childhood trauma had been discussed by many writers and researchers. For example, Dayanara Hestu Hapsari (2016:1-66). Other researchers such as Meira Adriani (2012:1-17). Exploring The Effect of Childhood Trauma in another novel. All of the research above discussed and examined the mental illness that happened to the character in a literary text.

The key concepts of this study are mental illness such as anxiety and guilt. Anxiety and guilt are part of the effect of childhood trauma that happened to the characters. According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA) (2021:2), mental illnesses are medical problems characterized by changes in emotion, thought, or behavior (or a combination of these). Distress and/or difficulties functioning in social, job, or family activities are related to mental illnesses.

According to Freud's theory in Pamela's book (2009: 119-124), "mental illness happens when the ego is unable to keep control over the id and superego when their urges are too powerful. Freud argued that early childhood trauma was frequently the source of this imbalance." The quote above explains that mental illness has a huge impact on someone who has experienced childhood trauma. This is because one's ego can influence the actions taken from within a person.

The previous study also discussed the issue of the effect of childhood trauma in texts of literature. This thesis shows that these works can serve as a basis for research to better understand the explanation of the effect of childhood trauma, especially in literary works. The main character shows that he experienced a bad childhood trauma that affected his mental health while growing up. The characters have difficulty interacting with people.

Previous studies that also discussed the effects of childhood trauma showed that the main character also experienced difficulties in his life and also affected his personality. Both studies focused on the difficulty of the character in dealing with the effects of childhood trauma and also affecting the personality of the character so that the character does not have confidence in others and himself. Maybe many have discussed this topic in other novels, but in the context of the novel *Every Moment After* (2019), both characters succeed in overcoming the trauma of their childhood.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is conducted by using psychological theory by Sigmund Freud and using the concept of repression and unconsciousness. The data collections take as a quotation in the novel *Every Moment After* (2019). The data collection is in the form of sentences and paragraphs. This research is a descriptive and content analysis study. The technique of the data analysis in this study is descriptive technique procedures in which the researcher interprets and understands the text and content analysis.

In this research, the data were collected from the novel *Every Moment After* (2019) by Joseph Moldover in following procedures: first, close reading to the novel *Every Moment After* (2019) by Joseph Moldover several times. Second, sorting and collecting the data related to the issue of the effect of childhood

trauma by the character in the novel *Every Moment After* (2019) by Joseph Moldover. Third, Identifying the data related to the issue of the effect of childhood trauma experienced by the character in *Every Moment After* (2019) by Joseph Moldover by using the concept of repression and unconsciousness by Sigmund Freud in Psychological Approach. Last, analyze the data related to the issues of the effect of childhood trauma in the novel *Every Moment After* (2019) by Joseph Moldover.

This research is a descriptive and content analysis study. The technique of the data analysis in this study is descriptive technique procedures in which the researcher interprets and understands the text and content analysis. This research uses the repression and unconsciousness concept to reveal the effect of childhood trauma in the novel. The psychological theory by Sigmund Freud helped the researcher analyze the data.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Findings

This chapter discusses the issue of the effect of childhood trauma in the Novel *Every Moment After* (2019) by Joseph Moldover. In this analysis, the effect of childhood trauma was experienced by two boys, Cole and Matt, who are teenagers growing from a traumatic childhood era. The fictional device used in this analysis is the characters. Both characters in this novel have an important role. Both characters have their mental health problems caused by past trauma, this makes both characters experience changes in attitudes and habits because of the childhood trauma. Based on the novel, it is explained that the cause of the two characters experiencing trauma is that they experienced a bitter incident when they were still in elementary school which caused almost half of their classmates to die. Bad experiences in the past make them feel great guilt even though they are survivors. However, the result of this guilt makes them experience changes in attitudes and behavior towards those around them.

2. Discussion

2.1 Having an Anxiety

In the novel *Every Moment After*, there are several effects seen in the two main characters, some of them: anxiety, self-blame, guilt, and suicide. The symptoms of anxiety are shown by Cole's character, which is proven in the following quote.

“I don't like big crowds, and this one is getting bigger by the minute. I zigzag back and forth, feeling my tension rising, sort of looking for the custodian but mostly looking for someone else.”
(p. 10)

Based on the quote above, it can be said that Cole here looks very restless with the crowd. Cole says that he doesn't like crowds because he feels that people are always watching him. This made him feel uncomfortable, and every minute

his anxiety grew. This includes the change in attitude that Cole experienced as a result of the trauma he experienced. According to Kaplan, Sadok, and Greb, in the journal written by Saleh (2019:2) fear and anxiety are two emotions that function as signs of danger. Fear arises when there is a clear or real threat, comes from the environment, and does not cause conflict for the individual. While anxiety arises if the danger comes from within, is unclear, or causes conflict for the individual. Moreover, the anxiety that Cole experiences come from within himself, related to Freud's theory of the unconscious mind, the anxiety that Cole experiences come from his subconscious, which makes him restless, afraid, and anxious about many people. This is due to the trauma he has, which is the fear of meeting people because he thinks that people will look at him. This is also shown in another quote.

“They both look in my direction. I freeze for a moment, the way I always do, feeling like a bug under a microscope. Is she pointing me out? Are they looking at me?” (P. 8)

The quote above also shows the form of anxiety experienced by Cole. Cole said frozen for a while meaning that he had been silent while being stared at by people. This comes from Cole's subconscious which makes him speechless because of the fear he has. This is due to the trauma he experienced as a child. Where the effects of the trauma make Cole a person who is afraid of many people, this is formed unconsciously by Cole which comes from instinct, because his trauma makes Cole anxious. Anxiety, which may be understood as the pathological counterpart of normal fear, is manifest by disturbances of mood, as well as of thinking, behavior, and physiological activity. The anxiety disorders include panic disorder, agoraphobia, generalized anxiety disorder, specific phobia, social phobia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, acute stress disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder. (Adwas, 2019:580) Moreover, the phenomenon above also shows the relation of the unconscious concept by Sigmund Freud, the unconscious contains instincts, impulses, and drives that are innate, and traumatic experiences (usually in childhood) that are suppressed by consciousness are transferred to the unconscious. The word “freeze” is related to anxiety, which means that the characters cannot feel anything. Based on theory shows that anxiety comes from the unconscious mind of someone.

The shooting incident that occurred in the character's childhood made the character lose a lot of the people closest to him. One of the victims who died as a result of the shooting was Andy, a childhood friend of Matt and Cole, who was their classmate at the time of the incident. Cole and Matt are deeply saddened by Andy's passing. Andy has a twin brother named Paul. Paul is a different child from Andy because he has autism. Matt and Cole have also been friends with Paul since childhood, but since Andy died, they haven't had the chance to see each other. Losing a loved one is very, very burdensome for someone, this makes someone who has lost will always be afraid of losing someone again. This makes someone overthink and also makes someone anxious. This is also seen in the novel *Every Moment After*, which can be seen in the following quote.

2.2 Being guilty and self-blame/suicide

In addition to the anxiety shown by Cole, Matt, who is Cole's best friend, shows guilt. This guilt led him to self-harm and even attempt suicide. The quote that makes Matt feel guilty is shown below:

I was home, I think. I was home in bed when that happened. I was home reading a comic book when this kid's body was turned into slammed Jell-O. I was drinking chicken soup out of a big mug when Sam Keeley came into our classroom and Chris moved his legs for the last time in his life. (p. 169)

The quote above explains that Matt was not at school when the shooting occurred. Which meant he didn't witness his friends being killed. This made the people around him think that Matt was lucky because he wasn't there at the time of the incident. However, Matt didn't think it was luck, Matt instead blamed himself for not being there when it happened. Matt's sentence in this quote is the form of a sentence that seems to say that he was relaxing when his friends were killed. This shows that he felt very guilty because he was not at school at that time. He considered that he also did not deserve to continue living. This can be seen in the quote below:

I feel my fingertips brush the bottom. I try to put my feet down, and I do, but I can't seem to take my own weight. I stumble forward one step, then two, then drop to my knees and pitch forward, my face plunging back into the lake, my arms nowhere to be found. For the first time, I panic. I'm going to drown on my knees in two feet of water.

And then I hear the splash of running footsteps and feel hands under my arms, and I'm being pulled up. Cole has me, and all hundred and fifty pounds of him is hoisting me out of the water and pulling me toward the shore. I suck air and cough. No, no, no, this isn't how it's supposed to be. Even as I'm thinking it, I'm wrapping an arm around his neck and stumbling along beside him.

"What the hell did you think you were doing?" Cole asks. "Are you suicidal?" I'm not. I shake my head. "I just wanted to see if I could." (p.26)

The quote above shows a suicide attempt by Matt due to the guilt he suffered. Matt tries to commit suicide by drowning himself in a lake. Matt did this because he felt he didn't deserve to continue living. At first, Matt intended to test his diabetes, but Matt instead tried to drown himself. This was seen by Cole who was accompanying Matt. When Cole saw the non-returning Matt emerge into the water, Cole immediately ran into the water to save Matt. Matt says that he didn't try to commit suicide, however, because he was testing himself whether he still deserved to live. However, according to Cole, Matt tried to commit suicide, because Matt was seen deliberately not rising above the water's surface. Moreover, Matt's suicide attempt showed the death instinct contained in the concept of repression by Sigmund Freud. Repression is conflicts or desires or traumatic events that are forced out of the conscious mind and remain in the

unconscious realm. It drives into life instinct and death instinct. Death Instinct is unhealthy individuals repress energy as symptoms of neurosis, psychosis: injure themselves, suicide. The cause of the death instinct is a traumatic experience in the past.

In summary, the effects of childhood trauma experienced by the protagonist can be seen from the character's way of thinking and actions toward people. It makes the character have several mental illnesses that affect their personality and behavior. The setting refers to the atmosphere of sadness and guilt. This condition builds conflict within the character. The conflict can be reflected in the way characters meet people and think by themselves. However, because of the effects of childhood trauma, the characters experience changes in their lives so that they affect their interactions toward themselves in everyday life. The effect of childhood trauma in this study showed that people who have trauma in the past will affect their life.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The novel *Every Moment After* (2019) by Joseph Moldover reflects the issue of the effect of childhood trauma. The novel *Every Moment After* (2019) is a literary work that shows the issue of the effect of childhood trauma on someone's experience. This analysis describes the changes that occur in the traits and habits of the two characters as a result of having trauma in their past due to the murder of their classmate, thus giving a bad effect on their mental health. It is revealed through text-based and context-based interpretation by focusing on fictional devices such as character, plot, and setting. This analysis deals with the concept of repression and unconsciousness in psychological theory by Sigmund Freud. The effect of childhood trauma can be seen through the changes in personality and behavior of two characters, Cole and Matt.

The first effect of childhood trauma is being anxious. Cole, the first character that explained his story first, had anxiety over many people that were staring at him. The second effect is guilty, self-blame/suicide. Matt, the second character that explained his story shows that he has a very big feeling of guilt towards his dead friends and to their families. Because of his guilty feeling, he tried to kill himself by drowning himself in a lake, when he found out that he had low blood sugar. Fortunately, at that time he was saved by his best friend, Cole. The setting refers to the condition of feeling anxious and guilty. These conditions create internal conflict in their life. Cole cannot meet many people and Matt always feels guilty and always blames himself because he was not at that time. The internal conflict is caused by themselves who always think negatively.

It is apparent from this novel that prolonged childhood trauma has an impact on people's lives. Because it is tough for them to shed their pain, they will develop their method to survive. This disease makes it difficult for them to engage with others. They have strained relationships with their family, partner, and others. This research can help other researchers to seek other issues that are

continued in the novel *Every Moment After* (2019). This research can help other researchers who want to discuss the issues of the effect of childhood trauma.

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