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**POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER IN THOMAS HARRIS' HANIBAL  
RAISING**

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**Abstract**

This research aims to analyze the Hannibal Lecter's PTSD in Thomas Harris' *Hannibal Rising* novel. It describes that the main character has psychological problem. He suffers from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. There are two questions that appear to discuss i.e. the causes and the symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder perceived by Hannibal Lecter the main character. This research uses theory of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder by Glenn R. Schiraldi. There are some concepts of the theory i.e. symptoms and causes of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This concept helps this research to describe the causes and the symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder that are perceived by Hannibal Lecter in the novel. The result of this research shows that war situation is one of the causes of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Hannibal Lecter's life changed after he experienced war situation such as witnessing the death of parent and witnessing the murder of sister Mischa in the war. Then, he also shows the symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder after experiencing the war. Those are flashback, troubled sleep, irritability of anger, trouble remembering, and feeling detached from others.

**Keywords:** *Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, symptom, cause*

**I. Introduction**

Many people experience traumatic events in life. Some of them can accept the situation and return to normal, but others cannot adapt the changes after the events. However, people who perceive the traumatic events for long time are suffering from mental illness which is suffered by people who cannot overcome their bad experiences or dangerous events in life for long time.

Sympson (2002:6) stated that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder can result in someone experiencing an unusual and frightening event that actually makes him overwhelmed to overcome it. It disturbs someone psychologically. It means that the person who perceives traumatic events may think of it all the time and it can affect the person's life. It is difficult to adjust and accept the changes after the traumatic events.

Scott (2011:3) stated that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a serious condition for someone who has difficulty, anxiety or severe depression to recover from a dangerous event that has been experienced in the past for months or years. It means that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a person's psychological condition that it triggered by tragic events in the past and it is unable to accept the accident so that it continuously disturb the life of the person who witnesses it in the long term.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is portrayed in *Hannibal Rising*. *Hannibal Rising* is a novel written by an American author, *Thomas Harris*. *Hannibal Rising* is prequel of previous novels by Thomas Harris; *Red Dragon*, *the Silence of the Lambs* and *Hannibal*. *Hannibal Rising* is a best seller novel published in 2006. It has been released with audio version and has been adapted into a film directed by Peter Webber in 2007. The novel is very interesting to discuss because it portrays Post Traumatic Stress Disorder suffered by Hannibal Lecter the main character. It begins from the war that happens in country of Lithuania, the death of his family and the murder of his sister. The novel also shows that the war is very bad for human life, especially for children as experienced by Hannibal Lecter. He has to experience the war situation since his childhood. The traumatic events that happened during the war are

always in his mind and bother him until he is adult. It changes his life into abnormal person who suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

## **II. Review of Related Literature**

### **2.1 Symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder**

Schiraldi (2009:7) said that there are three PTSD symptoms groups in the sequence in which they logically occur. There are event re-experienced, arousal, and avoidance and numbing.

#### **2.1.1 Re-experiencing**

Re-experiencing symptoms can be divided into having upsetting memories such as images, thoughts, and perceptions about the trauma, experiencing bad dreams and nightmares about the event, flashbacks, getting emotionally upset when reminded of the trauma and reacting physically when reminded of the trauma. It is very distressful both psychologically and physically. Nightmares and flashbacks are common forms of re-experiencing the trauma. Nightmares will be accurate replays of the traumatic events and depict the trauma with themes of treats, rescuing self or others, and being trapped by the bad memories. Then, flashback means that someone is going back in time and reliving the trauma.

#### **2.1.2 Arousal**

Flashbacks relate to the second symptom called arousal because the

flashback is often triggered by insomnia that makes someone with PTSD has difficulty in sleeping. Arousal has signs including trouble falling or staying asleep, experiencing irritability or outbursts of anger, problems in concentrating or focusing on tasks, feeling agitated and constantly on the lookout for danger and feeling jumpy or getting very startled by loud noises or someone coming up on you from behind when do not expect it.

### **2.1.3 Avoidance**

Someone with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder will also perceive avoidance and numbing. It includes blocking the traumatic events from minds thoughts, images or feeling, avoiding activities, places, people that arouse recollections, shutting out memories of painful periods and experiencing amnesia or trouble remembering important parts of what happened during the trauma, losing interest or not participating in things you used to enjoy doing, feeling detached or cutoff from other people, shutting down emotionally or feeling emotionally numb and feeling as if the future will be cut short.

## **2.2 Causes of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder**

Schiraldi (2009:5) stated that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder can be caused by a wide range of events. However, there are three categories that

cause Post Traumatic Stress Disorder including intentional human cases, unintentional human causes and acts of nature. Intentional human cases can be from man-made, deliberate, and malicious such abuse, torture, criminal assault, violent crime, being held hostage, terrorism, bombing, witnessing torture, alcoholism, witnessing suicide or other form of sudden death, witnessing death threats and damage to loss of body part. Unintentional human causes include accident and technological disasters. There are industrial, fire, burns, motor vehicle accident, unclear disaster, collapse of sport stadium and building, and surgical damage to body or loss of body part. Then, acts of nature or natural disaster can be from hurricane, tornado, flood, earthquake, volcanic eruption, fire, and others.

In addition, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder can affect anyone such as children, boys and girls caused by direct witnessing dangerous keys like war and the death of family. Schiraldi (2009:39)said that anyone can expose to potential traumatic events. Individuals in a war zone can be exposed to a range of traumatic events. Anyone may have been attacked, seen others die, lost friends and comrades, been physically or sexually assaulted, been exposed to mass death or suffering, or otherwise been the victim or observer of frightening events. Then, the person may have had to engage in actions that were very difficult, such as

holding individuals prisoner or attacking or killing the enemy

### **III. Method of the Research**

The method is considered as an effective way in exploring a problem and developing data by analyzing and interpreting it. Creswell (2012:6) said “Qualitative research is the best suited to address a research problem in which you do not know the variables and need to explore.” It means that qualitative method is used in order to explain research questions more deeply. This qualitative method is supported by three points including psychological approach, a library research and descriptive way. First, psychology approach is used in order to relate the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder theory to the causes and symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder suffered by Hannibal Lecter. Second, the library research is to collect the data; the primary data and secondary data. The primary data is taken from the novel *Hannibal Rising* by Thomas Harris and the secondary data is online sources and several books. Third, descriptive way is used to report this research.

There are some steps in getting the data. The first is by reading and understanding the novel *Hannibal Rising* for several times. The second is by collecting and exploring the data with the writer's opinion. The third is by identifying and classifying the data into two points; the symptoms and the causes. The fourth is by drawing and

evaluating the conclusion through the psychological approach especially Post Traumatic Stress Disorder theory.

### **IV. Findings**

#### **4.1 Symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Suffered By Hannibal Lecter**

Symptoms mean any mental or physical changes that can be detected by other from one who suffers from serious acute and chronic illness. Hannibal Lecter the main character of the novel shows symptoms of a disease called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder by Glenn R. Schiraldi i.e., flashback, trouble in sleeping, irritability of anger, trouble in remembering, and feeling detached from others.

##### **4.1.1 Flashback**

Many people whose minds are constantly stuck in the slump of the past unable to forget the sad memories. Almost every day the memory of bad events arises. The traumatic events continue to interfere over and over again. According to Schiraldi (2009:8), flashback is a particularly upsetting form of re-experiencing the traumatic event. In flashback, someone is like going back in time and reliving the trauma. Hannibal Lecter the main character in the novel experiences the flashback after he escapes from the war crime in his past. Before the war crime, Hannibal lives and grows in the castle with his father, mother, younger sister

and their workers. However, their life changes when the Nazis invaded Lithuania in World War II, Hannibal and his family survive in the lodge in the woods. However, a bomb destroys the lodge and kills the Lecter family, except Hannibal and his younger sister Mischa. Then, Hannibal and Mischa are chained and locked up in a cottage warehouse. Until one day during the heavy winter, the soldiers are hungry and have no food, they eat Mischa. Therefore, Hannibal cannot forget that traumatic event and he always recalls that bad memory. It can be seen through the quotation below:

*Hannibal Lecter, last of his line, stood in the looted castle of his childhood looking into the empty picture frame in the knowledge that he was of his line and not of his line. His memories were of his mother, a Sforza, and of Cook and Mr. Jakov from a tradition other than his own. He could see them in the empty frame, gathered before the fire at the lodge. (P.65)*

The quotation above indicates Hannibal's flashback about his family. He is like going back to the time when he lives with his family before the war situation. The phrase *looking into the empty picture frame in the knowledge that he was of his line and not of his line* means Hannibal's life is different now. His image and his thought have changed into bad situation because of the death of his family. The sentence *his memories were of his mother, a Sforza,*

*and of Cook and Mr. Jakov from a tradition other than his own* indicates Hannibal, in his mind, often re-appears memories when he lives with his family, but he cannot reach that anymore because of the death of his family and the eaten of his sister's flesh by the soldiers during the war.

Therefore, it can be concluded Hannibal Lecter always perceives flashback about his bad memories. He feels that as if his life with his family is happening again and feels back to his life before the war. However, it is all only a shadow for him because his life has changed in a situation that slumped.

#### 4.1.2 Trouble in sleeping

A nightmare is also a common form of re-experiencing trauma. Nightmares will review traumatic events that are quite accurate and describe trauma with the theme of threats, escape, trapped, and dying Schiraldi (2009:8). Hannibal always dreams of his sister's death. The dream bothers his sleep and he feels as if the sad event is happening again. It can be found through the quotation below:

*"Hannibal has ever said a word?" Count Lecter said.*

*"Not to me. Physically he is capable of speech – he screams his sister's name in his sleep. Mischa.Mischa." Comrade Lecter, I would be.. careful with Hannibal until you know him better" (P.74)*

The quotation above indicates that Hannibal is difficult to sleep. Hannibal is always bothered by the nightmare and the shadow of his sister death. The sentence *physically he is capable of speech* indicates that after the death of his whole family and his young sister, he cannot escape the tragic memories. He becomes a man that full of silence and avoids talking to people. The sentence *he screams his sister's name in his sleep* also states that the tragic event that happened in the past appears in Hannibal's dream and bothers him.

The traumatic event is always in Hannibal's mind and he has nightmares either the trauma or themes surrounding the trauma. He is frustrated about his sister's murder and every night he always dreams of it. Even though Hannibal has moved to his uncle house, he still has the same dream about the traumatic events. It can be seen through the quotation below:

*"Mischa, Mischa!" The cries ringing down the stone corridors and Count Lecter and Lady Murasaki burst into Hannibal's room. He has ripped the pillow with his teeth and feathers are flying, Hannibal growls and screams, thrashing, fighting, and gritting his teeth. (P.84)*

The quotation above also indicates that Hannibal Lecter always perceives trouble sleep. The word *Mischa* reminds Hannibal of his sister's name in his sleep. It is

because Hannibal could not help his sister when the soldiers ate his sister's flesh. The sentence *He has ripped the pillow by with his teeth and feathers are flying, Hannibal growls and screams, thrashing, fighting, and gritting his teeth* shows that Hannibal is frustrated and depressed of the tragic event. He is caught in the shadow of the tragic memories that always bother him. The murder of his sister is the top of Hannibal's traumatic experience. He is bothered by the killing of his sister and he feels guilty because he cannot help his sister from the soldiers that eat her flesh.

#### 4.1.3 Irritability of anger

Schiraldi (2009:9) said that irritability or outbursts of anger might be mixed with shame, frustration, betrayal, or other uncomfortable emotions that lead to moodiness and explosions of pent-up anger. One might then feel embarrassed or guilty. Everyone has thoughts or beliefs that help them understand and understand their surroundings. Hannibal Lecter the main character is easy to get angry after the traumatic events in his childhood. He always plays with animal rather than his friends and it makes him get bullied from people around him. It can be found through the quotation below:

*"It might be best if he did not play with other boys until he's settled. Someone always gets hurt."*

*"He's not a bully?"*

*“It’s the bullies who get injured. Hannibal does not observe the pecking order. They are always bigger and he hurts them very quickly and sometimes severely. Hannibal can be dangerous to persons larger than himself. P.74)*

Based on quotation above, flashback and nightmares influence Hannibal to control his emotions, so that he is easy to get angry. The traumatic event has changed Hannibal’s life. The sentence *someone always gets hurt* indicates that he cannot control his emotions when he gets the bullies from his friends. The sentence *Hannibal can be dangerous to persons larger than him* also shows that no matter how people around him look like, if they bother him, Hannibal will hurt them. It is because of the uncomfortable emotions lead to his moodiness. Therefore, Hannibal Lecter’s anger is provoked by his flashback about his traumatic event and it is also because of difficulty in sleeping. He cannot control his emotions since the traumatic events.

#### **4.1.4 Trouble in Remembering**

Someone with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder will try to avoid all reminders of the trauma, refuse to talk about it, block the thoughts, images and feeling about the event that cause the person cannot remember the events. Schiraldi (2009:9) said that difficulty in remembering can occur when one is still battling for control of intrusive

memories. Hannibal only recalls the traumatic events in his past, but he is difficult to remember the event because of flashback that always bothers his mind. It can be seen through the quotation below:

*He could remember nothing after that; he could only recall much later, he was riding on a tank, found by the soldiers with the chain locked around his neck. He wanted to remember. He had to remember. (P.208)*

The quotation above indicates that Hannibal is difficult to remember. The sentence *He wanted to remember. He had to remember* also proves that Hannibal has tried to remember all the things that happen in his past, but he could not do it. He cannot remind all the traumatic events in his past.

#### **4.1.5 Feeling Detachment from Others**

One will avoid pleasant activities, including the pleasurable before the trauma and feels detached or estranged from others because of the traumatic events. Schiraldi (2009:9) said that people with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder commonly feel detached from others and assume that they are now different and that one could possibly relate to their experiences. After the war passes, Hannibal has to live in his house that has been used as orphanage. Hannibal is now different and he cannot tell others about what happened in his past. Therefore, he avoids

gatherings and finding of pleasure in people around him. It can be found through the quotation below:

*Over his orphanage uniform  
Hannibal now wore the  
penalty shirt with the  
painted words NO GAMES.  
Forbidden to play in the  
orphans' soccer game on  
the field outside the walls,  
he did not feel deprived.  
(P.57)*

The quotation above shows that Hannibal is detached from his friends. The sentence *over his orphanage uniform Hannibal now wore the penalty shirt with the painted words NO GAMES* indicates that Hannibal cannot feel comfortable anymore after he gets the trauma and he does not feel guilty when he gets the punishment from the headmaster in orphanage. The sentence *forbidden to play in the orphans' soccer game on the field outside the walls, he did not feel deprived* proves that Hannibal is not allowed to play with his friends because he always treats them unwell when he gets the bullies. Hannibal never responds to people who talk to him and he also does not care about people around him. Therefore, it makes him feel detachment from people around him.

#### **4.2 Causes of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Perceived By Hannibal**

There are some causes of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder perceived

by Hannibal Lecter. It is witnessing war situation including witnessing the death of his parent and witnessing the murder of Mischa.

##### **4.2.1 Witnessing War Situation**

Schiraldi (2009:39) said that individuals in a war zone can be exposed to a range of traumatic events. Individual may have been attacked, seen others die, lost friends and comrades, been physically or sexually assaulted, been exposed to mass death or suffering, or otherwise been the victim or observer of frightening events during the war. Hannibal is still eight-year-old to experience the war situation. He and his younger sister have perceived the violence and torture by the soldiers who want to take Lecter family's wealth and lock Hannibal and his younger sister in the bunkhouse. However, witnessing the death of his parent and witnessing the murder of his sister become the top causes for Hannibal Lecter suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

##### **4.2.2 Witnessing the Death of Parent**

The feeling of grief due to loss and the direct seeing of a loved one's death in a war situation can affect a person's life either directly or indirectly. The traumatic event will leave a deep wound for someone who experience it. Witnessing the death of parent is experienced by Hannibal. Hannibal and his sister have to see the death of their parent with blood because of the bombing. It can be seen through the quotation below:



*Hannibal, on the floor of the lodge, Mischa partly under him, saw his mother lying in the yard, bloody and her dress on fire.*

*“Stay here!” to Mischa and he ran to his mother, ammunition in the airplane cooking off now, slow and then faster, casings flying backward striking the snow, flames licking around the remaining bomb beneath the wing. (P.40)*

The quotation above indicates that Hannibal has to witness the death of his mother. The sentence *Hannibal saw his mother lying in the yard, bloody and her dress on fireproof* that he looks his mother death directly. Hannibal Lecter has lost.

#### **4.2.3 Witnessing the Murder of Mischa**

After the death of his parents, Hannibal only lives with Mischa. He does not know what to do about the condition. He and Mischa still stay in the lodge. Therefore, unexpectedly, the soldiers came to occupy the lodge. The gripping winter makes the soldiers difficult to find food, but it turns out their eyes on Hannibal and Mischa and without mercy, they finally chooses Mischa as a sacrifice to overcome their hunger. Hannibal is just silent and looks helplessly doing nothing. It can be seen through the quotation below:

*Grutas’s face was smeared with blood and feathers. He turned his bloody face up to the children and he said, “We have to eat or die”.*

*That was the last conscious memory Hannibal Lecter had of the lodge. (P.51)*

Based on quotation above, Hannibal has witnessed his sister death. The sentence *he turned his bloody face up to the children and he said, “We have to eat or die”* indicates that because of no food the soldiers want to eat Hannibal and Mischa his sister. However, the soldiers choose Mischa for their food supply. The sentence *that was the last conscious memory Hannibal Lecter had of the lodge* Hannibal records all the tragic of his sister death to his memory and he is only silent and looks helplessly doing nothing. The memory of the sadistic death of Mischa is still much imprinted. The flashes of the killers while killing and eating Mischa's flesh continue to loom.

#### **V. Conclusion**

In this research, the data are collected from Thomas Harris’ novel *Hannibal Rising*, which Hannibal Lecter as the main character. The data analyzed based on psychological approach, the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder theory. Based on the data in novel, Hannibal Lecter is far from normal behavior and has psychological problem.

The symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder perceived by Hannibal Lecter are flashback, trouble in sleeping, irritability of anger, trouble in

remembering, and feeling detached from others. The causes of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder perceived by Hannibal Lecter are that the war situation such as witnessing the death of parent his parent and witnessing the murder of sister Mischa makes. It is because of. Hannibal is still eight-year-old to experience the war situation. He and his younger sister have perceived the violence and torture by the soldiers. He also has to see the death of his parent and his sister that make him getting a deep wound until he becomes adult so that he can be categorized as a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

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