

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA OF DAWSON COLE AS REFLECTED BY NICHOLAS SPARKS'S *THE BEST OF ME*: A PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

Ahmad Khoirul Rizal

a.k.rizal10@gmail.com

English Education Department

Ahmad Dahlan University, Yogyakarta

The journal entitled *The Psychological Trauma of Dawson Cole as Reflected in Nicholas Sparks's The Best of Me: A Psychological Approach*. The data are collected by using critical reading to analyze the novel as the subject of the study. The subject of the research is the novel entitled *The Best of Me* by Nicholas Sparks. The research findings are: first, the characterizations of the main character are: loyal, smart, tough, kind, regretful. Second, The psychological trauma experienced by Dawson Cole can be classified into two; psychological trauma by event and causes by the environment. Dawson had terrible accident many times, among others: the fall of helicopters at the rig, the sinking of a Dawson boarded the ship, an oil refinery without a strong reason, the daily death of his colleague was in an accident. In addition, Dawson was a broken family and experienced physical abused and being oppression. The third is the impact psychological trauma of Dawson Cole are; (1) hallucination and flashback, (2) violent outburst and manic behavior, (3) psychosomatic symptom, (4) passivity and depression.

Keywords: *psychological trauma, impact of trauma ,moral values*

I. INTRODUCTION

Life is not as easy as it looks. Sometimes anything just happens and no resistance. We can't do anything or even prepare for it. But no matter what hit us, usually we can handle with full of patience. A lot of people have a certain traumatic in their life. They got a great traumatic and life is hard to continue. The traumatic happens because of the lack of the ability from the human in solving the problems completely. There are so many kinds of problems in human life such as social problems, religion problems, also family problem and accident. Someone who witnessed the incidents of violence within the family can also experience the trauma of physical and trauma on psychology, mental and emotional disturbances will disturb. The experience of seeing domestic violence in people can cause

problems both in the short and long term. In the short term such as threats against the safety of the people's life, destructive family structure, the emergence of various mental disorders. While in the long run, the potential for people to engage in violent behavior and harassment in the future, both as perpetrators and victims. The experience of witnessing and experiencing domestic violence is a traumatic event because violence is perpetrated by those closest to people, a family that should provide a sense of security, instead of displaying and providing violence that creates a sense fear and anger. The traumatic experiences of children witnessing and experiencing domestic violence are often found as predictors of future psychological problems, such as neglect and physical and psychological abuse in children.

In the long run, these problems will also show its effect in everyday life, the inability to develop effective coping skills. Most people will become susceptible to depression and show traumatic symptoms until they are at risk of becoming the same perpetrators of the same crime when they continue to live.

II. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Alexander (2004: 3) : The trauma experience occurs when the traumatizing event interacts with human nature. Human beings need security, order, love, and connection. If something happens that sharply undermines these needs it hardly seems surprising, according to the lay theory that people will be traumatized as a result.

Trauma is an event or events that are so extreme, severe, powerful, harmful or threatening to the individual that they demand extraordinary coping effort. Traumas may take the form of an

unusual event or a series of continuous events that subject people to extreme, intensively overwhelming, perceived, or experienced threats to oneself or others, (Lacer, 2014:410).

Figure 1 presents an ecological model of psychological trauma treatment and recovery. The model makes assumption. In fact that individuals are not equally vulnerable to nor similarity affected by potentially traumatic events. Instead, both vulnerabilities to victimization and individually varied response and recovery patterns are multi-determined by interaction among three sets of mutually influential factors: those describing the person involved and their relationship to one another. Those describing events experienced and those describing the larger environment. Together these factors define the person- community “ecosystem” within an individual experience, copes with and makes meaning of potentially traumatizing events.

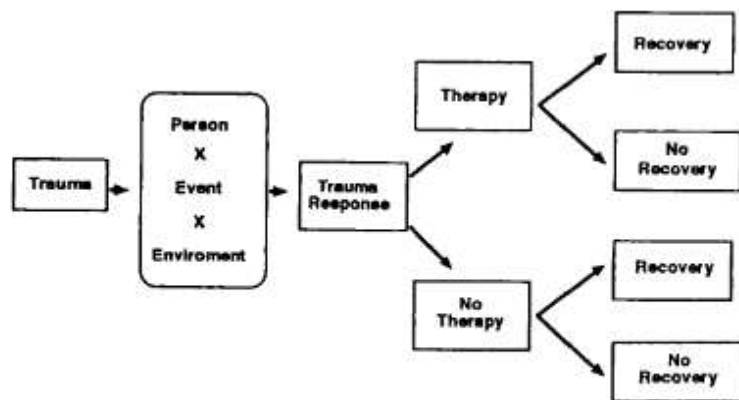


Figure 1. An ecological model of psychological trauma.

Harvey (1996: 6) said that Event factors describe salient attributes of one or a series of traumatic events. Important determinants of posttraumatic response include, for example, the frequency, severity, and duration of the event experienced, the degree of physical violence and bodily violation involved, the extent of the terror and humiliation endured, and whether the trauma was experienced alone or in the company of others. Equally relevant in an ecological frame-work are any number of circumstantial details to which the individual and his or her communities of reference may assign significance. A

combat veteran with a strong religious background may be haunted for years by the crucifix worn by a dead enemy soldier, for example, and a rape victim who found herself too terrified to resist may feel lasting shame for uttering the words of consent and pleasure that her assailant demanded of her. It is important that clinicians not judge in advance the most traumatizing part of a trauma patient's experience. Instead, the aim is to listen for subtleties of interpretation and remembrance, nuances of affect and self-experience and idiosyncratic social constructions that provide insight into the patient's unique posttraumatic response.

In another quotation, Harvey (1996: 7) said that Environmental factors influencing posttraumatic response and recovery are many. They include various descriptors of the ecological context within which the traumatic event was experienced (e.g. the home, school, workplace, or other context), salient attributes of the victim's natural support system, the ability of that system to foster adaptive rather than maladaptive coping, and the degree of safety and control afforded the victim posttrauma. In the aftermath of victimization, the attitudes and behaviors of first respondents and the actions and understandings of family and friends, caregivers, and other significant individuals and groups constitute important elements of the victim's recovery environment. Environmental factors of particular importance in an ecological understanding of trauma and recovery also include prevailing community attitudes and values, cultural constructions of race and gender, political and economic factors attending victimization, and the quality, quantity, accessibility and cultural relevance of the larger community's victim care and advocacy resources.

David Read Johnson (1987: 7) says that : The attempt to preserve a sense of the good self, characterized by safety, control, and gratification, leads to encapsulation and elimination of all aspects of the traumatic situation from consciousness. Whereas most the time in the post-traumatic period the person is unaware of the trauma and often has amnesia for the events, these splits off parts of the self may suddenly break through into consciousness. This leads to the biphasic nature of psychological trauma in which profound denial alternates with the uncontrollable intrusion of the traumatic events through nightmares, flashbacks, hallucinations, and unconscious reenactments of the trauma.

Furthermore, David Read Johnson (1987: 7) said that :

The result of these psychological, interpersonal, and social processes may include 1) hallucinations and flashbacks that appear to be schizophrenic reactions, 2) dissociative states including conversion reactions, multiple personality disorders, fugue states, or other hysterical symptoms, 3) violent outbursts and manic behavior, 4) psychosomatic symptoms, 5) addictive behaviors. or 6) social withdrawal, passivity, and depression). These symptoms are often misdiagnosed as a psychological illness rather than delayed manifestations of traumatic experience, leading to misguided treatment for these patients.

III. RESEARCH METHODE

This research belongs to library research. Almost all of the data sources are taken from library collections. Library method is a kind of research that is conducted by reading sources such as books, articles, etc. The type of this research consists of two kinds, first the research of the subject and the research of object.

1. The Best of Me by Nicholas Sparks novel was published by the grand central in 2011. It consists of 254 pages and it is divided into 23 chapters, this is as the research object.
2. The descriptive qualitative method that will be used by researchers to find an understanding of the character and trauma of Dawson Cole as an object of research.

In collecting data, the researcher does some steps to collect as follows: The first step is reading the novel carefully several times to understand the content of the novel, to catch the idea and find out the intrinsic elements of the novel. The second step is gaining some information. The researcher visits the libraries to find sources that relate to the study, then reads the sources and make some notes, categories the data and the researcher also explores the internet to get more information and data observation to support the research. The third step is selecting data. All of the data related to the topic were used as references to support the

research such as books, journal and internet sources are selected and analyzed to answer the problem formulation.

After the data are collected, they are analyzed through deep analysis. Data analysis used by the researcher is a qualitative description. The descriptive qualitative research is the technique that stated by quotation or it can be described by explanation. The reason for using qualitative descriptive description is giving description accurately, factually and systematically to take conclusion and relationship of the phenomenon and the object which will be analyzed. After the data are gathered, all data will be analyzed using a psychological approach. In this research, the researcher tries to provide clear information and describes the psychological trauma in the novel.

IV. DISCUSSION

A. Psychological Trauma of Dawson Cole

Trauma is closely related to the experience of someone who is psychological. It has a negative impact on him for the present and the future. Experience sometimes does not always have a positive impact, when bitter and bad experiences can also happen to someone whether intentional or unintentional. As we know that Trauma is an event or events that are so extreme, severe, powerful, harmful or threatening to the individual that they demand extraordinary coping effort. Traumas may take the form of an unusual event or a serious of continuous events that subject people to extreme, intensively overwhelming, perceived, or experienced threats to oneself or others, (Lacer, 2014:410).

1. Event: Accident

Harvey (1996: 6) said that event factors describe salient attributes of one or a series of traumatic events. Important determinants of posttraumatic response include, for example, the frequency, severity, and duration of the event experienced, the degree

of physical violence and bodily violation involved, the extent of the terror and humiliation endured, and whether the trauma was experienced alone or in the company of others. The event will never be forgotten by Dawson who works at the oil refinery. Dawson repeatedly experienced bitter things where he worked, Extreme things that Dawson does not stop there. Dawson is the luckiest person for the incident that he faced because he was still alive after the incident. After the events above, there is another disaster that comes towards Dawson who is facing the hurricane Ivanren disaster which leveled everything. Look at the events experienced by Dawson Cole are terrible. It was a very terrible event. Dawson always survives, survives the dangers that fight for him. Dawson had the next accident that the boat he was driving sank. The morning he did the routine, he had just watched the pumping station when one of the tanks suddenly exploded, from a Dawson explosion thrown into the nearest warehouse. from the incident according to Dawson he should die.

2. Environment: Home

Family is the first place of education for a child. Family is a place to kneel in difficult, sad or happy circumstances. The family should be one of the figures that motivate one of the future in terms of goodness. For Dawson, the home feels hell for him. Harvey (1996: 7) said that Environmental factors influencing posttraumatic response and recovery are many. They include various descriptors of the ecological context within which the traumatic event was experienced (e.g. the home, school, workplace, or other context), salient attributes of the victim's natural support system, the ability of that system to foster adaptive rather than maladaptive coping, and the degree of safety and control afforded the victim posttrauma. In the aftermath of

victimization, the attitudes and behaviors of first respondents and the actions and understandings of family and friends, caregivers, and other significant individuals and groups constitute important elements of the victim of the recovery environment. Dawson is a descendant of a broken family. He experienced violence from his family like being beaten, yelled at from an early age by his family. Dawson was intimidated and forced to hand over money generated from his own sweat. Not only that, but Dawson also had to follow the crime committed by his family. Dawson's bitter events made Dawson want to run away from home, he was unhappy, Dawson was often alone and afraid of the violence carried out by his father, he chose not to fight and keep quiet. This is the impact of psychological trauma obtained by Dawson Cole after experiencing violence committed by his family.

B. The impact of the psychological trauma of Dawson Cole

Trauma is a physical and psychological reaction that is bad stress due to an event, event or experience of spontaneous/sudden (sudden), which makes individuals surprise, shocked, frightening, shocked, unconscious, etc. which are not easily lost in human memory. As Johnson (1987: 7) said that The result of these psychological, interpersonal, and social processes may include 1) hallucinations and flashbacks that appear to be schizophrenic reactions, 2) dissociative states including conversion reactions, multiple personality disorders, fugue states, or other hysterical symptoms, 3) violent outbursts and manic behavior, 4) psychosomatic symptoms, 5) addictive behaviors. or 6) social withdrawal, passivity, and depression). These symptoms are often misdiagnosed as a psychological illness rather than delayed manifestations of

traumatic experience, leading to misguided treatment for these patients. As the quotation below:

1. Hallucination and Flashback

Dawson suffered psychological trauma as a result of this incident, as Johnson said in his research on the psychological trauma that there are psychological disorders by hallucinating as happened in Dawson. In the fourteen years he had worked on oil rigs, he thought he had seen it all. In 1997, he had watched as a helicopter lost control as it was about to land. It crashed into the deck, erupting in a blistering fireball, and he had received second-degree burns on his back as he had attempted a rescue. Like most of the others, he had not had time to save himself from the explosion, but in between swells he saw a dark-haired man waving in the distance as if signaling Dawson to swim toward him. Dawson struck out in that direction, fighting the ocean waves, exhausted and dizzy. His clothes and boots dragged him down, and as his arms and legs began to give out he knew he was going to die. He thought he had been getting close though the swells made it impossible to know for sure. At that moment, he spotted a life preserver floating among some nearby debris. Using the last of his remaining strength, he latched on. Later, he learned that he was in the water for almost four hours and had drifted nearly a mile from the rig before being picked up by a supply ship that had rushed to the scene. He was pulled on board, carried below decks, and reunited with other survivors. Dawson was shivering from hypothermia, and he was dazed. Though his vision was blurred, he was later diagnosed with a moderate concussion, he recognized how lucky he had been. He saw men with vicious burns on their arms and shoulders, and others bleeding from

their ears or nursing broken bones. It proves that the incident had an extreme impact on him.

2. Violent outbursts and manic behavior

Dawson feels inferior or anxious because he was born to a family that has a criminal history. As the Daniel J. Flannery (2011: 441) said that female three to five times more likely than control males and females to have scored in the clinical range of depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress, anger, and dissociation and were two to seven times more likely to have been exposed to violence. Similarly, males were one to three times more likely than male controls to have scored in the clinical range for posttraumatic stress and anger and were three to six times more likely than controls to have been a victim of or witness to violence. In another quotation show that Dawson was not happy with his family. He was afraid of the violence his family used to do. Dawson is unhappy with his family. To overcome Dawson's anxiety and unhappiness, he decided to leave his past, namely his family, who did not want to know their whereabouts anymore. Dawson feels not easy being a Cole anywhere. As far as he knew, every Cole in the family tree going back as far as his great grandfather had spent time in prison. Various members of the family had been convicted of everything from assault and battery to arson, attempted murder, and murder itself. The Coles were moonshiners and drug dealers, alcoholics, wife beaters, abusive fathers and mothers, thieves and pimps and above all, pathologically violent, Dawson's father was no exception. He had spent most of his twenties and early thirties in prison for various offenses that included stabbing a man with an ice pick after the man had cut him off in traffic. He had been tried and acquitted twice for murder after witnesses

had vanished, and even the rest of the family knew enough not to rile him up. Dawson feels embarrassed by his family because of the habit's family.

3. Psychosomatic symptoms

Psychosomatic is a condition or disorder when the mind affects the body, which leads to physical complaints. These physical symptoms arise due to an increase in impulse activity or nerve stimulation from the brain to various parts of the body. Some signs that can indicate psychosomatic are 1) How much concern arises. Psychosomatic people, tend to have physical complaints with excessive worry or even lack of what they complain about. 2) The pattern of physical complaints. Physical complaints that are triggered by stress, generally cause a pattern of similar and recurring complaints. As Dawson has experienced that Dawson experienced anxiety and diagnosed stress which made him confused. Dawson left his family for almost twenty years. When Dawson received a call from a lawyer who told him that Tuck, who was considered by his father had done, at that time Dawson recalled memories of memories he had experienced in the past, in that place and he remembered what his family had done at that time. Dawson was confused about what had happened to him as if he was often haunted by a flash of someone who continued to disappear, and the doctor diagnosed that Dawson was experiencing stress after the event he had experienced.

4. Passivity and depression

Dawson chose to live alone, did not want anyone to interfere. He wanted to stay away from his family and wanted to calm down. Dawson calmed himself down

by choosing a quiet place, which made him calm. Dawson never visited friends because he did not have any. He had not dated anyone since Amanda because, even now, she was all he could think about. To get close to someone, anyone, meant allowing that person to learn about his past, and the thought made him recoil. He was an ex-con from a family of criminals, and he had killed a good man. Though he'd served his sentence and had tried to make amends ever since he knew he had never forgiven himself for what he had done.

V. CONCLUSSION

Based on the research finding in novel, the researcher would like to draw some conclusion as follow:

- a. Based on the discussion in the fourth chapter, the researcher concludes that Dawson in the novel *The Best of Me* is the main character as The researcher explained that Dawson is the main character who has the following characterizations: loyal, smart, tough, kind, and regretful.
- b. The psychological trauma experienced by Dawson Cole be classified into two; psychological trauma by event and causes by the environment. Dawson had terrible accident many times, among others: the fall of helicopters at the rig, the sinking of a Dawson boarded the ship, an oil refinery without a strong reason, the daily death of his colleague was in an accident. In addition, Dawson was a broken family and experienced physical abused and being oppression.

C .The impact psychological trauma of Dowson. As stated in the fourth chapter, the researcher concludes that Dowson got the result of the trauma; (1) hallucination and

flashback, (2) violent outburst and manic behavior, (3) psychosomatic symptom, (4) passivity and depression.

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