

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Children are very precious creatures. A family is considered incomplete without them. Their presences bring hopes and dreams into our lives. Children are God's gift to parents to be cared for, loved, raised with love, protected, educated and listened to, therefore, supporting them in every way possibly will help them to cultivate and build their personalities.

Children experience their own personality development that continues to develop as much as adults. A psychological approach is a perspective, based on certain assumptions, about behavior. Each approach holds shared ideas about how to describe, predict, and explain behavior. Psychological studies provide critical information about life, including children. Child abuse is an act of inability as a parent or caretaker which causes harm on a child (Shannon, 2009). Maltreatment from parents or caretaker will interfere with childhood life and negatively affect the child as they grow up in the future. Lack of parental attention makes the child feel unappreciated. Children should have the right and freedoms to live their childhood well, but many children are ignored by parents resulting in their psychic being disturbed.

Despite the fact that a child should be protected and cared, child abuse and neglect are still commonly found in the society. According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022), there are at least 1 in 7 children ever dealt of child abuse or neglect previously in the United States, which the

number could be bigger as many cases were left unreported. The risk for child abuse and neglect only increases with poverty that put pressure and stress in the families for as much as 5 times higher for children with low socioeconomic status. The effects caused of child abuse and neglect are not to be underestimated as victim may suffer from physical and psychological issues. Long term effects are also expected to occur for the victim with increased risk to experience anything ranging from violence victimization to delayed brain development because of the abuse and neglect.

One of the novels which has an interesting psychological phenomenon regarding child neglect is titled "*The Rules of Survival*" by Nancy Werlin. The story tells about three young children who are raised by their abusive mother, Nikki. The oldest son Matthew tried to rescue his two younger sister Callie and Emmy and saw a glimpse of hope when their mother's dating Murdoch who is their neighbor. But things took a turn for worse when they mother broke up with him.

In the novel, Nikki goes to Aunt Bobbie's house when Matthew is alone in the house. Nikki keeps screaming and attacks Matthew when he goes to check on her.

"I turned to go. And Nikki attacked. She threw herself at my back, hanging on me with one arm while she clawed at my face with the other. Pain ripped through my cheek. Her weight was heavy on my back. I felt one of her legs twist up as she tried to kick me in the groin with her heel." (Werlin, 2011, p. 156)

In the quotation, Nikki can be seen as abusive toward her son Matthew by physically attack him. According to Doak (2007), physical abuses toward

children are considered as any physical injury done by parent or caretaker that might come as punishment or over disciplined. Nikki as a parent deliberated uses physical force to inflict injury on his son, Matthew.

In the novel, Matthew got caught stealing cookie by Nikki and she pressed a knife on his throat.

““Thief!” our mother yelled. “Cookie thief!” She burst into giggles. She had the big kitchen knife, and it was pressed to my throat. And as she laughed, I could feel it shake in her hands, and push against my skin. She cut me that night. Just a little.” (Werlin, 2011, p. 18)

In the quotation above, upon discovering that Matthew stole a cookie, Nikki’s immediate response is to hold a knife to his throat, cutting him a little. According to Doak (2007), psychological or emotional abuse can be seen as any acts by parent or caretaker toward children that may cause serious emotional damage though it isn’t always intended as harm. Nikki’s action by putting knife on Matthew’s throat directly inflicts harm to him by being a direct threat to his life. At that moment, Matthew’s life is in danger by his own mother.

In supporting this research, the researcher took two journals as comparison. First, Prabha (2016) investigated child abuse and the aftermath it has on the victims found on Toni Morrison’s works. It was highlighted how child abuse can prevent a child to development normally as it forms a barrier that prevented it. This previous research discussed the abuse experienced by children caused by Morrison’s mothers. It also explained the behavior of such abusive mothers that are considered murderers to the ‘self’ of the children as

victims. The effects of the abuse were also discussed for the victims and the surroundings.

Second, Kinanti and Daulay (2020) performed an investigation on the child abuse experienced on “Eleanor and Park” by Rainbow Rowell. In order to classify that the abuse and the effects it has on Eleanor, the research applied Erikson’s psychosocial development theory. The researcher applied four out of the eight stages in Eleanor as the setting of the novel is a coming-of-age novel. As the result, despite struggling in the earlier stages, Eleanor develops into a better person after meeting Park. Therefore, in the later stages, she will have a good possibility to pass as well. The previous study has the similarities with the present research that is child abuse. The different of this research is the literary approach, the previous research used psychosocial based on Erik Erikson, while the present study used the psychological approach based on (Wellek & Warren, 1948)

The researcher chose the topic “*Child Neglect and Abuse Reflected in Nancy Werlin's "The Rules of Survival" Novel: Psychological Approach*” as the object of the research because this topic the author saw some images of the the neglect and abusive acts along with the adverse causes that affect the lives of victims. Through this novel the researcher wants to show that the reality of child abuse and child neglect does happen in the real world and the novel is a reflection of its reality.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

1. The personality of character in “The Rules of Survival” novel by Nancy Werlin.
2. The negative effects towards children from parents’ maltreatment in “The Rules of Survival” novel by Nancy Werlin.
3. The children’s struggles in “The Rules of Survival” novel by Nancy Werlin.
4. The neglect and abusive act got by children in “The Rules of Survival” novel by Nancy Werlin.
5. The factors that cause the neglect and abusive act to the children in “The Rules of Survival” novel by Nancy Werlin.

1.3 Limitation of the Problem

1. The neglect and abusive act got by children in “The Rules of Survival” novel by Nancy Werlin.
2. The factors that cause the neglect and abusive act to the children in “The Rules of Survival” novel by Nancy Werlin.

1.4 Formulation of the Problem

1. What are the neglect and abusive act got by children in “The Rules of Survival” novel by Nancy Werlin?
2. What are the factors that cause the neglect and abusive acts to the in “The Rules of Survival” novel by Nancy Werlin?

1.5 Objective of the Research

1. To identify the neglect and abusive act got by children in “The Rules of Survival” novel by Nancy Werlin
3. To identify are the factors that cause the neglect and abusive acts to the in “The Rules of Survival” novel by Nancy Werlin?

1.6 Significance of the Research

1. Theoretically

This research has several purposes. Firstly, it is done to provide the information of child abuse and child neglect through the types and the causes towards a child. This research will act as a reference for the literary studies’ development especially psychological approach’s study in Putera Batam University.

2. Practically

This research is able to append the knowledge about child abuse and child neglect and the causes of the abusive acts, which related with psychology theory. In addition, it also may help readers to come across child abuse and child neglect in reality. This research is expected to be able in giving insight of child abuse and child neglect through fictional characters, as it might happen in real life and the readers will be able to identify it.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

Child Neglect : The failure in providing children’s basic needs. Forms of neglect could be physically,

emotionally, and educationally (DePanfilis, 2006).

Child Abuse : act of inability as a parent or caretaker which causes harm on a child (Shannon, 2009).

Psychological Approach : A psychological approach is a perspective, based on certain assumptions, about behavior. Each approach holds shared ideas about how to describe, predict, and explain behavior.