

## **THE EFFECTS OF ABUSE ON PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT IN TESS STEVENS' *SOLD*: A PSYCHOLOGY OF LITERATURE STUDY**

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### **Abstract**

This research aims to find the abuses experienced by Tess Stevens, the causes of the abuses, the effects of the abuses, and the effects of the abuses on Tess' personality development in the autobiography of *Sold*. This research is a qualitative research and applied content analysis method to analyze the data. The data was analyzed using Erikson's psychosocial theory of personality development and the theories of abuse by several scholars. The findings of the research show that there are four types of abuses experienced by Tess: psychological abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and physical abuse. She experiences these abuses because she lives in a brothel, a place where crimes frequently occur. Besides her mother who usually abuses her, other people who visits the brothel and the customers of the brothels also abuses her. Then, there are four causes of the abuses: gender inequality, poverty, abuser's past experience, and parent's divorce. Since Tess is a female who is vulnerable, she often receives the abuses. The abuses which she receives are also caused by the low economic and social condition of her mother and her mother's experience of being abused. These condition and mother's past experience lead her to be abusive. Next, there are four effects of the abuses: genophobia, juvenile delinquency and adult crime, physical wound in certain area of the body, and difficulties in socializing. Due to the abuses she receives, Tess has problems in trusting others which leads her to have socializing problems and become traumatic of the abuses. The abuses and neglects she receive also caused her to have physical damage and have moral problems such as being involve in crimes. Finally, there are four effects of the abuses on Tess' personality development: inferiority, role confusion, isolation, and generativity. Although the abuses negatively affect her personality development at her school age until young adulthood, she manages to develop generativity at her adulthood, a positive quality in personality development.

Keywords: Abuse, personality development, psychology of literature, psychosocial, *Sold*.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Human's personalities vary among individuals. The differences in personalities are due to three major factors; physique, psychology, and experience (Herlambang, 2011: 9). Experience has great contribution to human's personality since it influences the development of personality. The experiences which an individual has in the past may influence the personality in the future.

One of the acts which influence personality development is abuse. According to the Community Against Violence, Inc., abuse is an action which intimidates harms, manipulates a person's mind, and results in physical or psychological damage. The acts of abuse occur in many countries and causes physical and psychological problems to the victims.

The phenomenon of abuse is reflected in some literary works, since literature is a reflection of the society which consists of animate beings such as human and non-animate beings such as plants and animals. An autobiography is a great

example of a literary work which reflects and talk about human experience throughout their lives. One of the autobiographies which talk about the phenomenon of abuse is Tess Stevens' *Sold*.

This research has four objectives; to find the abuses experienced by Tess, to find the causes of the abuses experienced by Tess, to find the effects of the abuses experienced by Tess, and to find the effects of the abuses on Tess' personality development.

Psychology of literature is an interdisciplinary between psychology and literature. Since both psychology and literature deals with the world and human as a social and living being, the use of psychological approach is considered important in a literary research. The use of psychology is also considered common in interpreting literature (Moghaddam, 2004: 512).

Literature is a mirror of life since it reflects the reality. Literary works are reflection of human behavior and the world. Since literature is a reflection of human behavior and the real world, the

mimetic approach is appropriate to be used. This approach seeks to see how well a work adjust with the real world.

Personality development is affected by the social and historical factors (Erikson in Feist and Feist, 2006: 247). According to Erikson, humans will experience the eight psychosocial stages in life (Erikson in Feist and Feist, 2006: 250). The stages are infancy, early childhood, play age, school age, adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, and old age. Each of the life stages has its own interaction of opposites called contrary disposition. It is a conflict between the syntonic (harmony) element and dystonic (conflict) element. First, the conflict in the age of infancy is between trust and mistrust. Second, the conflict in the age of early childhood is between autonomy and shame and doubt. Third, the conflict in the play age is between initiative and guilt. Fourth, the conflict in the school age is between industry and inferiority. Fifth, the conflict in the age of adolescent is between identity and role confusion. Sixth, the conflict in

the age of young adulthood is between intimacy and isolation. Seventh, the conflict in the age of adulthood is between generativity and stagnation. The last conflict is in the old age between integrity vs despair.

One of the acts which affect personality development is abuse. There are several types of abuses which could be found around the world. There are Psychological, sexual, neglect, and physical abuse (Corby, 2006: 86).

According to Olive (2007) and Corby (2006), there are several causes which leads to the act of abuse such as parents having stress problems, lack of interrelationship between the parents or caregivers and the child, poverty, the vulnerability of the abused, drugs and alcohol, parent's divorce, the environment of the abusers, gender inequality, and abusers' past experience.

The abuses which occurs and experienced by the victims could leads to several effects. According to Olive (2007), Corby (2006), Hunter (2014), Gold, Sullivan, and Lewis (in

the Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013) Stated that there are several effects of the abuses such as physical wound in certain area of the body, having difficulties in coping with anger, difficulties in studying, difficulties in socializing, poor physical health, juvenile delinquency and adult crime, consuming illegal drugs and alcoholic, and genophobia.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The researcher uses the qualitative research method in conducting the research. According to Hayllar and Veal (1996: 30) “Qualitative research methods are concerned with collecting information which doesn’t involve numbers.” Qualitative research aims to understand a particular social situation, event, role, group, or interaction” (L Kocke. Spirduso, & Silverman in Creswell: 226).

In this study, the researcher used content-analysis in analyzing the autobiography. According to Hayllar and Veal (1996: 36) content analysis is a method that used three types of data: written, visual, and spoken material. The written data

include historical documents, government policies, speeches, magazines, newspaper, etc. Visual data include television, documentaries, and films.

The data of this research are words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs which are taken from an autobiography entitled Sold, which have correlation with the objectives of this research. The main instrument of the research is the researcher himself. According to Lincoln and Guba (in Vanderstoep and Johnston, 2009: 188-189) the best instrument for qualitative naturalistic inquiry is the human. It happens because humans are responsive and interpretative towards the research.

The researcher analyzed the data to find the types of the abuses experienced by Tess, the causes of the abuses experienced by Tess, The effects of the abuses experienced by Tess, and the effects of the abuses on Tess” personality development.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

To present the findings of the study, the researcher found four discussion points. The first point is

the abuses experienced by Tess. The second is the causes of the abuses experienced by Tess. The third is the effects of the abuses experienced by Tess. The fourth is the effects of the abuses on Tess'' personality development.

#### **A. The Abuses Experienced by Tess**

There are four types of abuses experienced by Tess. The abuses are psychological, sexual, neglect, and physical abuse.

##### **1. Psychological Abuse**

The first type of abuse Tess receives is psychological abuse. Abusers psychologically abuse others in order to gain control of the victim. In the following quotation, Tess'' mother tries to control her by denying the child''s emotional responsiveness, terrorizing, and isolating her.

There was another idea too, stirring in my mind. A seed of something. This is too much, I said to myself. Too much, even for Mother. She could never have known how bad it was going to be. Then I had a thought that shocked me with its suddenness. **Did she**

**know? Did she know exactly and still send me out with him? Was it arranged? No, I couldn't believe that she'd let this happen.** But the doubt was there now, and my mind whirled round as fast as the train wheels. (Stevens, 2008: 238).

Her mother is being abusive towards Tess by forcing her to visit the place of the punters. Tess have the thought that mother is innocence in this case since her mother continuously sends her out to visit the punters whenever mother receives orders from them. Since her mother sends her regularly, Tess interprets that anything which mother told her would not be harmful for her. Her mother also soothes her by saying to her that everything is going to be fine. This creates the sense of „trust'' for Tess. Then, her mother also tells Tess that her mother needs her help, especially in increasing the family''s income by going to the punters'' place. In addition, her mother tells Tess that she do not have to worry about the sexual abuse she will receive from the punters. She said to Tess that the punters would not dare to touch Tess'' private

organs since mother put the fear of God in them. As Tess thinks about this deeply, she starts to realize that she is being abused psychologically by her mother.

## 2. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is the second abuse experienced by Tess. She suffers from the sexual abuses committed by the punters, her step-father, and her mother. Tess is mostly being abused by the punters. It could be seen from the quotation below.

**...he was slipping his hand inside my vest, feeling my boobs. Oh well, just like before. As Mother had said so often, men like boobs, they're beautiful. The one part of me that was.**

While he was busy, I kept my eyes fixed on the wall opposite, trying to count how many different dresses I could see. If I could just keep my mind on that, I didn't have to take much notice of what this man was doing.

Soon he was breathing more loudly, and **suddenly he was pulling up my skirt and sticking his hand up my knickers, touching the most private part of my body.** (Stevens, 2008: 130)

Tess is told by her mother to accompany the punter in his house. In the punter's house, Tess is being abused sexually. From the quotation above it could be seen that Tess's breasts are being squeezed by the punter and her genital area is being touched. The punter pulls her skirt up and sticks his hand up her knickers and touches Tess's private part.

## 3. Neglect

Neglect is the third type of abuse experienced by Tess. According to Olive (2007: 67), there are five types of neglects; physical, medical, educational, motor, and emotional neglect. In here, Tess experienced neglect in term of education.

We were sitting in the kitchen, me and Mother. **She'd kept me off school again, to clear up after one of her parties,** and we'd sat down for a break. Mother made the tea and I broke out a packet of custard creams. Of course I didn't dream of saying no to Mother, and as ever I enjoyed being with her, but I didn't like to Miss School. (Stevens, 2008: 119)

From the above quotation it could be interpreted that Tess is being

neglected by her mother in term of education. Her mother keeps Tess off from school again in order for Tess to help her tidy up the house after the party which was held last night.

#### **4. Physical Abuse**

The last abuse experienced by Tess is physical abuse. Tess experiences physical abuse by her partner.

**He drew back his arm and gave me one punch between my eyes, smashing my nose. Then he punched me again and again, till I fell to the floor. He kicked me in the belly. (Stevens, 2008: 291)**

The physical abuse Tess experienced is done by her partner. Before the incident happens, Tess and her partner, John was having a fight because Tess saw a lipstick mark on the side of John's face. Tess starts the scene by showing her anger towards him. Then, John cannot control his emotion and then punches Tess on the face continuously until she falls to the floor. Then he kicks her belly.

#### **B. The Causes of the Abuses**

There are several causes of the abuses experienced by Tess. The causes of the abuses experienced by Tess are gender inequality, poverty, abuser's past experience, and parent's divorce.

##### **1. Gender Inequality**

The first cause of the abuses experienced by Tess is gender inequality.

**He didn't push me to the floor, and he didn't let his hand wander downwards. Just undid my school blouse, lifted up my vest and felt all round my boobs. When he got his willy out, I knew to look away quickly. (Stevens, 2008: 146)**

The first category of male whom abused Tess is the punters. From the text above we could see that the punter pushes Tess down to the floor, unbuttoned her blouse, lift up her vest, feels her breasts, and exposes his penis in front of her. From this interpretation, it could be concluded that Tess is being abused by male.

## 2. Poverty

The second cause of the abuses experienced by Tess is poverty. Child abuse and neglect in poor families happens due to the harsh living standards and stresses in living in them. This poverty could lead to low standard parenting. The greater the level of stress a parent has, the greater its possibility for the parent to abuse its children.

It took me a long time to realize that the way I thought about this was because I'd grown up in a brothel. Nobody ever used that word – for Mother it was always „the business“, and Don would make jokes about a knocking shop. For working girls to have sex with men for money was just a fact of life. **Money was at the bottom of everything. Mother would never have sent me out if she hadn't been desperate for cash.** (Stevens, 2008: 158)

The need of money is the reason Tess has to be sent to the punters, where she is sexually abused. By sending Tess to the punters, mother would receive money in return. It is described in the quotation above that money was at the bottom of everything, it means

that Tess' mother is desperate for the money in order to keep the family alive by fulfilling their daily needs.

## 3. Abuser's Past Experience

The third cause of the abuses occur to Tess is abuser's past experience. People or parents who had been abused in his/her childhood might fulfill his/her anger which was forced to be absent during the childhood, by abusing his/her own children at their adulthood.

One of my brothers had a dirty mind, and **he tried to feel me up** – do you know what I mean? „I nodded. I had a horror of that, **the most private part of your body being got at.**„I told Mother straight away, and do you know what she did? **Slapped me round the face as hard as she could and called me a filthy girl!** Me! Calling me filthy when it was my brother who was a wrong „un. (Stevens, 2008: 94-95)

From the quotation above, it is stated that Tess' mother has been abused by her family members. First, Tess' mother was abused by her brother. Second, she was physically abused by her mother by being slapped and also verbally abused by calling her a „filthy girl“.

#### 4. Parent's Divorce

The fourth cause of the abuses is parent's divorce. The reasons parent's divorce is the cause of abuse because those who live alone with children or being single-parent could get higher stress level and could be exhausted of nurturing children.

„After the war ended, there wasn't much use for an old soldier, was there? **He had his marching orders, and he had to go home, back to Ireland. And to his wife and kids.** I went to the barracks one last time, the day before he left. I walked all the way as usual, pushing the pram with Kath and Jess in it. You walked beside me, holding on to the handle. You were a good little walker, didn't complain." (Stevens, 2008: 102)

From the text above, it is explained that Tess had a biological-father. Tess's father was already married before marrying her mother, it is explained in the text that after the war ended, he has to go back to Ireland, the place where he and his family lives. From this text, we could get the information that this is the last time Tess and her family met

the father of the family and this is the time they parted.

#### C. The Effects of the Abuses

There are several effects of the abuses experienced by Tess in general; Genophobia, Juvenile delinquency and adult criminality, physical wound in certain area of the body, and difficulties in socializing.

##### 1. Genophobia

The first effect of abuse experienced by Tess is genophobia. Genophobia is a trauma of sex. In the case of Tess, she suffers from genophobia due to the abuses she received from the punters in her childhood.

I was still a virgin, and **being entered sexually was awful. Not that it hurt, particularly, but I hated feeling exposed, vulnerable. My mind flashed back to the time I'd been naked with that man in London, and I felt sick.** I insisted the light was out. I'd enjoyed snogging in the past, but now the whole thing struck me as a nasty, dirty business, with no pleasure. (Stevens, 2008: 262)

From the quotation above it could be interpreted that Tess is trauma of sex when she is about to have sex with her partner. She says that being entered sexually is awful, not because of the pain, but due to the feeling of being exposed. She hates if her body is seen by others. In here, Tess is traumatic of the sexual abuses she received in her childhood by the punters.

## **2. Juvenile Delinquency and Adult Crime**

The second effect of the abuses experienced by Tess is juvenile delinquency and adult crime. Children who suffer from abuse and being neglected by their parents in term of education may turn delinquent and involve in crime.

I'm not proud of the life I've led. It's pointless saying it, I know, but I wish I could turn the clock back. I'd try to lead a decent life, an honest life, one where I wasn't used and where I didn't use anyone. Because I did go on to use people. **I grew up in a brothel, and I ended up being a madam myself. I grew up with a mother who fenced bent gear, and I became a thief myself,**

hoisting from shops.  
(Stevens, 2008: 252)

From the quotation above it is described that Tess regrets her life and wishes she could fix her past. The reason she regrets her life is because she did not receive a decent and honest life. She was always being controlled by her mother to do as she planned. Her mother controls and leads Tess into a life of vice. Since childhood, Tess was exposed to prostitution, because she lives and grew up in a brothel with her family. In addition, mother never gave her adequate education and tends to be neglectful towards her education. As a consequence, Tess grew up and become a madam of her own brothel and follows her mother's steps into becoming a thief herself.

## **3. Physical Wound in Certain Area of the Body**

The third effect of abuse experienced by Tess is physical wound in certain area of the body.

When I could get up and make my way to the bathroom, I squinted at myself in the mirror. **My face was caked in blood, my lips were split and swollen to**

**twice their size, my nose was smashed.** (Stevens, 2008: 291-292)

According to the quotation above, Tess becomes the victim of physical abuse launched by her partner. Tess' partner punches Tess continuously causing Tess to be wounded. It is described above that when Tess looks at the mirror, she sees her face covered in blood, her lips are split and swollen to twice their size, and her nose is smashed.

#### **4. Difficulties In Socializing**

The fourth effect of the abuses experienced by Tess is difficulties in socializing. Children who have been abused seem to have problems in peer relationship.

**I didn't have any special friends at school – in fact I didn't really have friends at all. I just didn't get in the groups that other girls did. And they could never have come round to see me.** Anyway, I had a feeling that they might tease me about Victor as he wasn't good-looking, and I didn't want the boys to start calling me Tit-up Tess again. (Stevens, 2008: 171)

From the quotation above it is described that Tess has difficulties in

socializing with her friends at school. It is stated that she does not have any friend at school and could not join the groups of girls at school. The girls at school also do not found any interest to make friend with her.

#### **D. The Effects on Tess' Personality Development**

The abuses experienced by Tess affects her personality development. The effects of the abuses on her personality development are inferiority, role confusion, isolation, and generativity.

##### **1. Inferiority**

The first effect of the abuses on Tess' personality development is inferiority. Inferior or inferiority is the dystonic quality of the school age, the age from 6 until 13 years old.

In the case of Tess, she becomes inferior due to the abuses she receives.

The next day I was stiff and sore. It hurt to get washed and dressed, but I had to go to school. I was so scared of

seeing Mother again. **What if she turned her back on me for ever? What if she sent me away?** I knew people at school were looking at me, but I ignored them. I didn't care what they thought. I only cared about Mother and getting back into her good books. (Stevens, 2008: 184)

The quotation above proves Tess becomes inferior could be seen above. From the text above, it could be explained that Tess loses her trust from mother. She loses her trust because she had done a great mistake by going to Liam's house, the husband of Lily.

## 2. Role Confusion

The second effect of the abuses on Tess's personality development is role confusion. Role confusion is the dystonic quality of the age of adolescence, a period starting from 14 until 18 years old.

**I think of myself now as I was then, a teenager on the point of growing up, full of confusion. Desperate not to fall out with Mother, but desperate never to be exposed like that again...**I had a glimmering of an idea how Mother worked on me. I realized that sometimes she was nice, sometimes she was nasty – and that she was

nicest when I had to do something especially nasty. (Stevens, 2008: 242)

The quotation that proves Tess is having problem with role confusion could be seen above. It is stated that she is at the age of adolescence, the age where identity and role confusion dominates her. At this age, Tess has the feeling that she is full of confusion, it means that role confusion occurs in her. According to the text, Tess is trauma due to the two abuses; Neglect and sexual abuse. It is stated above that she is desperate not to be exposed again. It means that she does not want her body to be exposed again in front of the punters. In here, Tess is confused whether she should obey her mother or not. If she obeys her mother, it means that she would not fall out with her again, but she will have to fulfill her mother's order by fulfilling the lust of the punters.

## 3. Isolation

The third effect of the abuses on Tess's personality development is isolation. Isolation is the dystonic quality of the age of young adulthood. Young adulthood is the

age starting from 19 until 30 years old.

How could she betray me? I felt unwanted and really ugly. It was then I realized that my three relationships – with John, Jean and Marti – had something in common. **Apart from the first few months with each of them, I'd never felt loved or secure.** I wanted love so much yet I managed to drive it away. (Stevens, 2008: 315)

The quotation that proves Tess feels the isolation as the cause of the abuses she experienced could be seen above. According to the quotation above, Tess is having problems with all of her lovers, starting from John up to Marti. It is stated that Tess never felt loved and secured when she is with them; this is because of the physical abuses she receives from John and the betrayals from Jean and Marti.

#### **4. Generativity**

The fourth effect of the abuses on Tess's personality development is Generativity. Generativity emerges from the stage of adulthood, in the age of 31 up to 60 years old. According to the autobiography entitled *Sold*, Tess

becomes a person who cares for her own daughter.

More immediately, **there was Angie's wedding to think about. I wanted to give her the best wedding ever. It'd be my pride and pleasure to give her a day she'd remember for the rest of her life.** (Stevens, 2008: 332)

According to the quotation above, Tess's daughter, Angie is about to be married and Tess is starting to prepare her wedding. Tess really cares on her daughter's happiness and future since she is eager to give the best wedding for her. She wanted Angie to remember her wedding as one of the best days she ever had in her life.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The findings of the research show that there are four abuses experienced by Tess: psychological abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and physical abuse. She receives the abuses from her mother, step-fathers, partners, grandmother, caregiver, teacher, friends, and punters. The second finding shows that there are four causes of the abuses: gender inequality, poverty, abuser's past

experience, and parent's divorce. Since Tess's mother lives in poverty and also has parted from Tess's father, she has difficulties in taking care of her children and get stress because of it. Due to this stress she abuses Tess. In addition, mother's experience of being abused at her childhood also causes her to be abusive. The inequality between male and female also causes Tess to suffer from abuse since female lack of power. The researcher also found that there are four effects of the abuses: xenophobia, juvenile delinquency and adult crime, physical wound in certain area of the body, and difficulties in socializing. The abuses which occur to Tess affect Tess negatively. Due to the abuses, Tess has difficulties in trusting others and trauma towards sex. The neglect which Tess gets from her mother also causes her to have moral problems such as being involved in crimes. The abuses also cause physical wound towards Tess. Finally, there are four effects of the abuses on Tess's personality development: inferiority, role confusion, isolation, and

generativity. First, Tess becomes inferior since she loses her self-esteem and trust towards mother. Second, she is having difficulties in deciding her role in the society. She keeps on changing jobs and never feels satisfied. She is having conflict in herself whether she lives a normal life or obeys mother's orders by being a criminal. Third, she feels the isolation due to the physical abuses and betrayal she receives from her partners and the neglect by her mother. Fourth, at her adulthood, Tess manages to develop a positive quality in her personality development called generativity. At this stage she shows affection and nurtures her daughter.

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