

Miles's Trauma in Colleen Hoover's Ugly Love

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Abstract

The study deals with Miles's Trauma in Colleen Hoover's *Ugly Love*. The objective of this research is to examine the trauma suffer by Miles Archer as the main character. It uses qualitative method and the research design used is psychological approach. The study aims to explore and find the cause of the trauma, and their effects on the character, and the solution of the trauma. The results shows that the cause of his trauma relates to the abandonment of his first love, Rachel, due to the car crash that results the death of their newborn baby. He is not just devastated by Rachel's departure, but also the death of his son which makes him lose both of the person he loves the most. After Rachel leaves him, he promises himself not to fall in love with anyone again. The effects of his trauma also reveals that he faces difficulty and problem with relationship, also emotional impacts. The way Miles solves his trauma is by facing and accepting his fear, and learning how to manage his feelings in order to heal.

Key words

Trauma, Cause, Effect, Solve.

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Introduction

Trauma is considered as one of the psychological problems in human life. It is an emotional response to a severe incident, such as an accident, assault, or natural disaster. Initial reactions often involve shock and denial. According to Caruth (1996), traumatic experiences bring up an interesting contradiction. When someone witness a traumatic event, it's strange because even though they see it in front of their eyes, they cannot fully understand what is going on at that moment. The feeling of seeing it right then

may actually make it seem like they only understand it much later. This confusing part means that despite witnessing the event directly, their minds struggle to immediately make sense of it. Instead, it's like the intensity of the moment causes a delay in truly understanding what happened, making it clearer only after some time has passed and things have calm down. ¹² Over time, individuals may experience unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships, and physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. Though these reactions are consider normal, some individuals find it challenging to move on in their lives after such experiences. Meanwhile, In the studies of hysteria, according to Freud (1955) the original event is not traumatic in itself, but only in its remembrance. ³ Because the original event continues to inflict harm, the talking cure or abreaction is required to understand the effects of the past and gain freedom from its symptom causing grasp. Importantly, the traumatic event is understood only after a latency period of deferred action that delays the effects and meaning of the past.

An individual with trauma has excessive amount of emotional stress, leading to a lack of control over their emotions. Traumatic states may arise from significant losses, such as the death of family members, partners, or individuals with whom they shared meaningful relationships. According to Townsend & Morgan (2017) define trauma as an impactful incident that leaves a lasting impression on an individual. Such events can contribute ¹⁰ to mental health issues, including Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD may arise from tragedies, accidents, natural disasters, war, violence, and their aftermath, leading to symptoms like fear and a compromised sense of personal integrity.

Ugly Love is a novel written by American author named Colleen Hoover. The story tells about two main characters named Tate Collins and Miles Archer. However Miles's life is so much interesting since he hides his past life privately. Miles Archer works as a professional pilot. Miles is a very quiet and closed-off person. People around him do not know about who he really is. Because he is hard to emotionally approach and it is hard for him to be open up about himself, especially his past. Until he meet Tate Collins. Tate is the sister of Miles's friend. One day, they are agree to have physical relationship without involves feelings. Their relationship gets complicated and makes Tate uncomfortable. Tate have tries multiple times to ask why he does it, but Miles does not want to open up about what makes him this way. The more Tate asks about his past, it triggers his pain even more due to his awful past experience. The

reason that Miles does not want anyone to know about what happens in his past, only because he wants to forget the pain he carries over the years. He thinks tells the story, only makes him remember the tragedy of the night that he loses two most important people in his life. He often experiences anxiety when the topic of his six years past comes up. He often takes it out on Tate, either by word or their physical relationship unconsciously. He feels he deserves to take the blame on the incident that takes away his happiness. But after all he does, Tate is still willing to help him to forgive himself and move on with his life.

Literature Review

1. Types of Trauma

According to Mendato (2010) the types of events that can cause trauma are very diverse. Based on a person's involvement with the event, traumatic events can be divided into three different types:

- a) Impersonal Trauma
- b) Interpersonal Trauma
- c) Attachment Trauma

2. The Cause of Trauma

According to Hapsari (2021), trauma may result from a variety of situations, each of which can have a dramatic impact on an individual's well-being both mentally and emotionally. These are complex experiences that cover a wide range of situations:

- a) One-Time Events
- b) Continuously Stressful Events
- c) Interpersonal and Relationship Experience
- d) Loss and sadness
- e) Medical and Health-Related Events
- f) Identity and Self-Image Challenges

3. The Effects of Trauma

According to Kolk (2014) trauma is like a big force that affects people in many different ways how they feel, their body, thoughts, and how they get along with others. Trauma affects people in different ways:

- a) Physical symptoms
- b) Emotional Impact

- c) Cognitive Effects
- d) Problems with Relationship
- e) Behavioral Changes
- f) Post-Traumatic stress Disorder (PTSD)

4. How to Solve Trauma

When someone experience trauma, severe condition can happen, especially mental disorder. But this condition don't last forever, unless someone try to prevent or solve the trauma. Kolk (2014) offers different ways to help with tough experiences:

- a) Mind-Body Connection:
- b) Trauma Processing:
- c) Safety and Connection:
- d) Empowerment and Self-Regulation:
- e) Integration and Growth:

Research Method

The study uses descriptive qualitative method in analyze Miles's Trauma in Colleen Hoover's *Ugly Love*. Descriptive research is consider as a deliberate way of collecting, studying, organizing, and summarizing information about current situations, methods, procedures, patterns, and connections between things. This approach involves interpreting the data accurately which helps understand the existing facts within a studied group, offering descriptions (Calderon. 2006).

In This research uses psychological approach in order to analyze Miles's Trauma in Colleen Hoover's *Ugly Love*. A psychological approach is like a specific way that psychologists and researchers look at how people behave, think, feel, and understand their minds. Wellek & Warren (1949). The object of the study is trauma suffer by Miles Archer as the main character in *Ugly Love*. The type of data in *Ugly Love* novel consists of phrases, sentences and some dialogues. There are two types of data source. The data sources are consist of secondary and primary data. Primary data in this study is Colleen Hoover's *Ugly Love*. The secondary data are taken from other references such as related previous study, journal, articles and internet sources. The research instrument is the writer herself because the writer does all the data collection and the data analysis. The writer reads the whole of the story of *Ugly Love* by Colleen Hoover.

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The source of the data used in this research is the novel *Ugly Love* written by Colleen Hoover. It was published in 2014. The data are in the form of quotations from the novel and directly concerned with the objective of the research.

Findings and Discussion

3.1 The Cause of Miles's Trauma

3.1.1 Interpersonal and Relationship Experience

Miles Mikel Archer who goes by Miles is a 24 years old airlines pilot. Miles known as a confident, bright, and easy-going personality. He has dose of friends and enjoy spent time to socialize. But after the incident which takes two most important person in his life Miles guarded and reserved when it came to his emotions and personal life. He had built walls around himself, keeping his past hidden and avoid emotional attachments due to a traumatic event in his past that had a significant impact on him. It can be seen in the quotation below:

7
Miles,
I'm sorry. I can't do this. It hurts too much.. My mother is taking me back to Phoenix. We're both staying there. It's all too complicated, even between the two of them now. Your father already knows. I tried to stay. I tried to love you. Every time I look at you, I see him. Everything is him. If I stay, everything will always be him. You know that. I know you understand that. I shouldn't blame you. I'm so sorry.
Love, Rachel. (Hoover, 2014: 284-285)

The quotation above is evidence of how Miles discovers the feelings of being by the person he trusts and loves the most. The letter that is written by Rachel was left the next day after the tragic incident. Miles was upset since she left without saying goodbye and told him this through a paper sheet. The fact that Rachel said she does not blame him and yet left him all alone describes how she felt about him. But the sad thing is Rachel is not the only one who feels sad over the death of their newborn son, Miles lost him too, and now Rachel decided to go is make Miles lose both of the most important people that he wants to have a future with. He felt betrayed, he trusted Rachel so much and gave all of his heart to her. There is nothing left for him, and the pain he has to carry is so much that he cannot handle it. So that is why he promises himself not to ever fall in love with anyone again so he won't feel the same

3.1.2 One Time Event

The main cause of Miles's trauma happens because the night after his son was born. Miles is drive the car and being overwhelming by the happiest day of his life. That makes him lose his focus on the road, which cause a crash and their car jumped into water. That day became his unforgettable day for him because of the accident.

5
I don't find Clayton.

I push up on my hands and move to the edge of the boat.

I need to find him.

Someone stops me. Someone pulls me back.

Someone won't let me.

Someone is telling me it's too late.

Someone tells me he's sorry. (Hoover, 2014: 275)

From the quote above, Miles discovered they just had a car crash, and their car fell into the river. As he gains his consciousness he relies they are on the boat, and he only sees Rachel crying. He cannot find Clayton and he remembers when he tried to save him from the backseat he fainted. That is how he relies Clayton did not make it. He is just a few hours old, and he drowned when Miles last saw him. He tried to jump out of the boat and rescue him, but everyone stopped him. Everyone keeps telling him it is too late and they are sorry for what happened. Miles cannot process the feelings, that moment lingers in his mind forever.

3.1.3 Loss and Sadness

After the incident, Miles faces the reality of how everything can change in an instant. His grief and guilt over the death of his son make him battle with a sense of great sadness. He lost his newborn son who only experienced one day of his. It all happens because of his own negligence. His guilt over Rachel for being unable to give him the happy life he promised just makes him more drowned in sadness.

6
The water is everything now.

I look at Rachel. I only see water.

I close my eyes. I only see water.

I look up at the sky. I only see water.

It hurts so much. I never knew a heart could hold the weight of the entire world.

(Hoover, 2014: 276)

This shows how the picture of that horrible night lingers in Miles's head. He still remembers it too well, and everything he sees or does reminds him of that tragedy. The image of the water he saw that night keeps running back to his mind, and it scares him because along with the memory, the pain goes along with it. Everything is filled with water, his life has become devastated, and at the moment he can't or does not know what to do. The pain is just too heavy to be carried by him, and the sadness over his baby whom he only holds one time makes it even worse. If he only could erase that memory from his head he would. But it won't go away, so he just has to live with it.

3.2 The Effects of Miles's Trauma

3.1.2 Problem With Relationship

After getting abandoned by someone who he loves the most, Miles finds it difficult to trust and involve the feeling of love towards someone else. He has given up everything to Rachel and believes their feeling are mutual. But, in the end, Miles was left alone while still processing his life that had turned upside down. So Miles believes, there are no such genuine feelings, and Miles finds it hard to believe someone will not leave him. He decide to avoid dating and any attachment relationship for over six years. But after those years, Miles is finally attracted to his best friend's sister Tate. And still doesn't want to involve his feelings in the relationship, so he makes an agreement to only have a physical relationship with her and warns her to do the same thing, which does not involve feelings in their relationship. It can be seen in the quotation below:

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His eyes focus on mine for several seconds. "Don't ask about my past," he says firmly. "And never expect a future." (Hoover, 2014: 87)

Based on quotation above, Miles's statements hint at internal struggles stemming from past issues, potentially leads to symptoms like avoidance, emotional detachment, and difficulty forming a deep connections due to a fear of getting hurt once more. His resolute stance against discussing his past and his avoidance of any future expectations shows that he might be dealing with profound emotional wounds. This defensive approach serves as a shield, enabling him to maintain control and safeguard himself from potential emotional distress or triggers linked to his past trauma. Miles's refusal to talk about his past and his rejection of the potential of a future relationship can be symptoms of emotional defenses created by trauma and unresolved suffering. It shows that Miles is dealing with the long-term effects of his tragic events.

3.2.2 Emotional Impact

Due to his past traumatic experience, Miles is suffer from trauma for over six years. The main effect of this trauma disorder has an impact on his emotion. For example, he often seems mad or angry when the question about his past comes up. Or he being denying his own feeling over the love he have towards Tate. And sometimes Miles seems failed to move on from his traumatic past by experiences a flashback or the feeling of guilt towards Rachel unconsciously.

8
He's not sick.

He's crying.

Hard.

So hard he isn't even making a sound. I don't even know the guy, but the obvious devastation he's experiencing is difficult to witness (Hoover, 2014: 15)

From the quotation above, shows how Miles deeply upset,. It seems like something from his past might have hurt him a lot. He is using alcohol to try to deal with these feelings. What's really striking is that he is crying hard, but without making any noise. This suggests he might have learned to hide his feelings because of something tough he went through before. His appearance reflects how much this past pain is still affecting him emotionally. The way he's handling his emotions, using alcohol to cope, and the clear distress he's in all point to something really tough he's been through. This moment shows a glimpse into how much his past experiences are still hurting him inside.

3.3 How Miles Solve his Trauma

Miles is able to overcome his trauma by facing his biggest fear. Rachel is the key of Miles healing process. Although Miles have intimate relationship with Tate, and she tries to help him to get through his trauma, Miles has to deal his trauma on his own. Because the cause of his trauma is the feeling of guilt with Rachel. So when he decided to face his fear and meet Rachel, he sees how Rachel is able to move on with her life. Rachel is being the person that makes him out from his trauma.

4
"Rachel, I . . ."

He looks back at me again.

"I don't know why I'm here."

I do.

I can see it in his eyes. I got to know those eyes so well when we were together. I knew all his thoughts. All his emotions. He wasn't able to hide how he felt, because he felt so much. He's always felt so much. (Hoover, 2014: 300)

The quotation above shows Miles's struggle to articulate his thoughts and feelings coherently. It reflects his internal struggle, suggesting that he might be grappling with unresolved emotions or uncertainties, unable to provide a straightforward explanation for his actions or presence. Overall, this quote also shows Miles's emotional complexity, hinting at his internal conflicts, confusion, and the intricate nature of his emotions, which he finds difficult to express or comprehend fully in that moment.

1 Conclusion

Based on research discussion above, it can be concluded that the cause of Miles's trauma is related to the tragic events causing Rachel's departure and Clayton's death. These circumstances reveal the deep cause of loss and the lasting impact of guilt. It shows how Miles's emotional experiences, where memories of the past continue to affect his current life, making it difficult for him to open up and form genuine connections.

The effects of Miles's difficulties with intimacy and trust affect not only his romantic relationships but also how he interacts with friends and family. The barriers he puts up around his feelings are clear evidence of the deep and widespread effects of his unresolved trauma. The way Miles solve his trauma is by facing his own fear. His decision to meet Rachel is change his perspective, the way she able to move on and have happy life makes him realize he can do the same. Also, Miles and Tate's relationship is very important. They become a safe place for each other where Miles gets the courage to deal with his past. Through patience, understanding, and always supporting each other, they help each other heal.

In conclusion, Miles can cope with his trauma by facing and accepting his past that haunted him for years. By the help from someone who is patient and shows him the love, he is always terrified of. Miles is slowly able to start opening up about his past and gaining the trust of other people around him, especially Tate who has opened his mindset about loving someone.

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