

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN EISHES CHAYIL'S *HUSH*

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ABSTRACT

Child sexual abuse is an unwanted sexual activity that is often not disclosed by the child for many years and even decades after the events. This article discusses psychological effect of child sexual abuse in Eishes Chayil's *Hush*. This study uses child sexual abuse effect theory by Hollenberg and Ragan. Since the study deals with phenomenon in life, the researcher applies psychological approach. This study uses qualitative approach as method of research. This study is to mention and to describe psychological effects that happen toward Devory and Gittel. This research may discover an act of child sexual abuse conducted by older brother, namely Shmuli toward his younger sister, namely, Devory. The suffering and shame, the anger and powerless of child who gets sexual abuse victim such a reality in this fictional novel. The act of the sexual abuse results in some negative effects toward Devory and her friend, Gittel. In Devory's case, she becomes depressed that leads her to committing suicide. Toward Gittel, she suffers from anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and low self-esteem. In conclusion, the victim of sexual abuse in the novel is Devory. The psychological effect happens in the novel are depression, committing suicide, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorder and low self-esteem.

Keywords: *Child Sexual Abuse, Psychology, Effect.*

INTRODUCTION

Child sexual abuse is a hidden phenomena that frequently goes unreported by the victim until years or even decades after the acts have occurred. Because child sexual abuse occurs in private, without witnesses, and typically leaves no obvious traces of it having happened, it can be challenging for others to discover (Mathews 2019: 21). Sexual abuse is unwanted sexual activity, with perpetrators using force, making threats, or taking advantage of victims not able to give consent. There are many types of sexual abuse, including rape, child sexual abuse, and intimate partner sexual violence, and so on. Child neglect, physical abuse of a kid, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse are the four main categories of maltreatment that make up sexual child abuse. The World Health Organization (2006) states when a child conducts in sexual behavior that "he or she does not completely comprehend, is unable to provide informed permission to, or for which the child is not developmentally equipped and cannot offer consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society," this is considered child sexual abuse. In the past year, Up to 1 billion children between the ages of 2 and 17

around the world have been neglected or subjected to physical, sexual, or emotional abuse

(<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-children>).

There are various kinds of abusers, some of whom will be attracted to children sexually while others will not; some of them will sexually abuse or assault a child while others will not; some of those who are attracted to children sexually will not abuse children while others will (Petheric 2020: 164). Social and cultural obstacles specific to child sexual abuse are present. Social stigma prevents victims from coming forward, adds to the humiliation victims experience, and is linked to specific institutions' history of concealing child sex abuse. According to McLean and Gallop, Post-traumatic stress disorder is more likely to occur in people who have a history of sexually abusing children (2003: 369), and in particular, exhibit higher signs of hyperarousal, avoidance, and intrusion than people who have never had a history of child sexual abuse (Rahm, Renck, & Ringsberg, 2013: 272). The impacts of

childhood sexual abuse on adolescence and adulthood include sadness, anxiety, PTSD, emotional issues, low self-esteem, distortions of one's body image, and suicidal thoughts. Some of 30% of sexual child abusers are family members, such as parents, older brother and sisters, cousins, step-parents, aunts, uncles or grandparents (Foster 2007: 80-81).

Hush, a novel by Eishes Chayil brings a story about child sexual abuse. The fictional book *Hush* tells the story of child sexual abuse that occurs in isolated Chassidic Jewish communities and how the abuse is covered up. Throughout the course of the years 1999 to 2008, the drama is set in Borough Park, Brooklyn's Chassidic community. The narrative is given by a young Chassidic woman named Gittel. It jumps between Gittel and Devory's lives as best friends at age nine and Gittel's life as an adult dealing with her first marriage and motherhood while carrying a painful secret. Nobody can figure out why Devory's behavior suddenly changes, why she misbehaves at school, and why she wants to stay at Gittel's house when her brother comes home from Yeshiva. Gittel spends a night at Devory's residence and observes Devory's brother abusing her sexually. With her limited grasp of what sex is, she tries to notify her parents, but is told to keep quiet. The torture continues until Devory hangs herself in Gittel's family bathroom. In response, Gittel's family destroys any evidence of Devory's existence and bans Gittel from mentioning her ever again. Years later, Gittel struggles to report the incident because she is still tormented by it, is getting married soon, and is worried about embarrassing her and her family.

The researcher will explore a psychological effect of child sexual abuse in the novel *Hush* by Eishes Chayil. This research aims to analyze the psychological effect of child sexual abuse from the prestigious family. The life of the Chassidic community are shown in *Hush*. The researcher learns about their daily lives, their education, and their familial relationships. Eishes Chayil, the anonymous author who picked her pen

name based on the Yiddish term for a woman of valor to go forward and remove the veil of secrecy that the Chassidic community surrounds itself with, wrote a book that was inspired by events in her own life. The researcher should read *Hush* to gain a better understanding of the harm that silence may cause to a community. The researcher chooses the novel as an object because the novel provides information about the effect of sexual abuse on a child and about any issue that we might be denial about child sexual abuse effects. Also, the researcher interested with this novel because of the title *Hush* have the hidden meaning or fact that might hidden from everyone. After reading it, the researcher finds that the novel tell about sexual abuse happen in Chassidic Jews Community. The writer hide her identity to protect herself because this novel is a fictional novel that tell about a true story. This novel tells how a best friend tries to speak up the truth about her best friend is being raped by her own elder brother.

METHOD

Chamamah (2003: 19) stated that a researcher, in conducting a study on literary work, has its own scientific measure determined by its characteristics as a system (in Pramesti and Supsiadji, 2022). Accordingly, this research applies a qualitative approach as a method of research. The article takes the data from *Hush*, a novel written by Eishes Chayil that is related to child sexual abuse of each story. The researchers use the extrinsic approach in which the literary work is analysed through its psychological approach.

Also, the researcher takes a few procedures. First, the researcher reads and rereads the novel to gather data. Then, the researcher analyzes the section of the story that depicts child sexual assault. Second, when child characters act, speak, think, and interact with other characters, the researcher makes notes and emphasizes pertinent information. Third, the data are correctly classified by the researcher. Fourth, the data is processed by the researcher using the theories that were employed. The analysis of the data involves

these three steps: Reading and memorization, explaining what is happening in the document, and categorizing research findings are the first two steps.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

There is victim of the sexual abuse and some effects of the sexual abuse. The following discussion will show the matter.

A. The Victim of Sexual Abuse in The Chayil's Hush

The victim of sexual abuse in *Hush* is Devory Goldblatt. Devory has a blue-eyed girl who was born from a poor family. She has siblings, they are Miriam, Shmuli, Leah'la, Tzvi, twin sister and Chana'la. Her father is a *maggid shiur* (a Torah scholar, who taught boys in the *yeshiva*) and her mother is a *chumash* (the five books of the old Testament) teacher of high school in the *Yushive* school (a traditional Jewish educational institution that focus on Talmud and Jewish law). Her family is a prestigious family because Goldblatt family is related to all sorts of important *Rebbes* (teacher of boys in elementary school or Chassidic school) or other to the *Yushive Rebbe's* family. Her father is along with every descendant of the front place in line of the past seven generations to the *Rebbe* for a blessing. Devory is close with Shmuli. Shmuli has the patience of a real father, he is a big helper. Shmuli is fifteen-year-old but his parents have sent him to *yeshiva* (high school for boys), that makes Shmuli stay in *yeshiva* dorm. When he is at home, he always helps his mother and Devory. When Devory sets the table for *Shabbos*, Shmuli helps her. He buys book for her and offers to read the book he has bought to her. He also gives piggyback rides around the dining room table, plays hide-and-seek and teaches Torah songs to Devory.

In the year of 2000, Devory Goldblatt, a nine-year-old child has experienced the sexual abuse done by her brother, she is raped by Shmuli. The reason that makes Devory is raped by her brother, is because she is a beautiful sister. She has straight blond hair

scattered in every direction on her head. The event of the abuse is presents through another character that is Gittel. Gittel is the witness of the event. She suddenly see what Shmuli doing. She is frightened by what Shmuli doing to Devory even she does not know what it is but she can feel what Devory's feel. She thinks that there is something wrong happens in that time. All she can do is pretend to sleep. After the event, Gittel knows why Devory always run away when Shmuli comes home. She tends to dodge Shmuli.

B. The Effects of Sexual Abuse in The Chayil's Hush

There are some psychological effects of child sexual abuse happen. In this novel, the psychological effects happen toward Devory and her best friend, Gittel. Gittel and Devory are best friend because their house is close and their mother is close since in high school. Gittel lives three and half blocks away from Devory's house, they both are almost neighbour. The psychological effect happen in Gittel is because Gittel stays at Devory's house for a week when Gittel's mother goes to Israel. The psychological effects discovered on the novel are depression that lead to suicide, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), low self-esteem, and anxiety. They both have different psychological effect because the sexual abuse happens in different way. The effects of sexual abuse towards Devory manifest in depression and committing suicide and the effects of sexual abuse towards Gittel are post-traumatic stress disorders, low self-esteem and anxiety.

1. Devory's Depression

Devory's depression can be read from several scenes in the novel. Devory tries to hide that she has been abused from her family and her best friend. She tends to be silent and stays away from her brother who has raped her. Before she is raped, Devory is cheerful, agile and smart person, she usually playing with her friends, her neighbors. "Devory was running around wildly" (Chayil 2010: 121). Besides being a silent person, Devory also is

withdrawing herself from other. According to Stephen S. Illardi withdrawing is the most common sign of depression, individual who has depression they usually seek out alone time (2009: 100). Depression has a significant risk factor for withdrawal (McDale-Montez, et al. 2006: 198). Withdrawal is one of the characteristics of a person who is in depression. Devory's withdrawing can be seen in the way she limits her socialize with people around her and spend her time alone.

In her effort to withdraw from other she spends her time alone, reading book and stops playing with her friends. Devory's peak of depression seems to be expressed through her topic of conversation on committing suicide. Devory always spends her time by reading a book. She keeps staying silence. "Devory placed a book on her lap and read straight through the Shabbos meal" (Chayil 2010: 120). Also, she reads the book during class time. Even when break time at school, she keeps reading, sits at her desk and she does not want to play with her friends. After what has happened with her, she becomes nerd, reading book for the entire week. The teacher in the class comes over to Devory when break time, asking her why she stops playing with her friend but she ignores her. Even she does not stop reading when lunchtime. She reads books all the time.

2. Devory's Committing Suicide

Devory's committing suicide can be seen from the conversation about how to hang up. Devory has thought that she will suicide herself by hanging after reading book. She practices the way she will end up her life to Gittel. It describes that she has committed suicide since the sexual abuse has happened to her because she feels shame if she has to tell people about what has happened between her and her brother. After reading about how to suicide and trying to suicide herself, then she has suicided herself in best friend house. Devory commits suicide in Gittel's house. The way she ends up her life is same with what she demonstrates to Gittel. She reads the books she

has ever read then she follows the step. That makes Gittel disbelieve what Devory has done in her house.

3. Gittel's Low Self-esteem

Gittel always has low self-esteem as psychological effect after her best friend suicide. Gittel disbelieves in herself that there will be someone who will marry her after what has happened with Devory. The event happen in Gittel's house and Devory is her best friend. People will think that Gittel has done something wrong to Devory and she feels that she is useless best friend because let Devory suppressed her fears alone. She does not understand Devory's feeling well. Gittel is afraid to come to the police office. She is afraid of her parents if she speaks up about what has happened with Devory. She needs to look at her parents afterward. She needs to look into their eyes and tell them why she destroys her family because of something they do not do because she will destroy her reputation, her shidduchim, and everything and she will be a moser (traitor). Gittel actually does not want to speak up about what has happened with Devory. She thinks about the Jews community she lives with. She also think about her parents which they are the religious Jews. She does not want to expose the disgrace that has happened in the Jewish community to public. She feels she becomes low-person when she is speaking about what has happened to Devory. Gittel feels that her parents hate her since the day Devory hang up herself in the bathroom. Her parents feel that the friendship between Gittel and Devory bring problems to Gittel's future as she grows up in the religious community in town.

4. Gittel's Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

The post-traumatic Gittel includes nightmares, flashbacks and reminders of the abuse. Gittel always starts writing a letter when she thinks and feels about Devory. Gittel usually gets nightmares in the night when she is sleeping after her best friend suicide in her house. Every night and sometimes in the day,

she will scream a lot after that. Gittel feels that Devory shows her up but she has passed away. Gittel feels that Devory gets mad at her because she has not spoken up to people about what has happened with her even she knows everything has happened between Devory and Shmuli. The feelings that Gittel gets take her to have nightmare since the day Devory hang up herself in the bathroom. Gittel's parents has sent Gittel in the psychologist to help Gittel to solve her nightmares that she always gets. She does not tell the psychologist because she thinks that the nightmare she gets is from Devory. She thinks that Devory haunts her by coming in her dream. She is scared to go to sleep, but she does not want if her father take to the psychologist again. Gittel has nightmare about Devory because she is guilty not to help Devory. She begs to Devory to forgive her. She feels that Devory knows that Gittel knows what has happened between Shmuli and Devory. Gittel is haunted by guilty.

Gittel does not know what makes her best friend hanging herself up, she thinks that the reason why her best friend does not want to sleep at home when her brother come home, also what makes her best friend always ignore her brother. She always has flashback moment that remind her about what happen with Devory. She tells her father about what happen in the past nights when she is sleeping at Devory's house. Gittel still remember the events of Shmuli on that night when she is in Devory's house. She is the only witness in the Devory's room. She pretends to sleep while she is thinking what Shmuli doing in Devory's bed. She gets fever after telling her father about what happend with Devory that makes her hanging herself. the flashback event when Shmuli comes to Devory's bed is showing up in Gittel's dream. Gittel feels that the event is real and she feels what Devory feels that time. She begs to Devory to disappear in Gittel's real life because they both live in different life. The shadows of Devory haunts Gittel's life. Even she gets flashback when Yankel (her husband) falls off her bed, touch and come near her. She dreams of Devory. She is frozen, her body turns to stone. She wants to run,

pound his bed to scream at him. Gittel feels regret that she does not help Devory when Shmuli enter the Devory's room. That time, she only watches what Shmuli doing. She feels that Devory shout at her, asking Gittel to speak up what Shmuli has done. That shows that how Devory suffer every time Shmuli comes to her bed every night.

5. Gittel's Anxiety Disorder

Gittel always feels anxiety. She does not want to go to the police office. Then finally she encourage herself to go. Once she is crying when she is going to tell Miranda, a social worker for the Department of Special Investigation in Brooklyn. When Miranda asks her is she scared they will hurt her, she does not answer she just but her lip until it hurt. Gittel is not really sure that she is able to tell the police about what has happened. She is frightened because the reality of Devory and also the fact that she has to close the information to maintain the Jews community name. Gittel has new habit, biting her nails. She bits her pinkie nail hard while she is thinking how to explain from all the beginning and looking down at her shoes. After she tries to tell Miranda about what has happened, she twists the ring on her finger, bits her nail again and chews on a nail. This means that she has anxiety because she feels nervous, restless and tense of the questions she gives. Gittel also does not want to accept the fact that types of sexual abuse that has happened to Devory is rape.

Gittel cannot accept the reality that Devory is raped by her brother. She is in anger when she knows the truth. That is describes that she has anxiety that lead her cannot refuse the fact of the event that has happened. She always thinks that Devory is mad at her. She thinks that she should tell the police the truth long time ago, in 2000 before Devory hang up. there is kind of suspicion that Gittel has toward Devory. In Gittel's mind, Devory seems to be angry on her. Gittel feels that Devory does not pay attention on her problem. Even Gittel feels that no one pays attention to

what has happen to her as she says “I should have done more, screamed louder, told other people, but they wouldn’t listen. They are too scared of the truth.”. Furthermore, Gittel asks Devory to give away her madness.

CONCLUSION

To sum up the discussion, the researcher now will present the conclusion of the research. The research discovers that the statements of the problem in chapter one can be answered as seen in the analysis. The novel portrays a practice of sexual abuse that results in some negative effects on two characters. Child sexual abuse happens in this novel happens between family members, older brother and sister. The victim of the sexual abuse happens in *Hush* novel is nine-year-old children, namely Devory. The abuser and the victim is of a prestigious Jewish family.

There are some psychological effects portrayed in this novel that are suffered by Devory and Gittel, those are depression, committing suicide, anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorders and low self-esteem. Mood disorder that affects the feeling, thought, and behaviour that lead to emotional and physical problems is depression. Anxiety disorder is a feeling of strong of worry, anxiety and fear that interfere with daily activities. Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is happen because the survivor has experienced or witnessed a terrifying event that affect to survivor’s mental health condition. Low self-esteem is dissatisfaction with oneself to society in life. Devory is the victim that experiences the rape conducted by Shmulu because she is a beautiful sister. Because of the event, Devory becomes depressed. For Devory, the event is really a hard thing that she cannot bear. As the result the depression leads Devory committing suicide. Another character, Gittel, the witness of the sexual abuse also has been affected psychologically in the forms of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and low self-esteem.

The psychological effect towards Gittel happens because she continues her life while she regrets that she has not spoken up about what happen with her best friend, Devory. There are many great lines and passages in *Hush* (including Gittel’s letter to Devory that she sends into community paper).

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