

CHERRY'S POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER IN NICO WALKER'S *CHERRY*

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Abstract: This research is entitled Cherry's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in Nico Walker's *Cherry*. This study discusses the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder experienced by Cherry. The purpose of this study is to find out the symptoms, causes, and effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder experienced by Cherry. Many factors cause post-traumatic stress disorder such as having experienced war, accidents, natural disasters, and sexual harassment. The method used in this thesis is a qualitative analysis presented descriptively. In this study, the writer uses a psychological approach to analyze. The theory is applied psychological approach is suitable for this research because the focus of this research is on Cherry's psychological condition in the novel. The analysis shows that Cherry suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. The symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder included frequent recurring nightmares, difficulty getting to sleep or staying asleep (sleep disturbance), and being physically responsive, such as experiencing a spike in heart rate or sweating when remembering the traumatic event. The causes of the post-traumatic stress disorder he experienced are seeing several tragic deaths during the war including seeing his friend who dies from an improvised bomb. The effects of post-traumatic stress disorder that make Cherry suffer are not being able to sleep, disrupting relationships with the woman he loves, and using illegal drugs to deal with excessive post-traumatic disorders. Cherry's post-traumatic stress disorder is even more worrying when he is not treated immediately.

Keywords: *post-traumatic stress disorder, trauma, mental disorder.*

INTRODUCTION

Life is a turn of events and a tragic event leaves a deep impression. A tragic event makes an impression that is difficult to forget, and it leaves a psychological wound. These events appear in the form of natural disasters such as tsunamis, floods, volcanic eruptions, and airplane accidents, as well as in the form of social disasters

such as persecution, torture, attacks, wars, and various human rights violations. Everyone who survives an event or disaster, more or less, experiences psychological effects with different intensity of emotional disturbances, some are mild, moderate, and some are even severe. The emotional disturbance caused by the disaster is called post-traumatic stress disorder, which is commonly



abbreviated as PTSD.

According to Gore, A.T (2017), the psychological impact experienced by disaster victims is related to psychological capacities, in the form of self-concept, development and relationships between human beings. If someone in PTSD does not get help as early as possible, the trauma will get worse, affecting his physical, emotional, mental, behavioral, and spiritual conditions. Post-traumatic stress disorder is very dangerous. It can even destroy the existence of a person's survival.

Trauma comes from the Greek which means wound (Cerney, 1998). The word trauma is used to describe the incident or situation experienced by the victim. Traumatic events or experiences will be experienced differently from one individual to another, so that each person will have a different reaction when faced with a traumatic event. A traumatic experience is an event experienced or witnessed by an individual, which threatens his or her safety (Loneragan, 1999). Therefore, it is a natural thing when a person experiences shock both physically and emotionally as a stress reaction to the traumatic event. Sometimes this aftershock effect only occurs after a few hours, days, or even weeks. According to Kaplan and Sadock (2013) in their book *Synopsis of Psychiatry*, patients classified as sufferers of post-traumatic stress disorder must experience a great emotional stress that causes trauma to almost everyone.

According to Stamm (1999), traumatic stress is a natural reaction to violent events (such as group violence, rape, accidents, and natural disasters) or dire conditions in life (such as poverty, deprivation, etc.). This condition is also known as post-traumatic stress (or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder / PTSD). Overall it can be concluded that PTSD is a type of generalized anxiety disorder that develops after experiencing a frightening event or physical attack or feeling threatened.

Kaplan and Sadock (2013) say that post-traumatic stress disorder can appear at any age, but is most prominent in young adults, due to the nature of the situation that triggered it. For women, the most common are assault and rape. The number of women who have experienced trauma is twice that of men. Disruption is likely to occur in those who are single, divorced, widowed, economically impaired, or socially withdrawn. Overall the writers can conclude that PTSD is a type of generalized anxiety disorder that develops after experiencing a frightening event or physical attack or feeling threatened.

Based on the above definition, the writer chooses a novel entitled *Cherry* to be discussed in this study because the writer is interested in the story described in the novel. Of particular interest is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The writer wants to analyze post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and wants to learn more in order to better understand



mental disorders, particularly post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). *Cherry* (2018) is a novel by Nicholas Walker or better known as Nico Walker, who also talks about post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the story. *Cherry's* character development in her youth will be discussed. Since *Cherry* drop out of college to become a medic in Iraq only because of his true love, Emily. *Cherry* is a young boy who grows up with PTSD after the war in Iraq and his life turns to drugs and crime as he struggles to find his place in the world.

This research is preceded by two previous studies from two researchers from the same university, namely a thesis entitled "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Found In Gillian Flynn's *Sharp Objects*" written by Mega Fadilla and a thesis entitled "Analysis of trauma found in Paula Hawkins's *Girl in Train*" written by Graninda Mukti Aulia that distinguishes the two research from the writer is the theory from the first research and the discussion is different from the second research.

RESEARCH METHOD

Literature approach used in this study is an extrinsic approach. Gerdin explains and states the extrinsic approach that 'literary texts are part of the world and rooted in its context'. The extrinsic approach can look at things like the history behind a book, psychology, gender issues, author intentions, social issues and more (Gerdin, 2016). In this section, the writer uses theories found in various

sources to assist this research. The literary approach in this study is a psychological approach because it is used to help the writer analyze the data using a psychological perspective that analyzes human behavior and as a reflection of the writer psychology such as the writer perception, dreams, conscious and subconscious thoughts, experiences and feelings of the writer.

According to Martin (2013), psychology means the science of human behavior. The writer uses a psychological approach to analyze post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The writer uses a psychological approach because it is suitable for analyzing behavior and characters that discuss human personality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In *Cherry*, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a mental disorder. *Cherry* is a character in Nico Walker's *Cherry*. *Cherry's* character development in her youth will be discussed. Since *Cherry* drop out of college to become a medic in Iraq only because of his true love, Emily. *Cherry* is a young boy who grows up with PTSD after the war in Iraq and his life turns to drugs and crime as he struggles to find his place in the world.

This chapter discusses *Cherry's* post-traumatic stress disorder analysis as depicted in Nico Walker's *Cherry*. The discussion is divided into three subchapters. The first section discusses the symptoms of *Cherry's* post-traumatic stress disorder. The



second section discusses the causes of Cherry's post-traumatic stress disorder and the last section discusses the effects of Cherry's post-traumatic stress disorder. Before discussing the causes and effects of Cherry's post-traumatic stress disorder, the writer discusses the background of Cherry's post-traumatic stress disorder because the topic supports the analysis of the symptoms, causes and effects of Cherry's post-traumatic stress disorder.

Symptoms of Cherry's Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Cherry's post-traumatic stress disorder is preceded when Cherry is sent to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, where he begins training as a medic. The medic gets on the bus to get to Fort Sam Houston and they join a company called Charlie's company and they get on another bus to get to the next barrack. The medic has a training battalion and has a spell for a medic that is Warrior Medic. There they have a class for training as a medic. Medics there are taught to treat other soldiers who are injured while on duty. Firstly medical officers are taught to make artificial respiration so that oxygen enters the injured soldier, they are also taught medical lessons about parts of the human body so that they understand the body parts of a man. Human body parts also cannot be held careless when injured, they must always pay attention to the class to treat every wounded soldier while on duty. The medics also have their chant to

encourage themselves and other soldiers who are injured.

“He addressed the company formation: “WAR-RIOR MEDICS, YOU WERE TOLD TO COME UP WITH A COMPANY CHEER. YOU WERE GIVEN A WEEK TO DO THIS. THIS IS WHAT IS CALLED A DEADLINE. AS OF NOW YOU HAVE MISSED THE DEADLINE... OPEN RANKS.” “OPEN RANKS.” “HALF-LEFT ... FACE.” “FRONT ... BACK (Walker, 2018:67).”

Cherry's symptoms of PTSD are sleep problems. People with PTSD usually have a change in their condition because they may also experience decreased sleep. Sleep problems as another change in arousal symptoms tend to reduce a person's ability to tolerate something (Hamblen, 2018). Having trouble sleeping is one of the most common symptoms people with PTSD have to deal with sleep problems can include difficulty getting up, having sleep, or even staying effective. In a previous analysis of Cherry's intrusion symptoms, Cherry has sleep problems. Apart from struggling with his nightmares, he also has difficulty coping. He is described as having sleepless nights due to his traumatic events.

“For weeks, he could not sleep at night, exhausted during the day, his nerves torn apart by repeated memories and nightmares of war” (Walker, 2018:157)

Moreover, because of the bad



dream, Cherry has trouble sleeping at night. He wake up in the middle of his sleep, screaming and screaming. Cherry managed to overcome her nightmares, and sleepless nights, by using illegal drugs which he admitted that he could not confirm the pill's integrity.

After Masters statement that Cherry will be sent to Iraq, Cherry is not happy because he will work hard there during the war. After the weekend, Cherry asks his boss for permission to go home and meet Emily. Staff Sergeant finally allows Cherry to come home for the weekend and talk about Iraq with Emily. Until they finally meet again, Cherry is picked up by Emily at the airport by car. Emily and Cherry spend all their time at home and she takes Cherry around when Cherry has to go somewhere. Cherry is happy that Emily is not on drugs anymore, he is happy that Emily was able to raise her money and be stuck with her school and that is a good thing.

Until they finally talk about Iraq, Cherry tells Emily that he has to go to Iraq soon and Emily is a bit upset with Cherry because she has to be left for a long time to serve in Iraq. Cherry told Emily the whole truth and does not want to worry about Emily because they both have a life that is lived to achieve a better life. Emily is finally able to understand with everything she has lived so far and matures that they both have to live better in the future even though they are separate. But Cherry insists that they will not be separated forever, Cherry only needs

time to complete his assignment in Iraq so that he can live together again with Emily, while Emily also needs time to finish her school to be able to live together again. Finally, they understand each other.

The following day an Iraq insurgent is seen near the base, and a female cook kills him with a rifle. The soldiers on duty are furious because he is the first person to confirm to have been killed. This leads the other soldier to find out until finally the female cook is found by the soldier and the female cook is brought before the local authorities to be brought to the authorities and Cherry is assigned to regular drain the abscess on the back of one of the sergeants. Meanwhile, the soldier finds a dog and takes it to the base. The soldier eventually shoots and kills the dog, and Cherry feels a strong pain and loss for the dog.

Then the next day an army administrator arrives at the base to notify the soldiers that they would receive their army pension. But from that day on, recruits might not receive the pension. A week later, a man in Private Grace's platoon is killed by an improvised explosive device (IED) while on patrol. Cherry is sent on patrol with a rookie lieutenant. At one point, frustrated by the lieutenant's incompetence, Cherry losses his temper and screams at the lieutenant, and then returns to base himself. After some horrific events the worst, possible outcome gets killed in the end, after all that bullshit. If the soldiers are



not going home it is better to be killed early. That is logic. Everyone does not want to be killed in the end.

The horrible event happens when two of the battalions are killed the next morning. Cherry goes out that night, he meets a group of people from the Third Platoon, led by Evans. It is supposed to be the last patrol on the tour, and the roster is a mix and match between asshole and fat people. Finally, Lieutenant Evans can arrive at the coordinates to kill the enemies. Cherry's close friends who know at the beginning of the training until they are assigned together turn out to be tasked with looking for the enemy and they are killed on the way. Finally, Cherry and Cherry's platoon on duty meets Cherry's friends who have been bombed. It is there that Cherry sees his close friend be killed by a bomb and Cherry sees that it is too traumatic that causes post-traumatic stress disorder and that is the end of Cherry's journey with other officers in Iraq.

We said, "Oh, shit. Look at that."
 We asked was he alright.
 After a minute he said he was alright.
 Then we huffed one last can of duster.
 And it was alright, like we were kids. (Walker ,2018:183)

From the quote above, it is told that Cherry sees terrible events such as his classmates while practicing together from the beginning who has been together with his since register and then some basic checks such as a full body check, color blind test, to

some basic physical exercises such as lifting barbells every day by to be shout at by her commander. To keep practicing properly and quickly of course after that he starts to be doused with strong water that he is strong and able to withstand the water that is so fast spraying his face hard. Then he also practices lying down on the ground like following the arena competition quickly in the arena on his body hanging from wood. The one who is stuck with razor wire which could certainly tear anyone is skin and the muddy mud road with puddles of water surrounding the arena is found to have died because the army car driven while on duty is a bomb. From there the trauma begins to appear in Cherry's life.

After a year in Iraq, Cherry permanently return to America. He returns to Cleveland and returns to college. However, his new drug addiction interferes with his ability to focus on his work at school. Emily breaks up with him after she finds out that he goes on a date with another man. He starts dating a young woman named Libby. He suffers from a post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health problems which force him to return to drug addiction to get rid of the post-traumatic stress disorder. His drug addiction is worse, and he soon becomes addicted to heroin. Until he finally breaks up with Libby and realizes that Emily is the woman he loves. He and Emily finally resume their relationship. Emily also become addicted to heroin. They allow addiction to each other, and their



heroin addiction only gets worse. Cherry uses student loan money to buy drugs, and he cultivates connections among various drug dealers. Finally, Cherry and Emily run out of money to buy drugs. After that Cherry robbed the bank to get money. Emily did not mind this because they were already addicted to heroin very heavily. Then Cherry executes several successful robberies until Cherry ends up injecting another dose of heroin into her arm and is caught by local authorities.

"She rolled over and I pressed the bag of heroin into the palm of her hand."

"Care to weight it out?"

"Mm-mm"

"You don't have to do it now my account," I said.

"We can wait till later if you want to go back to sleep."

"No," she said. I have to pee."

"I love you."

"I love you too." (Walker, 2018:313)

Cherry's ending not only offers salvation to the main character and his partner but also gives him hope and the promise of a new beginning. Walking out of prison, Cherry finds Emily waiting for him, apparently free of drug abuse due to the post-traumatic stress disorder she has endured for years. Despite the immense pain of being tied down for a long time due to their past along with the self-inflict damage and individual trauma of war. Cherry ends up with the iron bar holding her back, the two finding their way back to each other, albeit slightly broken and hopeless in sight. In their world, Emily and Cherry are finally free from their respective

addiction. They will likely be able to rebuild their lost dream of a happy together, and create a fulfilling life together in the house she has lived in since childhood. Happiness seems reachable once again against the backdrop of a dream twilight sky from a house they can finally call their happiness in a new color.

Causes of Cherry's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

It is told in the middle of the story that when Cherry returns from Iraq after some time doing his duty as an Army medic. He struggles to erase the nightmare of living in a war zone after witnessing many atrocities in the land of war such as many people being injured when hit by an improving bomb. That resulted in many casualties resulting in death including his basic training friend since joining the Army.

"Since returning from Iraq, he has been unable to shake off the effects of spending nearly a year in a war zone serving as an Army medic. They cling against the walls like invisible animals, so small as to be invisible, yet tenacious as snakes and, so far, impossible to escape from the battle zone because that is my job" (Walker, 2018: 131).

Cherry is shown to be suffering from a traumatic disorder called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The cause of PTSD based on Hamblen, J., & Barnett, E. (2018) itself is exposure to traumatic events by experiencing or



witnessing the trauma firsthand, and studying trauma from close family members or friends who experience it or from work related to it. In the case of post-traumatic stress disorder experience by Cherry, it is known that Cherry's traumatic event is relate to a Sergeant name Arnold.

Sergeant Arnold is told to be an important figure who makes American troops in Iraq very strong because of his genius in displaying accurate tactics in American barracks in Iraq during the war or battle that occurred. He is both a friend and a boss to everyone there. He is a person who was always there to comfort those who had lost their close friends in war and wrote letters to inform the families of those who died while serving in a war zone and made everyone a role model for his mature attitude. His personality and capacity as a soldier make everyone respect him, including Cherry who is also on duty in the field and constantly meets with his superiors because they are in the same platoon and often talk with Cherry.

Cherry and the other members immediately run to the car that carries Sergeant Arnold and other members after arriving it is found that Sergeant Arnold and other members who are in the first car have died from the pathetic condition of their body parts. Their bodies are almost crushed and their faces are charred because of hitting the explosion of the homemade bomb made by the enemy. It makes Cherry and the other members cry which causes the situation to become

scary. Cherry and the other survivors return to the barracks without a triumphant face and a very depressed, sad, and frightened face hit Cherry. In that situation, Cherry could not think clearly which make him so scared that it cause a traumatic event that he can not forget so she become a sufferer of post-traumatic stress disorder.

“On the other hand, Cherry as an Army medic has indeed witnessed many atrocities and deaths in Iraq over the past year or so. However, the death of Sergeant Arnold in front of him really haunted his life because it was an event that he will always remember, Sergeant Arnold, and the soldiers had shared many things together. Cherry sleeps, talks, laughs and even plays cards together in their barracks where she is on duty.” (Walker, 2018: 180).

From the quote above, it can be said that Cherry experienced post-traumatic stress disorder after witness firsthand the traumatic event, namely the death of his own superior. Sergeant Arnold in front of her when they join the task of guarding the war zone in Iraq. Not being able to sleep, worries, fears, anxiety, and nightmares related to the traumatic event as one of the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as other symptoms shown in Cherry have been shown in the analysis above. The effect of post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by Cherry will be discussed in the following discussion.



Effects of Cherry's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Emily knows that Cherry is inconsistent with her decision because of PTSD he has since come from Iraq. He notices that Cherry is hesitant between her own life and those of others because PTSD bothered him enough that he turns to a drug to reduce the PTSD feeling that is always present with him. Emily even tells Cherry that his PTSD is so severe that Emily also takes drugs to live with Cherry.

"Emily and I were going to split heroin up. I caught a smell off the bag of heroin and I told Emily and she smelled it too and we agreed that it smelled like Raul ate a lot of fruit snacks. After we shot the dope I called Raul. He asked what I thought of the heroin. I said the heroin was fine and I asked him if he always was going to stick the heroin up his ass before he sold it to me. He laughed". (Walker, 2018:263)

In the years after his return from Iraq, Cherry could not sleep, and during his, sleep Cherry dreamed of violence while in Iraq. Cherry dreams of a movie he has seen while in the barracks in Iraq. He has a dream-like he was going to die in his dream and not wake up and it was very scary. Cherry will die in her dream and then die again, and when she wakes up she is tired from having a lucid dream overtaking her life. He does not care what else when he dreams of Iraq, he feels unhappy with

his life experiencing PTSD because of the tragic events in Iraq.

"Dr. Kaufmann had made an appointment for me with a drug counselor at the hospital. I told him I didn't have any confidence in Suboxones on account of they didn't ever work on met at all."(Walker, 2018:263).

In an analysis of the effect of Cherry's previous post-traumatic stress disorder, it is found that Cherry has shown Emily some kind of nightmare in her sleep which advise her to see a therapist and that she should see a psychiatrist. Nightmare and insomnia caused him to lie in the bathroom for so long that one of the things that causes someone with PTSD to have difficulty in a relationship with Emily is because Emily also feels depressed but Emily loves Cherry so much that she will do anything to stay with Cherry. Cherry herself is often described as having the effects of PTSD such as nightmares and sleep problems. He also did not show any kind of rude behavior.

However, when people suffer from PTSD, their ability to be a good partner or family member tends to decrease whether they develop behaviors that they are not aware of so that they almost become hopeless. This is because PTSD has various effects that affect and change sufferers including how they think about themselves, how they make choices, or how they deal with their problems.



The effect of PTSD on other aspects of Cherry's life such as his work as a student was so severely tested that she could not live like other students. However, analysis of Cherry's difficulties in living a life such as nightmares and insomnia due to her PTSD has shown that PTSD can make it difficult for sufferers to live a normal life like other people.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the novel written by Nico Walker entitled Cherry, it can be concluded that Cherry's depicts Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) through its main character named Cherry which is quite representative of people suffering from PTSD in the real world. The writer analyzes PTSD described in Cherry's including the symptoms, causes, and effects of PTSD which is supported by the PTSD theory proposed by several experts. From the analysis that has been written by the writer, it is known that Cherry suffered from PTSD after witnessing the death of Sergeant Arnold while they are assigned to Iraq.

The symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by Cherry are that he experiences sleep disturbances, cold sweats after remembering the traumatic event, and nightmares that haunt her after the traumatic event occurred. These symptoms occur after Cherry fights to check the enemy's situation. He watched his friend die from a homemade bomb.

The causes of post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by Cherry after arriving in the area, the sound of an improvised bomb exploded very loud and hit Sergeant Arnold's car. Cherry and other members who are in the second car immediately come to the car that Sergeant Arnold is traveling in when they arrived in the car they see Sergeant Arnold and other members has died with their body that is almost destroyed and their face scorched from being hit by the explosion of the homemade bomb made by the enemy. Cherry and the other members cry because the situation becomes scary. Cherry and the other members who survived return to the barracks without triumphant faces and very depressed, sad, sad faces. Cherry is terrified. In that situation, Cherry could not think clearly which make him so scared that it caused a traumatic event that he can not forget that the traumatic event that Cherry witnessed firsthand is his PTSD, and it haunts Cherry's life even after he returns to America.

The effects that Cherry received after learning that he has PTSD due to the inability to maintain a healthy body due to PTSD is shown by Cherry through her tendency to run towards drugs because he has anxiety that he would end up hurting herself as he did to other people. In the analysis of changes in positive to negative attitudes and mood symptoms, the writers state that Cherry is described as insecure about himself. That is why it is difficult for him to take care of



himself with a normal life. The writer finds that because of his PTSD, Cherry takes illegal drugs to relieve his excessive PTSD feeling so he finds it difficult to control herself when he suffers from PTSD. Cherry takes an illegal drug because he is not strong with PTSD which makes it difficult to sleep, his body was shaking, and the cold sweat hit so that he becomes damaged and disorganized. By consuming illegal drugs, Cherry's PTSD is getting out of control and being treated.

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