



**THE EFFECTS OF TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES ON SHEILA'S  
BEHAVIOR IN *ONE CHILD* NOVEL BY TOREY HAYDEN**

A FINAL PROJECT

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## **PRONOUNCEMENT**

The writer states truthfully that this project is compiled by her without doing plagiarism and without taking the results from other research in any university, in S-1, S-2, and S-3 degree and in diploma. In addition, the writer ascertains that she does not take the material from other publications or someone's work except for the references mentioned in the bibliography.

Semarang, June 21<sup>st</sup> 2019

Idrifa Maarsyena Rahmata

## **MOTTO AND DEDICATION**

“So verily with every hardship comes ease, verily with every hardship comes ease”

—**Quran 94:5-6**

“Soon, when all is well, you are going to look back on this period of your life and be so glad that you never gave up”

— **Brittany Burgunder**

“In the process of trying to understand others' difficult behaviour, I've found it is very helpful to realise that no one chooses to be unhappy. If someone is unhappy, they will be so because they genuinely cannot see how to do otherwise.”

— **Torey L. Hayden**

I dedicated this final project to my beloved parents, family, friends, and everyone who helped me to get through this. I cannot thank enough for the love and support.

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I realize that this project is still far from being perfect. I, therefore, will be glad to receive any constructive criticism and recommendation to make this final project better.

Finally, I expect that this project will be useful to the reader who wishes to learn about the traumatic effect on children or something related to it.

Semarang, June 21<sup>st</sup> 2019

Idrifa Maarsyena Rahmata



## TABLE OF CONTENT

PRONOUNCEMENT .....	ii
MOTTO AND DEDICATION .....	iii
APPROVAL.....	iv
VALIDATION .....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	ix
TABLE LIST .....	x
ABSTRACT .....	xi
1.INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	3
3. METHODS OF RESEARCH .....	7
4. DISCUSSION .....	8
5. CONCLUSION.....	19
REFERENCES.....	20

## **LIST OF TABLE**

Table 1. Table of the analyzing on Sheila's behavior using Erikson's Psychosocial Development Stages .....	15
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## ABSTRACT

Childhood is a precious moment in someone's life, as it takes a big impact on their future. However, some children face an unfortunate event in their lives, by experiencing or witnessing life-threatening events such as military combat, natural disasters, serious incidents, or physical or sexual assault in adults or childhood. Those circumstances can lead a person to suffer a psychiatric disorder called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD can influence character, behavior, psychology, and even the physical of the sufferer. Sheila, a character from *One Child* novel by Torey Hayden, is one of the unfortunate children who suffer PTSD. In order to learn more of the reason behind Sheila's behavioral disorder, the writer aims to discuss about the effect of traumatic experience on Sheila's behavior in *One Child* and analyzing the correlation of Sheila's behavior with the effect of early childhood trauma and the symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) by using Erik Erikson's psychosocial development stages theories. The result shows that Sheila's mischievous and wild behavior is caused by her traumatic experience in the past and also by the poor environment. By Torey's help and guidance, Sheila gradually becomes obedient and begins to make friends as she develops trust with other people. In this case, Torey treats Sheila, a child with PTSD by approaching her patiently, listening to her problems, giving affection, building trust and supporting her.

**Keywords:** *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Early Childhood Trauma, Psychosocial Development Stages, One Child*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As people live, they will face other people with different characters and behaviors, and sometimes people are wondering what factors that make a human are so varied psychologically. Is a person's childhood one of the influential times in life? Is that true that childhoods have a big impact on the type of adult they turn out to be later? If so, how about children who undergo a series of events which lead them to trauma?

The word “trauma” is used to describe experiences or situations that are emotionally painful and distressing, and that overwhelm people’s ability to cope, leaving them powerless. For some groups of people, trauma can occur frequently and become part of the common human experience. A longitudinal general population study of children and adolescents (9-16 years old) in Western North Carolina found that One quarter had experienced at least one potentially traumatic event in their lifetime, 6 percent within the past three months. (Costello, E.J., Erkanli, A., Fairbank, J.A.,&Angold, A. 2002). From the study, trauma can be defined as an issue that can be experienced by anyone, anywhere and anyhow.

A traumatic experience can influence characters, behavior, psychology, the way of thinking, and even physical. Unfortunately, the sufferer is often labeled as a ‘delinquent’ without even considering the background or the reason behind the action. With various of the famous novel, an author named Torey Hayden presents a unique way to tell her stories with the ‘problematic’ children. One of her splendid works is telling a story about a traumatic child. The book is explaining a probability

about the unfortunate reality that a person may encounter in this world, especially on a child. That remarkable book is titled *One Child*.

*One Child* is a true story novel based on the real-life experiences of an American author and psychologist Torey Hayden. It was first published in the United States in 1980. This book was dramatized as an interactive opera and was made a movie titled *Untamed Love*. The book is opened with Torey, a special education teacher, reading a newspaper article about a six-year-old girl who kidnaps a three-year-old boy and ties him to a tree then sets fire on until it nearly killed him. As there was no place for her at the mental hospital, she ends up as a student in Torey's special class, where there are already eight problematic students. At first, Sheila refuses to talk to everybody and acts very wildly. Still, Torey attempts to “tame” this girl from time to time.

In this study, the writer aims to analyze the effect of Sheila's traumatic experience which was caused by past experiences and environments. The writer using Erikson's theory of psychological development stages to explain the correlation of her behavior with the effect of early childhood trauma and the Posttraumatic Stress Disorder's (PTSD) syndrome. The writer also observing Torey's treatment on handling Sheila so that Sheila's behavior can get better by orienting the treatment from the 'Mind' Mental Health Organization. Therefore, the writer will discuss the effects of traumatic experiences on Sheila's behavior in *One Child* novel by Torey Hayden.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The word “trauma” is used to describe experiences or situations that are emotionally painful and distressing, as it is said on the previous page. From another definition, individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or a set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being. (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration 2014: p. 7). In this case, the writer found Erikson's Theory of Psychological Development is the most suitable theory to analyze by using a psychological approach based on the Early childhood trauma of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Erik Erikson (1902–1994) is a stage theorist who took Freud's controversial theory of psychosexual development and modified it as a psychosocial theory. Erikson emphasized that the ego makes positive contributions to development by mastering attitudes, ideas, and skills at each stage of development. Erikson's eight stages were based on the social conflict which will influence the personality of the child. Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory has eight stages, yet the writer is focusing on four stages which are relevant to the discussion.

## **2.1 Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory**

### **2.1.1 Infancy : Basic Trust vs. Mistrust – Hope**

From birth until 18 months old, the most important thing from the parents, especially the mother, is the ability to nurture the children. From the parent's visual contact and affection, the children will develop trust, optimism, security, and confidence if they are cared and handled properly. The children may develop insecurity, worthlessness, and mistrust of the environment if they do not experience the feeling of trust. (Boeree, C. George. 2017. *Personality Theories* P. 8)

### **2.1.2 Toddler / Early Childhood Years : Autonomy vs. Shame – Will**

This is the second stage of Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory. It occurs between 18 months to 3 years. At this point, the children have an opportunity to build self-esteem and autonomy as they learn new skills and the right or wrong of things. Children tend to be insecure at this stage, they begin to know the feeling of shame and low self-esteem of the inability to learn certain skills. (Boeree, C. George. 2017. *Personality Theories* P. 8-9)

### **2.1.3 Preschooler : Initiative vs. Guilt – Purpose**

This happens between 3 to 5 years of children. During this period they tend to copy the adults around them and take initiative in creating a role-play situation, like creating stories with a doll. They also often feel curiosity by using the word "Why?"

to ask on almost everything. They tend to search for the purpose of anything. (Boeree, C. George. 2017. *Personality Theories* P. 9-10)

#### **2.1.4 School Age Child : Industry vs. Inferiority – Competence**

At this stage, children from 6 to 12 years are capable of learning, creating and accomplishing various new skills and knowledge, then they begin to develop a sense of industry. They will be dealing with social matters among their peers. In this time they may face a serious problem of competence and self-esteem. As their world is expanding, parents are no longer in the center of their minds, although they are still important. Their most intense relationship is usually with the school mate and neighborhood.(Boeree, C. George. 2017. *Personality Theories* P. 10)

#### **2.2 What is PTSD?**

PTSD, or Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, is a psychiatric disorder that can occur by experiencing or witnessing of life-threatening events such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents, or physical or sexual assault in adults or childhood (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, (DSM-5)* American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013). Most survivors of trauma return to normal time after time. However, some people will have different reactions of stress that cannot go away on their own or may even get worse over time. These individuals may develop PTSD. People who suffer from PTSD often experiencing nightmares and flashbacks, have difficulty sleeping, and feel detached



or dissociate, and these symptoms can be severe enough and last long enough to significantly affect the person's daily life.

### **2.3 Early Childhood Trauma**

Early childhood trauma generally refers to the traumatic experiences that occur to children aged 0-6. Young children are affected by traumatic events, even though they may not understand what happened. Young children even infants may be affected by events that threaten their safety or the safety of their parents or caregivers. These traumas can be the result of violence such as child physical or sexual abuse, domestic violence, or the effect of natural disasters, accidents, or war. Young children also may experience traumatic effects due to painful medical procedures or the sudden loss of a parent or caregiver. As for physical, sexual and verbal abuse, this could cause the child to feel worthless, unlovable, insecure, endangered, failing to express affection, caring and love, neglecting mental health, medical or educational needs.

### **3. METHODS OF RESEARCH**

As the writer observes *One Child* novel and psychological book, also searching for related academic essays and journals as resources, the writer finds that library research is the most suitable method for this study. Library research is used to find the theory that will be useful for the analysis. A research library is a library that contains an in-depth collection of material on one or several subjects (Young, 1983; p.188). A research library will generally include primary sources as well as secondary sources. The writer uses *One Child* novel as a primary data to collect a direct source, and obtain the secondary data from other resources, such as some related books, academic essays, journals, and scripts.

The writer uses the psychological approach to analyze the object of research. Psychological research is one of the literature approaches which is used to analyze the psychological issues lie in the literary work. (X.J. Kennedy and Dana 1995: 1790-1818.). The writer will focus on the psychological approach based on the Early childhood trauma of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which is a psychiatric disorder of feeling a deep trauma because of experiencing or witnessing life-threatening events, by using Erikson's Psychosocial Development theory.

#### **4. THE EFFECTS OF TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES ON SHEILA'S BEHAVIOR IN *ONE CHILD* NOVEL BY TOREY HAYDEN**

##### **4.1 Synopsis of the book**

Sheila enters the school on January 8. She comes up with messy hair, eyes full of hatred and smells very unpleasant. She is wearing denim overalls and a striped T-shirt which already faded. According to the report, she has severe emotional problems. She is aggressive and disobedient. Oddly, though in a state of sadness, anger or pain, she does not even cry. Sheila comes to class with full of cautious in her new environment. As a teacher of a “special” class, Torey attempts to approaches Sheila, yet Sheila rebels and very aggressive. Torey does everything she can, pulling out all the skills that she has through her experiences as a teacher. In the meantime, Torey discovers that Sheila is greatly hurt. Sheila was left by her beloved mother on the roadside when she was four. Her father is a drunkard and cannot provides her a proper life. Torey learns that Sheila’s painful experience and the poor environments are taking a big part in Sheila’s mischievous behavior and her trust issue to the world. Later, Torey’s sympathy becomes affection. In the process of “taming” Sheila, Torey finds that Sheila is very smart, brilliant, passionate, and very charming. Through the ups and downs, and by the affection that Torey gives, Sheila begins to build trust for others and she finally learns how to love.

## **4.2 Sheila's Abnormal Behavior Depicted in The Book**

### **4.2.1 Aggressive, rebel, silent and uncontrollable**

Sheila often becomes an aggressive, rebel, and uncontrollable. Sometimes she keeps silence when people try to talk to her. She destroys things as she is asked to do any schoolwork things like a math or writing practice. She will tear apart the paper. She also makes a mess in the whole class when Torey is away from school. Turns out, Sheila does mischievous things and becomes destructive when she is feeling insecure, worry, afraid, and disappointed.

### **4.2.2 Cautious**

Sheila is so cautious that she cannot trust anybody. As we can see from the dialogue:

“You can't make me do nothing in here. You can't make me talk.”

“Maybe not. . . Shall we go to lunch?” I extended a hand to her. Some of the anger had dissipated to be replaced by a less readable emotion. Then without further urging she got off the chair and came with me, careful not to touch me (p. 29)

Some symptoms of PTSD are very hostile and feeling distrustful towards the world, that's why Sheila even avoids friendships and relationships or finding them very difficult. In the passage above, she insists that she will not talk even to Torey, her teacher. Sheila thinks that Torey will be the same as the previous teacher that cannot handle her and will give up in the end. However, Torey reacts very calm and responds

to Sheila wisely. Sheila's behavior carefully not to touch shows her caution towards Torey. Sheila cannot trust Torey at their first meeting.

#### **4.2.3 Wild**

When Sheila is told to do her chores or obey the rules, she rebels and becomes very wild and aggressive like in this passage:

Sheila screamed and yelled all through playtime. The ruckus had been going over an hour and a half by then. She stomped her feet and bounced and rocked the 'quiet corner' chair. She pulled at her clothes and shook her fists. But she remained in the chair (p.52)

Sheila has no trust in other people so that she does not like to be told for doing things, then she protests by her wild gestures, whether it is screaming, stomps her feet, or making a mess. She does rebel things since people with PTSD usually have difficulty controlling their emotions.

#### **4.2.4 Violent and Sadistic**

This is the scene when Torey read a newspaper about Sheila's case. At this time, Torey never thinks that she will be Sheila's teacher:

It is told of a six-year-old girl who had abducted a neighborhood child. On that cold November evening, she had taken the three-year-old boy, tied him to a tree in a nearby woodlot and burned him. The boy was currently in a local hospital in critical condition. The girl had been taken into custody (p. 5)

When reading about this case, Torey has no idea what the world has become. Then she thinks about the fate of the 'criminal' girl, and what makes her become a violent

child. Anger is one of the hyperarousal symptoms of PTSD. The anger of people with PTSD can become so intense that it feels out of control. When that happens, they may become aggressive toward others or even harm themselves.

Sheila also suffers destructive anger, as we can see from the passage below:

Sheila stood defiantly on a chair by the aquarium. She had apparently caught the goldfish one by one and poked their eyes out with a pencil. Seven or eight of the fish lay flopping desperately on the floor around the chair, their eyes destroyed. Sheila clutched one tightly in her right fist and stood poised threateningly with the pencil in the other. A lunch aide was near her, dancing nervously about, but too frightened to attempt disarming Sheila (p. 39)

On the first day of school, Sheila expresses her protests very violent and sadistic. She does not like to be in school and has to obey the rules, so she kills the goldfish in the class by poking its eyeballs and makes a ruckus so the whole “special” kids in the class panic. She is out of control, as early childhood trauma can cause the child to feel endangered.

This one is the scene when Torey read the report document as research for finding a solution to face this ‘violent and sadistic’ child:

Before entering Torey’s class, Sheila had already went to the police three times. Beside because of the burning incident, she had been punished for setting fires in the migrant camp where she lived with her neglectful father, and for smearing feces in the restroom of a bus station (p. 34)

On Sheila’s report document, there are the lists of her cases, one of them is this case in the migrant camp. It is not clear what causes her to do the things as it is not written

on the document and it is not mentioned in the book. But people with PTSD when they are angry or disappointed, they may become aggressive toward others.

### **4.3 The Cause of Sheila's Problematic Behavior**

All of Sheila's behavior is not just the usual children's mischievousness. From analyzing the book, there are some aspects which cause Sheila's character and behavior becomes wild, ignorant, rebel, violent and so on. Those behaviors are caused by Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, a mental illness. In Sheila's case, she suffers from the disease because of experiencing Early Childhood Trauma.

#### **4.3.1 Losing A Mother's Figure**

She was left by her teenage mother on the street when she was 4, moreover, she also lost her beloved little brother who was brought along by her mother which make her questioned it even more, like the one from this dialogue:

My mama take me out on the road and leave me there . . She push me out of the car. You ain't suppose to do that with little kids . . My mama don't love me so good. . .My mama take Jimmie and go to California. He be a nice boy to have in this here crazy class. Cept I don't think he be crazy like me. . . She like Jimmie better'n than me, that's why she tooked him and left me behind. . . He don't do bad things like me(p. 94-95)

Early childhood trauma can cause the child to feel worthless, unlovable, and insecure. After the incident with her mother, Sheila feels like nobody can understand what happened to her, and she is the most miserable kid in the world.

### **4.3.2 Raped and Abused by Her Uncle**

In April, Sheila says that Uncle Jerry, her uncle who just out of prison will stay in her home. Every day they play together until the terrible events occur to Sheila. Uncle Jerry tries to rape her. Sheila's genital is torn by a knife until she almost bled to death. With a pale face, Sheila still entered the classroom and repeatedly go to the restroom to hide the blood that flowed from her genitals. Later, Torey noticed Sheila is being odd. Once Torey knows what is going on, she immediately took Sheila to the hospital. Sheila stays in the hospital until the end of April. Meanwhile, her uncle is facing a trial for sexual abuse.

### **4.3.3 Family Environment**

Sheila lives alone with her father in a hut with one room in the township of migrant workers. Her house has no heater, water plumb, and electricity. This made Sheila do not know hygienist, and she seldom to take a bath and smell really bad.

Her father spent most of Sheila's early years in prison, in charges of molestation. Then after he was released, he had to stay in a state hospital for alcoholism and drug addiction. Sheila moved between families and friends of the family, especially from the mother's family before she was abandoned on the roadside. Having dealt with the children's center, Sheila, who was four years old, was discovered that she has a lot of scars and broken bones caused by abuse. While a



child protection service officer assigned to monitor her case, Sheila was released and they gave the responsibility to her father.

#### **4.3.4 Social Treat**

From this conversation, we can state that Sheila never gets the feeling of affection from her environment:

“How come you do this? . . . Be nice to me?”

I looked at her in disbelief. “Because I like you.”

“Why? I be a crazy kid; I hurt your fishes. Why do you be nice to me?”

“I just want to Sheila. That’s all. I thought you might like something nice for your hair.”

“Ain’t nobody give me nothing before. Ain’t nobody be nice to me on purpose.” I stood watching her in bewilderment. There was nothing in my experience to relate to that.

“Well, things are different in here kiddo,” was all I could reply. (p. 87)

In the dialogue above, there are some symptoms of PTSD. Sheila feels as if she is worthless, and cannot obtain happiness like the other child. Even it is just a simple thing like taking care of her hair as Torey does. Sheila thinks that she is different from other people, as she is always stated that she is a crazy child so that she does not worth to receive kindness acts. This also makes her find it difficult to build a relationship with people.

#### **4.4 Erik Erikson Psychosocial Development Theory Analysis**

Based on Erik Erikson Theory of Psychological Development, some of the psychosocial development stages match Sheila’s behavior. Those are:

No.	Erikson Stages	Sheila's Behavior
1.	Basic Trust vs. Mistrust	As she did not properly raise, she feels insecurity, worthlessness, and mistrust towards the world.
2.	Autonomy vs. Shame	Amazingly, she has almost no problem in gaining a new skill, she can read, write, and even counts. Yet because of her ability, she becomes a perfectionist who afraid of getting her answer wrong and will be getting depressed about it.
3.	Initiative vs. Guilt	She believes that she is a bad kid since her father keeps on telling her that her mother left because she is a crazy kid. She keeps questioning the reason behind her mother left and still feeling guilty about it.
4.	Industry vs. Inferiority – Competence	As time goes by, she begins to have a friend, develop a trust with the teacher, and experiencing a problem with her peers. Her world begins to expand, as she

		gains more experience, skills, feeling, and expression.
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Table 1. Table of the analyzing on Sheila’s behavior using Erikson’s Psychosocial Development Stages

#### **4.5 Torey’s Treatment on Handling Sheila**

Based on the ‘Mind’ Mental Health Organization, there are some treatments that can be done by the closest people of PTSD sufferers. Those treatments are also depicted in the book. These are Torey's treatments for healing Sheila.

##### **4.5.1 Listening to Her**

By listening to Sheila’s story without judging it, and answer wisely on each of Sheila’s questions, Torey helps Sheila improves her behavior by overcoming the feelings of guilt and depression. As Sheila recounts being abandoned, Torey avoids saying anything that will bring Sheila’s guilt and it results positive in their relationship.

##### **4.5.2 Approaching Her**

Torey approaches Sheila patiently, with a consideration, and giving affection like bathing her, read her a book, telling a story to her, and Torey treats Sheila as if she is a normal kid, appreciate Sheila works by praising her, and the most touching moment is when Sheila always asks Torey to read her a book titled *The Little Prince*,

as Sheila finds a similarity on the story with her life. After that, Sheila gradually “tame” like a fox in *The Little Prince* book which was tamed by the prince.

### **4.5.3 Building Trust**

As Torey approaching Sheila very carefully, with patience and pulls out her best skill as an experienced teacher, Torey gradually obtains Sheila’s trust. Torey responds to Sheila’s act very wisely and she always tries for not losing emotion on dealing with Sheila. Torey also always acts openly so that Sheila gradually opens up to her.

### **4.5.4 Help Her to FindSupport**

#### **4.5.4.1 In academic**

Sheila turns out to be very smart. She is improving in class and begins to follow the activities in the school quite well, especially in math. She is doing very well without any wrong answers. Later, Torey brings Sheila to a psychological school test named PPVT (Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test), as well as IQ and reading tests. The result is her IQ above 180. Sheila is able to read the comprehension level of a fifth-grade despite the fact that no one who taught her to read. It was unexpected. Sheila has a brain as bright, but with many of her crazy behavior, people think that she is experiencing a severe mental disorder.

#### **4.5.4.2 In The Trial**

Torey helps Sheila the best as she can, with the help of Torey's lawyer boyfriend, Chad, to win the trial so that Sheila does not need to be placed in the country's children's hospital and send her to the regular school instead. Torey believes in Sheila's ability and in the end, with the help of everyone, they manage to win the trial.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The findings show the result of traumatic experience on children leaves a big effect on their future. By experiencing or witnessing of life-threatening events such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents, or physical or sexual assault can lead children to suffer Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The symptoms will influence their characters, behavior, psychology, the way of thinking, and even physical. This will become a bad impact on the children's future life if children with traumatic experiences are not cared for. As for in this discussion, Sheila, a character in *One Child* novel by Torey Hayden, is one of the victims of traumatic children who becomes extremely hard to be handled. She is very aggressive, rebel, wild, violent and sadistic. In her amazing work, Torey teaches us for not ignoring and dumping the children, giving them affection and time to heal instead, also give them the feeling of being loved. In *One Child*, Torey does her best by listening Sheila's problem and stories, learning her behavior, not judging her conditions and even wisely answering every question that is asked, 'taming' and disciplining her, helping and supporting from many aspects; such as education, health, family matters, and social environment. Torey's efforts results in good improvements in Sheila's behavior. Sheila gradually becomes obedient and begins to make friends as she develops trust with other people. Furthermore, the writer believes, with patience and efforts, broken children caused by traumatic experience can be healed in a shorter or longer time if they are rightly treated.

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