

## FACING PHYSICAL DISABILITY IN *SLOW MAN* (2005) BY J. M. COETZEE

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### Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah: (1) mengetahui sejauh mana cara protagonis dalam novel ini menerima kecacatannya, dan (2) menginvestigasi seberapa jauh karakter, plot (konflik) dan seting dalam novel ini membantu dalam membuktikan usaha protagonis untuk menerima kondisi tubuhnya yang baru dan bertahan dalam hidup. Kutipan teks dalam novel ini dianalisa menggunakan teori *self – efficacy* dari Albert Bandura secara interpretasi teks ataupun konteks. Hasil analisa menunjukkan bahwa protagonis dapat bertahan dan menerima kondisi tubuhnya yang baru dengan cara bertahan dalam zona amannya dan peduli pada orang lain.

Kata Kunci: *facing, physical disability, self – efficacy, comfort zone*

### A. Introduction

Disabled people may be able to achieve success without assistance from other people. They can find their potential even though they lost one of their organs. They have capabilities to organize actions to manage forthcoming situations due to their misfortune. It leads them to maintain and survive in their life even give contribution to other people.

Physical disability means the physical condition that ender someone to do normal activity. Ingstad and Whyte in Eskay (1998) says that physical disability is any restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being. It means someone who has physical disability cannot do activity as similar as normal person. There are three forms of physical disability such as hearing, visual and mobility impairment. However, the most viewable is mobility one.

At least, there are two kinds of disability. The first one is disability that is obtained since she or he was born. They are ready to face the society. They have an instinct to survive even some of them can learn better than normal people in their life. The second is disability that is obtained due to the accident, chemical

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radiation and some diseases. They have problem and difficulty to accept new physical conditions. It may lead them to the depression, frustration, isolation, even to suicidal tendency.

According to Bandura, for those who have self-efficacy can overcome their disability to continue and survive in life. Furthermore, Bandura (1994) says that self-efficacy is a person's belief about his or her ability and capacity to accomplish a task or to deal with the challenges of life. It means disabled people who have ability to find the way to do normal activity with incomplete part of body can live as same as normal people.

The way to survive in life after gain physical disability due to accident is also appear in real life. He is Sugeng Siswoyusodo, one of disable people in Indonesia that can find his potential even he lost one of his body organs. He broke his right leg in the accident in 1981. His parents brought prosthesis for him. He should use it for the rest of his life. When his parents died he had to buy it by himself. However, the price of prosthesis is too expensive for his financial condition. Then, in his house he learns how to create it by his own ways in the low cost. He determines his house as his comfort zone. In this zone he is able to think to create new way to do normal activity. The prosthesis that he made is the result of his choice to stay in comfort zone in an interview with LPJK East Java May 10<sup>th</sup> 2011 he says that:

Some people asked me to create prosthesis for their family members. I asked them to bring the materials here. I teach them how to make it by their own self. I do not want their life is depending on me. I want they can solve the problem by own self... I never ask them to pay me for what I do. It is kind of my charity to help each other. (P.2-4)

Helping another disabled people by give prosthesis is his step to leave the comfort zone. He wants to prove that disabled people also can give contribution to society. By create the prosthesis, he already prove that he does not need another people help even he lost one of his body organs. Base on this fact, he is categorized by Bandura as he has high self-efficacy due to he could manage his attitude in specific circumstances.

The issues about facing physical disability is also appears in the literary works. One of them is the novel *Slow Man* (2005) by J.M Coetzee. Novel show how protagonist faces physical disability that he obtains due to the accident.

J.M Coetzee tends to talk about the cruel rationalism and cosmetic morality of western civilization. One of his novels titled *Disgrace* (1999) has won Nobel Prize for literature. The themes of Coetzee's literary works mostly tend to talk about someone's fortitude to face tragedy in her or him life. His literary works show how someone solve serious problem in his life by using his own ways. The dark themes in his literary works show the characters extreme suffers.

A novel titled *Slow Man* (2005) written by J.M Coetzee reveals ways of a handicap person to face his new life after disability. It represented by the protagonist, Paul Rayment. He is in sixties years old, former photographer who lost his leg in the accident. In frustration condition, he realizes that he cannot handle all of his housework by himself. He hires a nurse to help him and consider her as his own family. He attempt to face physical disability in rest of his life. In

this analysis, there are two ways chosen by protagonist to show how to manage his life with physical disability. They are; staying in comfort zone and caring to the other people

The protagonist prefers to stay in comfort zone. In his mind, being lonely in his flat is the save place. Stay in his comfort zone has purpose to prepare his mental condition to face society. He prefers to receive a phone call rather than meet them. When he receives a call from his friend, he prefers to tell story about his fortitude rather than to meet face to face. He chooses to keep all of his work into his bookshelf and save it as the collections. He did not want submit his photography works into national library. He let the people to find it in his bookshelf as private collection.

He makes himself to be useful to other people. He proves that disabled people can give positive contribution to the society and can do better rather than normal person. He gives scholarship to his nurse's son. He forces the nurse to accept it, even though nurse's husband refuses it. He saves the nurse's daughter from indictment. The protagonist pays the fine for save the nurse's daughter from the punishment. She was accused steal a silver chain.

There are two studies that gives contribution to this analysis. The first analysis is entitled *Portraying Disability in Modern Novel: Identity, Subjectivity and Power* written by John Bothwell (2011). It discusses the society's view toward disabled person in J.M Coetzee's novel *Slow Man* (2005). He focuses on how society force protagonist accepts this fate as disabled people without giving rehabilitation through plot (conflict) and setting. He argues that major society in this novel marginalized disabled people. The society allows these disabled people to join them. However, they only contribute to society passively.

Another analysis entitled *Ability in Disability: The Empowerment of The Disabled in J. M. Coetzee's Life and Times Of Michael K.* written by Ayo Kehinde (2009). In this study, Kehinde examines the positive representation of the protagonist. He is black and disabled people. He can break out of the racial and social hierarchies. He discusses the dignity and central position of the disabled in the universe. Through the positive representation of the disabled character, black people can break out of the racial and social hierarchies on which the traditional Africans identity.

This study is going to reveal how someone with physical disability survives in his or her life. It has relation with the theory of self-efficacy from Albert Bandura. According to Bandura (1994) self-efficacy refers to beliefs in someone's capabilities in order to organize and execute necessary action to manage forthcoming situations. Someone who has high self-efficacy can survive in life and those who have low ones is not capable to do this action. There are four components that persuade someone to achieve self- efficacy. According to Bandura in Barlow (2012) there are four main sources of information that influence perception of self-efficacy. They are mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion or similar sources of social influences and physiological feedback. These factors are able in order to help someone with disabilities through and maintain their live. However, in this novel, the protagonist only got two factors. They are mastery and vicarious experience.

Someone with disabilities can master his or her experience in order to maintain and survive in life. It depends on their performance to organize his or her problem in forthcoming situations. The performance itself refers to the actions that someone conducts to manage and find new ways to solve problem in their life. Barlow (2012) said that successful performance leads to increase self-efficacy whereas repeated failures may result in lower self-efficacy. The requirement to this situation is the one's own efforts and abilities to fix the failure and gain the success in life. Someone can gain high self efficacy when he or she succeeded to learn from the failures.

Disabled people can learn from others who have similar conditions' actions to manage their problem in order to gain self-efficacy. Bandura in Redmond (2012) says that "a person can watch another perform and then compare their competence with the other's competence". Someone with physical disability can learn from someone who has similar condition with them who succeed to manage actions in specific difficulty and situations. It can increase the self-efficacy. However, the opposite is seeing someone similar with them already fail to manage and organize these action can lower their self-efficacy.

## **B. Research Method**

The analysis of novel *Slow Man* is done through text and context-based interpretation. It is done by analyze some part of fictional devices, such as; characters, plot (conflicts) and setting. Characters and conflicts are used to evoke the way to face physical disability by analyzing character's reactions toward the conflict. Then, the setting deals with the circumstances and atmosphere. It gives contribution in process of analysis by giving help in revealing the meaning. Plot and conflicts in this novel give important role to reveals the meaning. These elements are analyzed based on how disabled people face his physical disability.

## **C. Discussions**

This section analyses the fictional devices such as character, plot (conflict) and setting to reveal the way of disabled people to *face physical disability*. The protagonist is representation of disabled people who can survive and able to give contribution in life. He finds new ways to take care own self, to do normal activity and even can help others people. It is done through staying in comfort zone and caring to other people.

### **1. Staying in Comfort zone.**

Staying in the comfort zone is one of strategy of protagonist to prepare his mental condition. He keep himself alone to find another way to solve his problem with new physical condition. Here, He can learn and find new ways to do normal activity like normal people can. He also becomes comfortable with his new current physical condition.

In order to prepare his mental condition, protagonist chooses to stay alone. It appears on his awareness to be more independent. He does not want to meet his friend to achieve the value of comfort zone. The comfort zone for him is a place to find new ways to solve the problem based on the past experience. It appears at following quotation:

“I have all the friends I could wish for he replies. ‘I am not Robinson Crusoe. I just do not want to meet them’. ‘Seeing your friends would make you feel better’, she says. Give you a lift. I am sure.’ ‘I will receive visitors when I feel like it thanks you,’ he says.” (p.14)

He needs a time make himself become comfortable with condition after gain disability. He keeps stay away from his friends due to he want to recall his memory and conduct the action what should he do next. The quotation “*I will receive visitors when I feel like it thanks you, he says.*” Show that he refuses to take sympathy from his friend. He is not ready to meet another people in the new physical condition. His mental would be disturbed by meeting another people face to face. By staying alone he can create rehabilitation program to his mental. The utterance “*I am not Robinson Crusoe I just do not want to meet them*” show that his unwillingness to meet another people. He needs the time to overcome his mental as the purpose of this avoidance.

In comfort zone, the protagonist wants to prove that he can manage his life without helping from another people. He does not want another people to change the rule in his comfort zone. He realizes that his own rule can increase a chance to find another way to do normal activity. It appears on following quotation:

“It is she who reorganizes his bedroom for him, installs rails, and generally takes over. She has already drafted a day by-day schedule for the two of them covering meals, exercises, and what she calls SC, stump care which she tapes to the wall at noon, one in the afternoon, labeled ‘SD PRIVATE TIME’, time during which she retires to the kitchen to refresh herself.

He puts up Sheena until the end of the week, then telephones Mrs. Putts. ‘I am going ask Sheena not to come back.’ He says. ‘I cannot abide her. You will find someone else’... (p. 24)

He has offended with the way of nurse to hospitalize him through the schedule. This schedule makes himself cannot rule himself in the comfort zone. He cannot conduct necessary action to fix his mental condition. Maintaining himself alone in the zone can give him a chance to rehabilitate his mental condition. His utterance “*I am going ask Sheena not to come back. He says. I cannot abide her. You will find someone else*” shows that how he refuses another people who create another rule in his comfort zone. He cannot accept another people who take over the value of his comfort zone by creating new rule that he dislikes. Without helping from another people also help him to find another necessary action to conduct.

The protagonist began to accept his new physical condition. In this circumstance, he is able to recall his memory about his successful achievement from the past in the comfort zone. This memory can help him to gain his self confidence again. In the post accident circumstances he has suffered with trauma. By learning from this achievement he can overcome it. This is kind of own mental rehabilitation in the comfort zone. It appears on following quotation:

“I began saving them in the 1970s, when first-generation photographs were still affordable. And when I still had heart go to auctions. Deceased estates. It would depress me too much now.” (P. 48)

The achievement that he gains from the past based on quotation above is he does not sell his first generation photographs. These photographs are worth history for him that can motivate him to survive. He can see this photograph and find necessity action to overcome his problem without helping from another people. The quotation “*And when I still had heart go to auctions. Deceased estates*” shows that he discovers another function for this photograph as the way to do self mental rehabilitation. It gives him good impact as someone who fixes his mental condition in the trauma circumstances.

In summary, by staying in the comfort zone the protagonist is able to prepare his mental and accept new physical condition. He does not want other people look down and give a pity to him due to his physical disability. It will make his mental become down. The setting and atmosphere of his flat makes him feels comfortable. Through this feeling he able to release internal conflict that noticed as his way to accept his new physical condition. It is able to give a chance for him to do personal mental rehabilitation program. It is also able give a space for him to recall his successful achievement from the past and learn from another people experience. He is able to manage actions to solve forthcoming problem and find new way to do normal activity base on both of these actions.

## 2. Caring to Other People

The protagonist makes himself to be useful to other people. He proves that disabled people can give positive contribution to the society and can do better rather than normal person. In this condition, he began to leave his comfort zone. He gives scholarship to his nurse’s son and saves the nurse’s daughter from indictment. This is the result of his mental rehabilitation program.

The protagonist pays attention to the importance of education for the nurse’s son future. He tries to find good recommendation about education to the son, Drago. He gives opinion to the nurse about her son future. It is his willingness to give positive contribution to other people. It appears on following quotation:

“What do I think of boarding school? I think it can be very expensive. I also think it is a mistake, a bad mistake, to believe that in boarding schools young people are watched over night and day to make sure they come to no harm. But you can get good education at a boarding school, no doubt about that, or the better boarding schools. Is that what you are thinking of for Drago? Have you checked the fees? You should do that first. Their fees can be high, absurdly high, in fact astronomical.” (p. 75)

He does not take a side which one is better between local and boarding school. He sees both bad and good effect in them. He prefers to give recommendation about boarding school base on the fact that he knows. The utterance “*But you can get good education at a boarding school, no doubt about that, or the better boarding*

*schools*” shows that he has willingness to the son have good mental condition and knowledge through the education. He wants the son can take care himself and become good man in the future time.

He also pays attention to children’s mental development besides the importance of education. He does not want the next generation have bad mental condition. It appears on his action to save the nurse’s daughter from the indictment. The daughter was accused to steal silver chain. However, the punishment is not equal with her age. It makes him tries to save her. It appears on following quotation:

“So, does he, Paul Rayment, know someone he can talk to about Blanka, someone can in turn talk to the Jew and, take the charge go away?  
Of course I want to talk. Of course I want to help. Why I on this earth but to help? Give me particulars. Tell me when and where it happened, this business of silver chain. And tell me mere about Blanka’s friend, the one who was with her in the shop” (P. 168)

He realizes that childhood is the moment to gain knowledge that needed. It is not the time of children spend their time in the prison. It can damage their mental condition. He gathers the information to find the way to save the daughter from indictment. He does not want people around him have bad trauma that he already get. He is not sure about her ability to overcome the trauma. He realizes that there is bad effect in the daughter mental development if he does not save her. The utterance “*Tell me when and where it happened, this business of silver chain*” shows that he wants to save the daughter from indictment. He knows that the daughter is innocent. He cannot stand when someone who is not guilty receive the punishment. He want to show to another people that he also have justice in his life.

In conclusion, the protagonist needs to be useful for other people as the result of his own mental rehabilitation program. He gives the scholarship to another people who need it in order to keep interaction with them. In order to accomplish his mission, he faces the conflict about the rejection from other people to accept his charity. The setting that also considered as his comfort zone makes him become someone who has reliable way of thinking. He realizes that he cannot accomplish all problems in life alone. By saving the nurse’s daughter from indictment, he does not want they must get through hard moment that he had suffered. He is also able to help another people to face their conflict.

#### **D. Conclusions**

The novel *Slow Man* (2005) by J. m Coetzee reveals the way of protagonist to face his physical disability. It exposed through text-based and context-based interpretation by focusing on fictional devices such as character, setting and conflicts. The setting that refers to atmosphere of his flat makes him feels comfortable. Through this feeling he is able to release the internal conflict that noticed as his way to accept his new physical condition. in order to accomplish his mission to be useful to other people, he faces the conflict about the

rejection from other people to accept his charity. The setting that also considered as his comfort zone makes him become someone who has reliable way of thinking.

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