

THE MAIN CHARACTER'S TRAUMA IN LEAH KONEN'S *LOVE & OTHER TRAIN WRECKS*

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***Abstract:** The impact of trauma on the psychological aspect caused by external factors, namely the divorce that experienced by that main character's parents can cause deep trauma for the main character within *Love & Other Train Wrecks* by Leah Konen. The research method used in this study is a qualitative method with descriptive analysis techniques. This study aims to analyze the impact of trauma arising from a divorce on the psychological aspects of adolescents. The writer found the way how the main character overcomes the impact of trauma on the psychological aspect as a result of the research.*

***Keywords:** Divorce, Film character, Impact of trauma, Psychological aspects*

Abstrak: Dampak trauma pada aspek psikologis yang disebabkan oleh faktor eksternal yaitu perceraian yang dialami oleh orang tua tokoh utama tersebut dapat menimbulkan trauma yang mendalam bagi tokoh utama dalam *Love & Other Train Wrecks* karya Leah Konen. Metode penelitian yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode kualitatif dengan teknik analisis deskriptif. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dampak trauma yang timbul akibat perceraian terhadap aspek psikologis remaja. Penulis menemukan cara bagaimana tokoh utama mengatasi dampak trauma pada aspek psikologis sebagai hasil penelitian.

Kata Kunci: Aspek Psikologi, Dampak trauma, Karakter Film, Perceraian

INTRODUCTION

Family is the first and main life experience for children, namely a place for socialization which plays an important role in the development of the child's personality. In the family, children first learn the meaning of life, love, sympathy, receive guidance and education and create a safe atmosphere. This can be said, the family plays an important role in shaping personality. However, in reality, not all families can carry out their functions well. There are many problems faced by family members. Often the balance will be disturbed and endanger family life, resulting in the family not feeling happy. One of them is the problem of parents' divorce (Hasanah, U. 2020).

Divorce is an event that occurs between a husband and wife where both parties decide to no longer carry out their duties and obligations as husband and wife (Dariyo A, 2004). Divorce can also result from a lack of interest, trust and incompatibility with each other, causing disharmony in the household. There are many factors that divorce continues to increase. One factor is unstable economic conditions in a family which will affect harmony in married life. Basically, marriage is not only based on strong love for each partner, but also adequate mental and financial readiness to build a harmonious household.

Divorce occurs between husband and wife due to differences in principles that cannot be reconciled through various means in married life. Both of them have certainly thought about all the risks that must be accepted and borne if they divorce. They become widows or widowers, children who do not have complete parents, live unhappy lives and so on (Dariyo A, 2004). To achieve a happy family, efforts are made according to the abilities of each family member, especially both parents. However, many families also fail to strive for harmony, and end up deciding on a "divorce" that they never expected (Matondang, A 2014). The cause of divorce is lack or neglect of responsibility towards the partner in marriage. There are many reasons why one partner chooses to leave each other. There are those who argue that they feel bored, but more often the cause of this factor is selfishness.

Not only economic problems, incompatibility of tastes or ongoing disputes between partners are also causes of divorce. As in the novel *Love & Other Train Wrecks* by Leah Konen, it includes a story about how the impact of divorce that occurs due to lack of communication and continuing to start disputes greatly affects the people around them, including the partner and children involved. In the family, there is a need for a harmonious relationship between parents and children because harmony in the household greatly influences children's growth, development and education. However, in reality it has become a human lifeline that happiness, misery, suffering, joy, sorrow, harmony, and disagreement are phenomenons that come and go in human life (Azizah R. N, 2017).

Demographic factors that trigger divorce are unpreparedness for marriage both physically and emotionally, incompatibility, infidelity, and violence both physically and psychologically. Socio-economic factors that trigger divorce are lacking economic resources and the wife's income being greater than the husband's. There has been a change in the relationship between women's education and divorce, with in some countries highly educated women being more likely to divorce (Nurhalisa, R. 2021). Divorce has become a serious problem; challenging the establishment of the family in a routine manner and causing severe impacts on the emotional and mental health of the individual especially, women. Divorced mothers are also trapped in a vicious cycle of financial problems and other stressful life events. The results revealed that women tend to suffer from a feeling of rootlessness and lack of identity after divorce. (Damota, 2019).

The influence or impact of divorce is not all bad, there are those who feel more peaceful if they have let go of something that has been bothering them, in other cases, a household that has been maintained for a long time but feels empty, and ends up being let go to feel more spacious. Divorce can basically be prevented, but not all types of divorce can be prevented. Some do it because divorce is considered the only solution to be a middle ground for all problems. This is different from what the author will discuss which is more directed towards the negative impact that a divorce event has on the people left behind.

Divorce generally not only has an impact on the two people in the couple who are the figures in the divorce, but can also have an impact on the psychological health of the child.

Divorce has a direct impact on children's development and can influence their behaviour either positively or negatively. When the children keep on witnessing the fight between their parents, it may result in the children's emotions physically and mentally. Children usually end up being the middle person of interaction between their parents. Besides that, they may have to move to a different environment and adapt to a new lifestyle such as a new school, new friends and a new house. Some may even have to travel back and forth from one parent's house to another. Without realizing, parents are setting a bad example of their marriage towards the children. The end result the children may blame themselves for the divorce and still hoping that their parents will get back together (Shariff, S. A. M. *et al.*, 2021)

If in one case the divorce of the parents occurred when the child was growing up, such as when he was a teenager, according to what is told in the novel *Love & Other Train Wrecks*. Divorce can be a burden on children and have a psychological impact. Such as feelings of shame, sensitivity, and low self-esteem to the point of withdrawing from the environment. Things that are usually found in children when their parents divorce are feelings of insecurity, not being wanted or rejected by their parents who have left, sadness and loneliness, anger, loss, feeling guilty, blaming themselves as the cause of their parents divorcing (Untari, 2016). Parental conflict consistently predicts negative outcomes for children (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2020). Child negative outcomes may be even more pronounced when parental conflicts consist of high levels of hostility or aggression, are child-related (the disputes are about the children), or when the parents involve their children in their conflicts (triangulation), which is most likely to happen in HCD (high conflict divorce) disputes (Hetherington, 2006; McCoy *et al.*, 2013; Van Dijk *et al.*, 2020; Van Eldik *et al.*, 2020).

Divorce not only has bad impacts, but can also cause excessive trauma resulting from these bad impacts. Adolescence is a transition period from childhood to adulthood. Apart from that, it is also stated that adolescence is a critical and important period in human life (Santrock, 2011). Crisis situations during adolescence can become a new stressor for individuals. Adolescents' psychological development is characterized by unstable and uncertain attitudes and feelings, as well as desires and emotions (Mutiarra, 2008). According to Hidayati (2016 : 137) Adolescence is a stage of development where a person will be faced with moments of crisis in their life because they are in a transition period towards adulthood. The impact of divorce on teenagers causes trauma that leaves a lasting impression on those who experience it.

There are many things that are necessary for a child's growth and development, and some children will not fully grow and develop if they only get one side of love from their parents', although there are children who are able to get through all of this and even succeed in achieving their dreams even though there is a divorce, because he was able to use the valuable lessons from his parents' divorce into new enthusiasm and motivate himself to succeed. This depends on the child's age at the time of divorce, the circumstances of the divorce and the child's personality. Some children will experience setbacks in learning, some children may not feel close to their parents when they grow up. But what is certain is that

children who face divorced parents will feel shocked, sad, anxious, angry/confused at the same time. Children will also experience more problems in socializing. This is a condition where children will feel inferior and feel jealous of children who have complete families.

This research carries the theme of the impact of trauma on psychological aspects because of the increasing number of divorce cases that occur without thinking, resulting in an impact on people around who see and witness the divorce. Through this problem the author wants to conduct research on the impact of trauma on psychological aspects. In the novel studied, the author finds problems that arise as a result of divorce in society and one of them causes trauma for those who feel it.

METHODS

This research used a qualitative research method with a descriptive analysis technique. Qualitative research proposed by David Williams (1995) is collecting data in a natural setting, using natural methods and carried out by people or researchers who are naturally interested. This research uses a literary psychology approach. Meanwhile, the qualitative descriptive approach is research that attempts to describe and interpret existing conditions or relationships, emerging opinions, ongoing processes, ongoing consequences or developing trends (Sumanto, 1990:47).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The discussion will focus on the impact of trauma on the main character in the novel *Love & Other Train Wrecks*. This analysis will also discuss several intrinsic and extrinsic elements in this novel. The main character in this novel is named Ammy. Ammy has a family background that can be said to be not very good. Ammy's parents had just divorced, which apparently had a traumatic impact on Ammy, who had just entered her teens or around 18 years old. As we know, adolescence is a time when we are experiencing many new things and also feel many new feelings that we may have never felt before. For this reason, the role of parents in guiding children's development is very important. And when Ammy started her teenage years, she couldn't get the role of a parent, which should be very important. Ammy was forced to follow her parents' decision to separate.

Divorce has various impacts on children's development. For children, parental divorce is the worst thing for them, where they lose the love and affection of their parents, and this affects several aspects of the child's development, which will be hampered. There are also children whose social and emotional development after their parents' divorce develop well, even better than children from intact families. This is because children receive the attention, protection and love they need from their parents. Children are the victims who are most hurt when their parents decide to divorce (Veronika, N. *et al.*, 2022)

The fear felt by children when their parents' divorce is when the child feels discomfort towards both parents, especially when the parents' divorce the child is faced with a different situation where the parents no longer live together but live separately (Haryanie, *et*

al., 2013). In conditions where households experience broken homes, children often experience mental depression (mental stress), so it is not uncommon for children who experience broken homes to behave badly in their surrounding environment. The condition of a broken home can be a strong factor causing children to be more sensitive to their environment, thereby creating problems in the school environment (Azis, 2019). This novel tells the story of two teenagers who meet by chance where they meet on a train on their way to their destinations. They have completely opposite characteristics. More precisely, they have different views on love. Despite the differences between the two, they end up getting to know each other. The conflict began when the train they were on was hampered by heavy snow blocking the train tracks. Meanwhile, the two of them were being pressed with an event that had to be attended immediately. After arguing with a cool temper, the two decided to cut through the snow.

Ammy, the main character who the author will discuss here, was told by Noah, a character who is no less important here, that near the point where their train was blocked, there was a bus stop. Their journey started from there. Starting from those who have different backgrounds, combining it all makes it happy, sad, and also tense. Ammy is a child from a broken home because her father has met his new lover, namely his own yoga trainer. Ammy was very devastated by the decision taken by her father. Even if you look at it from both sides, his father has reasons why he prefers the new one. Her father always harbored bad feelings towards his ex-wife, Ammy's mother. The longer it is buried, the bigger the time bomb that seems to be just waiting to explode. And finally, it all happened. His father always gave in when there was an argument, and he had a greater sense of affection than his annoyance. This makes both of them have pent-up resentment. With the separation of her father and mother, Ammy, who was the third party who witnessed it all, was confused. Ammy has just become a teenager, 18 years old. Ammy often becomes a punching bag when her mother, who is feeling very devastated, relapses. Ammy's mother, who was left behind, experienced a lot of sadness and destruction due to the sudden divorce.

And also, his mother unconsciously often took out her sadness on her only child. Often when her mother's emotions are unstable, Ammy is in charge of taking care of her mother. Ammy was told by her family psychiatrist to understand her mother's condition. Meanwhile, there was herself who also unknowingly discovered the impact of a divorce. Ammy, who was a witness to how her parents separated, how the chaos after the divorce happened, turned out to really influence Ammy in how she saw love. Ammy, who is still a teenager, doesn't know much about love, but has been traumatized by love. Ammy also has a character that tends to be doubtful, and also does not easily trust other people or, more precisely, trust issues. This will greatly influence how the story in this novel will play out.

Disharmonious, unstable families, broken homes cause the development of unhealthy personalities in children. The form of mental health intended includes aspects of children's emotions, responsibility and sociability. The forms of frustration reactions shown are aggression, withdrawal, and compensation. Psychological and social impacts greatly

influence the mental health of children who are victims of broken homes (divorce) (Mamuly, W. F., & Paunno, M. 2021). The symptoms of the impact that Ammy experienced gradually appeared without her realizing it. Ammy is invited to her father's wedding with his new lover through news from the character who will later become Ammy's adopted sister, Kat. Ammy found out about the wedding through Kat, who contacted her. Ammy, who finally found out that her father would tie the knot with someone she had never thought about, was very confused. She still thought that it wasn't a good thing, she felt that it would be unfair to her mother if she attended her father's new wedding. Long story short, Ammy was determined to attend her father's wedding regardless of her mother's reaction when she found out about her decision. She ordered the ticket, and also brought her favorite book. She sat in the corner, reading a book. At that time, the male main character, Noah, came.

Noah has an outgoing nature, he doesn't mind greeting strangers and also making new relationships. Noah greeted Ammy who was reading a book, but Ammy responded to it with cynical eyes. Noah didn't think too much about it, and continued to put his belongings on the shelf above his seat. In the midst of their conversation, they suddenly felt a shock from the train they were riding. Unfortunately, the train they were on was hampered by the thick snow that covered the train tracks. The two of them decided to push through the heavy snow because not far from the point where they were stuck, there was a bus stop. And from here, a journey full of twists and turns begins. On her journey through the snow with Noah, Ammy discovered and realized many things. One of them is Ammy's view of love. Ammy, who always told herself not to believe too much in love, slowly gave her another perspective on love. Ammy remains in her stance because she is still thinking about what her mother felt, how her father left everything for someone new. However, as the journey with Noah progresses, Ammy understands a little and understands why her father did what he did.

The group of children who had reached the age of majority at the time of their parents' divorce gave a different reaction. This group of children no longer blame themselves, but have a slight feeling of fear because of changes in family situations and feel anxious because one of their parents abandoned them. When children reach adolescence, they begin to understand the ins and outs of the meaning of divorce, teenagers understand what the consequences will be, they are aware of the problems that will arise regarding economic, social and other factors (Ariani, A. I., 2019). Realizing this, Ammy thought that her father already knew that this would happen. This was because her father often gave in when he was having an argument with his ex-wife. Sometimes, we need to express everything that's on our minds rather than bottle it up, however, Ammy's father prefers to keep it bottled up until it ends badly. However, not only did she understand her father's point of view, Ammy also gradually understood her mother's point of view. At the end of the story, it is explained that her mother contacted Ammy who was at her ex-husband's new house. Her mother apologized for what her mother and father had done.

We need to know that the impact of a phenomenon such as divorce does not only impact the two partners who go through it, but also impacts the children who are witnesses to

the divorce. Trauma originates from a series of dangerous events or circumstances, in the form of physical or emotional threats and has long-term detrimental effects on the individual, emotionally or spiritually. Trauma in children can cause the development of post-traumatic stress disorders such as anxiety disorders, panic attacks and others. Thus, a traumatic event or situation creates psychological trauma when it overwhelms the individual's ability to cope, and makes the person fear death, annihilation, mutilation, or psychosis. Individuals may feel emotionally, cognitively, and physically tired.

The trauma experienced by the main character in this novel comes from external factors due to the divorce incident that occurred to his parents. External causes are factors that come from the environment, for example individual parents or social conditions in family life or abuse that causes physical injury or trauma. The causes of trauma contained in this novel include external factors which are the consequences of parents' divorce which indirectly causes trauma to teenagers who witness it. Ammy, who was affected by her parents' divorce, often feels anxious or has panic disorders when faced with a problem or making a decision. In childhood, the closest figures of our life must be the parents. Attachment develops according to the individual's age. Once the individual is an adult, this attachment figure plays a big role in the development of the child's character and personality. This can be interpreted as a child, they digest the things seen in front of them. Therefore, children will get used to what they see during their growth period. The attachment trauma experienced by the main character Ammy in the novel *Love & Other Train Wrecks* by Leah Konen is in the form of a child's trauma when they see their parents who were previously fine end up separated. This unknowingly causes trauma to the child's psychology.

The impact of trauma on some individuals may clearly display criteria associated with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), but more individuals will demonstrate a resilient response or brief subclinical symptoms or consequences that fall outside the diagnostic criteria. Trauma in children begins with excessive fear of a situation (Novita, 2007: 135). The traumatic events experienced have different impacts on each individual who experiences them. Until now, the impact of parental divorce can indeed have a negative impact on children, both physically and psychologically. So divorce really needs to be considered carefully, and parents must be able to provide good understanding to children so that they can reduce and overcome the negative impacts on children when divorce occurs (Ramadhani, P. E., & Krisnani, H., 2019).

One of the most frequently encountered impacts of trauma is the emergence of excessive anxiety caused by the individual's emotional instability. Anxiety is a feeling of fear and restlessness that a person feels. Anxiety can appear in physical forms (such as heart palpitations, cold sweat, difficulty concentrating, even dizziness), feelings (excessive anxiety and fear), thoughts or cognitive (such as thoughts of death, overthinking), and behavior (such as denial). Apart from that, anxiety also causes panic (panic attacks). At the end of the novel, it is explained that Ammy finally found a way to make peace with the trauma she had been experiencing. Her relationship with Noah ended well thanks to their good communication,

and she began to believe in genuine love. Ammy's mother also apologized for all her actions which, without realizing it, had a big impact on her only daughter. Meanwhile, Ammy's relationship with her father's new family also ended well, Ammy was very happy to have a cool adopted sister. Everything takes time, but there will definitely be an answer. Likewise, any wound or trauma we experience, there will definitely be a time when it can all be resolved.

CONCLUSION

The trauma experienced by the main character is caused by external factors, namely the divorce of his parents which triggers trauma to the psychological aspects of the main character. This influences the behavior of the main character in making his life decisions. The behavior of the main character tends to be hesitant in making decisions, the main character named Ammy also has a different view of love. Referring to the psychological impact of divorce on teenagers, the main character in this novel also manages to find a way to overcome the psychological trauma caused by the impact of the divorce. Ammy, the main character in the novel that the author discusses, is able to make peace with what she has experienced so far. This can be seen at the end of this novel where Ammy and her mother decide to open up to each other about the things that bothered them during the divorce incident. Ammy expressed all the anxiety that she experienced without realizing it during her parents' divorce. Ammy also felt that she was becoming a hesitant person, and also can't easily believe in love. Ammy's mother, who heard this, felt very hurt, without realizing that she had made her only child suffer. She also apologized if he had often caused trouble to Ammy. They both spoke with great emotion.

Using literary psychological research theory by Sigmund Freud which states that the subconscious is the key to understanding a person's behavior. Literary psychology by Sigmund Freud examines aspects of the id, ego, and superego. This research discusses the impact of trauma that arises as a result of bad incidents or events experienced by the main character, which influences how the main character behaves. Based on the results of this research, it can be concluded that the trauma experienced as a result of an event that makes it a bad memory so that it can have a traumatic impact on those who experience it needs to get help from experts and also people around them so that it gradually gets better.

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