

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Various distressing experiences can strain someone's ability to cope. Exposure to violence, such as domestic violence or assault, can significantly affect one's sense of security and safety. Similarly, accidents and natural disasters, characterized by sudden and extreme stress, can leave lasting psychological scars. Combat and war expose a person to high levels of danger and violence, often leading to mental disorders. Sexual violence and severe child abuse or neglect are particularly damaging, as they involve major violations of personal boundaries and trust. In addition, significant losses, such as the unexpected death of a loved one, medical trauma involving severe illness or invasive procedures, and experiences of systemic discrimination and racism, can all be sources of trauma. Witnessing or experiencing severe injury, as well as growing up in chronically unstable environments, further contributes to the risk of developing mental disorders. According to the American Psychiatric Association, a psychological disorder, or mental disorder, is “a syndrome characterized by clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotion regulation, or behavior that reflects a dysfunction in the psychological, biological, or developmental processes underlying mental functioning.” (APA, 2013:20). The impact of these traumatic experiences is influenced by individual factors such as personal resilience, social support, and previous life experiences, which shape how one processes and recovers from such distressing events.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is one of the most significant outcomes of such traumatic exposures, characterized by symptoms that can severely disrupt an individual's daily life. Research indicates that individuals who have experienced severe or prolonged trauma are at a heightened risk for developing PTSD. This includes not only those who directly experience violence or injury but also those who witness such events. For instance, combat veterans, survivors of sexual assault, and individuals involved in serious accidents are all populations with elevated rates of PTSD. The severity of the trauma and the individual's proximity to the event, whether they were directly involved or merely witnessed it can significantly influence the likelihood of developing PTSD symptoms.

Such traumatic experiences and their impacts are captured in *Room*, a novel written by Emma Donoghue, an Irish-Canadian author, in 2010. The book wins the 2011 Commonwealth Writers' Prize regional prize (Caribbean and Canada) and is included on the longlist for the 2011 Orange Prize. It is on the 2010 Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize shortlist, the 2010 Governor General's Awards shortlist, and the Booker Prize shortlist. This novel is also adapted into a movie with the same title.

The story tells about Ma (the mother) being captivated in a small, soundproofed shed they call "Room" for seven years and her five-year-old son Jack, since he was born. Ma and Jack share an isolated one-room outbuilding in the backyard with a small kitchen, a simple bathroom, a bed, a wardrobe, and a television. Since Jack has never been outside yet, Jack considers the room and everything within it, including Ma and him, as the only real things. Besides Ma, Jack has only seen Old Nick, the captivator who comes to the room at night to fulfil

his desire. Ma has experienced sexual abuse from Old Nick during the captivity. Ma and Jack survive by receiving food and necessities from Old Nick, he gives them once a week as a Sunday treat. Ma and Jack do not have the proper amount of food, so they must count what they eat to avoid running out before the Sunday treat. Ma has been planning to escape the room and asks Jack to act dead so Old Nick can bring him outside so they can escape. Jack escapes and meets the police to release Ma from the room. After that, Old Nick gets arrested. Ma and Jack stay in the hospital for rehabilitation. Jack is afraid to be outside the room because he is not used to everything he has not seen before, including people. After a few weeks in the hospital, Ma and Jack return to Ma's parents' house. Then, they move to an independent living residence and get used to the normal environment.

1.2 Research Problem

Based on the research background, three research questions must be answered in this research study, such as:

1. What are the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by Ma and Jack in Emma Donoghue's *Room*?
2. What are the causes of post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by Ma and Jack in Emma Donoghue's *Room*?
3. What are the impacts of post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by Ma and Jack in Emma Donoghue's *Room*?

1.3 Objectives of the Research

The objectives of a study show the specific goals or aims of this research.

There are three purposes of this study which include:

1. To analyze the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder that Ma and Jack experienced in Emma Donoghue's *Room*.
2. To analyze the causes of post-traumatic stress disorder that Ma and Jack experienced in Emma Donoghue's *Room*.
3. To analyze the impacts of post-traumatic stress disorder on Ma and Jack experienced in Emma Donoghue's *Room*.

1.4 Previous Study

The first previous study is a thesis titled *Main Characters's Depression Described in Room by Emma Donoghue* by Laili Eka Mazida (2022). This study concentrates on the symptoms of depression faced by the major characters, as well as the reasons behind those symptoms and how they affected the main character's growth in the novel *Room*. The primary character in Emma Donoghue's book provides a fresh perspective on the notion of depression, which makes the research crucial. The depression hypothesis Beck and Alford (2009) developed is the theory applied in this study.

The second one is *Ma's Trauma: A Psychoanalytic on Emma Donoghue's Novel Room* thesis by Ardi Ridho Nugroho. This study attempts to identify the trauma-causing variables for Ma, who developed into one of the central characters in the book *Room*, as the post-trauma characteristics. The researcher employs

descriptive qualitative approaches to analyze Ma's trauma in the *Room* novel. Psychoanalytic theory by Sigmund Freud was used in the research. From the data research, the research's findings highlight the elements that contribute to trauma in Ma, including violations of fundamental rights, verbal and physical abuse of victims, and the loss of a profoundly significant item.

The third one is a thesis titled *Woman's Struggle in Novel Room by Emma Donoghue: A Feminist Approach* by Kamariah. This study examines how women in Emma Donoghue's 2010 novel *Room* battle against violence. Simone de Beauvoir's feminist method (2010) is employed in this work to examine Johan Galtung's hypothesis regarding violence and the presence of women. This study concentrates on three types of violence: structural, cultural, and direct. The researcher discovers two reasons in this study that led women to reject patriarchy. The primary protagonists were first exposed to direct kinds of violence, such as rape, kidnapping, and sexual assault.

The next one is *Woman Subjectivity: Maternal Power in Room by Emma Donoghue*, a thesis by Ifa Nabila. This descriptive-qualitative study examines how Ma, the protagonist, attempts to become more subjective by using her parental authority. Emma Donoghue's book serves as the basis for this analysis. This research aims to demonstrate that, instead of viewing nurturing and care as feminine characteristics, it views such traits as maternal power that may reveal a woman's subjectivity. The findings demonstrate that a woman's capacity for care should be seen as her strength, not weakness. The exercise of maternal power, which is a

manifestation of a woman's caring and nurturing nature, has the potential to foster a woman's subjectivity despite the trauma that the rape has created.

While *Room* by Emma Donoghue offers a profound exploration of trauma through the experiences of Jack and Ma, a notable research gap exists in the study of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) within the context of captivity narratives, particularly those involving young children. The novel poignantly illustrates the psychological impacts of prolonged confinement and abuse. Still, there is limited research specifically focusing on how PTSD manifests in children who have been isolated from the outside world for their entire formative years. Most existing PTSD research centers on adults or adolescents who have experienced trauma in more conventional settings, leaving a gap in understanding the unique psychological effects and coping mechanisms of young children like Jack, who experience trauma from birth within a confined space. In this thesis, a central thesis argument revolves around the psychological impact of trauma, particularly post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as experienced by the characters Ma and Jack. The novel illustrates how prolonged captivity affects their mental health and relational dynamics, highlighting themes of survival, resilience, and the struggle for autonomy in the face of overwhelming adversity.

1.5 Scope of Study

This study examines the characters Ma and Jack in the novel *Room*. It focuses on intrinsic aspects, including character, characterization, conflict, and setting. Meanwhile, the discussion of extrinsic aspects covers Ma and Jack's lives,

as well as the causes, the symptoms, and the impacts on the major character's life. Here, Ma and Jack go through some traumatic events that lead them to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The cause, the symptoms, and the impacts of PTSD can be seen from the causes, the symptoms, and the impacts of PTSD.

1.6 Organization of Writing

CHAPTER 1

The first chapter introduces the study's context and research topic. The research problems state the main research questions, the research objectives, previous studies, and the scope of the study.

CHAPTER 2

This chapter explains the theoretical framework that provides the foundation for the research. It also briefly describes the literary approach and theories used. This study uses Gerald C. Davison's theory of post-traumatic stress disorder.

CHAPTER 3

This chapter presents the results of the research. Relate the findings to the theoretical framework and literature review, and also discuss how the results align with or deviate from existing studies.

CHAPTER 4

The conclusion chapter of this research paper concludes the study by summarizing key findings, highlighting their significance, and providing a final reflection on the research.