

## **THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF SLAVERY IN TONI MORRISON'S *BELOVED***

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**Abstract:** This research aims to reveal the psychological effects of slavery in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, especially depression and feeling of insecure. This research is qualitative research because the data that support this research are collected from books, journals, articles, and internet. Data collection is taken in two forms namely the primary source that is the novel itself and secondary sources are books, articles, the internet and journals. To analyse the data of this research, the writer uses psychological approach, which studies the behaviour of human life. Based on the results of research, it is shown that there are some psychological effects of slavery concerning living life full of depression and insecure, that are feeling of sadness, helplessness, worthlessness, fear, hopelessness and uncertainty.

**Keywords:** *Morrison, Slavery, Psychological Effects*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Slavery is a system in which property rights principles are applied to people, allowing individuals to own, buy and sell others as legal form of property. In a broader sense, slavery can encompass any situation in which someone is coerced into working against their own volition. Slavery has been prevalent in numerous cultures throughout history, and individuals may become slaves through various means such as being born into slavery, being captured, or being purchased. (Marcovltz, 2015)

*Beloved* by Toni Morrison is a novel about a story of slavery (a very sad time in history when some people were treated unfairly because of their skin color). It tells a story of a mother and her child, and how they had to go through scary and painful

things because of the way they looked. The main character in *Beloved*, did something very sad to protect her child from being treated badly like she was (Morrison, 1997).

In Stangor & Walinga, (2014:2) said that Psychology is the study of how our mind works and why we behave the way we do. It comes from Greek words that mean "life" and "explanation." Sigmund Freud believed that some problems we have are caused by memories that we have hidden and don't even realize we have. Psychodynamic psychology is a way of understanding why we do things by looking at our hidden thoughts and feelings.

There is some psychological effects on the main character that looks, like: Depression and Insecure. Paul D feels so disconnected from himself that he sometimes can't tell if the screaming he hears is coming from him or someone else. Slaves were treated like they weren't fully human and were bought and sold like objects. Because of this, Paul D feels unsure about whether he can be a true man and often questions his worth as a person. Sethe was treated very badly by some mean people who thought she was less important than them. One time, she saw a schoolteacher talking to his students about how she was "like an animal". Because of this, she started to feel really bad about herself. The only thing that made her feel good was her children. But even her children had a hard time knowing who they really were. One of them, *Beloved*, started to feel like she was falling apart. Slavery made it really hard for Baby Suggs to see herself as a whole person. It made her family fall apart, and she couldn't be a real wife, sister, daughter, or loving mother. Because they couldn't feel good about themselves, both Baby Suggs and Paul D felt really sad and tired (Morrison, 1997).

In general, everyone expects good things such as happiness, freedom both for him/herself, his/her family and in society both physical and psychological. However, it is the same in the life of slave in the novel *Beloved* want freedom, happiness in their lives.

But in fact we can see in this novel the lives of the slaves in Cincinnati, Ohio, on Mr. Sweet home's estate. Garner in Kentucky especially Sethe, Baby Sugg, Hell, Paul D and other slave friends, their lives are always haunted by past experiences that are very sad even in freedom.

Therefore, the psychological effects of slavery need to be discussed so that we can respect each other even though we have different religions, races, and ethnicities.

The writer chose this topic because the writer is interested in this novel and thinks that it is important to study it deeper because it contains many moral messages, motivation and life lessons. Furthermore, it helps people in dealing with this life especially to train our critical attitude in analysing every problem, to be sensitive to the surrounding environment also to extend our knowledge. Moreover, it prevents us from taking actions that are fatal and detrimental, so that we are able to find solutions to get out of trapped lives in a better life. This novel portrays that slavery has a negative impact on the life of slavery itself, both psychologically or mentally and physically.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### ***Research Design***

The writer chose this research to examine the novel *Beloved* by Toni Morrison by using a qualitative approach. (Berg and Howard, 2012) qualitative research is a way of studying things by understanding their meanings and concepts. It uses tools like metaphors and symbols to describe and explain things. This type of research helps us remember things and solve problems. We gather information by asking people open-ended questions, having detailed interviews, talking notes, and observing them in their everyday lives.

As stated by Bogdan & Biklen "Qualitative research is when people collect information by talking to others or looking at pictures instead of using quotes from what they saw or heard to help explain they found." (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The definition above tells us that conducting qualitative research entails obtaining data from novel quotations or other sources in order to support or clarify the findings of the research.

### ***Data Collection***

Data collection is taken in two forms: primary source and secondary source. Primary Source means getting information directly from the novel itself, *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. Secondary source means using other sources that help the writer to

complete the research through articles, journals, dictionaries, and the internet related to this research and information to support the writer's research study. The writer first read the novel and understands the story to find out the main ideas of the story.

### ***Data Analysis***

In analyzing the data, the writer used psychological approach to present the psychological effects of slavery. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) in Stangor & Walinga, (2014:48) said that the psychodynamic perspective in psychology proposes that there are psychological forces underlying human behaviour, feelings, and emotions. Freud's theory of psychoanalysis assumes that much of mental life is unconscious, and that past experiences, especially in early childhood, shape how a person feels and behaves throughout life. (Stangor & Walinga, 2014).

The writer used psychological approach to reveal the psychological effects of slavery in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, especially Depression and feeling of insecure. Concerning depression aspect, the writer analysed the symptoms of depression included persistent feeling of sadness, helplessness and worthlessness. While about insecure, it included persistent feeling of fear, hopelessness and uncertainty.

### ***Findings and Discussion***

In this chapter, the writer would like to present the analysis of the psychological effects of slavery revealed in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, especially depression and feeling of insecure. In order to answer the research question in the previous chapter, the writer uses the theory presented in chapter three.

### **The Psychological Effects**

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), who argued that many psychological disorders were caused by memories that we have repressed and thus remain outside our consciousness.

In the Novel *Beloved* by Toni Morrison the writer found out the some major characters Sethe, Paul D, Beloved, Baby Suggs and Denver. They have some psychological effects that looks like depression and feeling of insecure.

### **Living life full of Depression**

Life as a slaves they found so many things make their depression that is feeling of sadness, helplessness, and worthlessness

While in Wittig & Belkin (1990:323-324) explains that among the symptoms experienced by depressives is feeling of helplessness. Depressives are often unable to sleep or they sleep too much, and they may suffer loss of appetite. They feel like is not worth living, and they sometimes have suicidal impulses, which it turn may arouse guilt.

### **Feeling of Sadness**

The writer found the feeling of sadness in the novel "*Beloved* by Toni Morrison". This life full of depression found in the novel was:

#### **Sethe**

"You have to believe that he's still alive"

"No, I believe he's dead. But not being certain keeps the idea of him being alive in our minds." (Morrison, 2004:5)

From quotation above the writer found out the feeling of sadness. The Sethe feeling disappointed to her husband didn't hope anything about him. Because she never see him again or her husband never come to her again. "*It's not being sure that keeps him alive.*" This statement show us, Sethe really feel sad to her husband.

"After I left you, some boys came and took my milk.

They wanted it for themselves, so they held me down and took it away from me. I told Mrs. Garner about what happened, but she couldn't speak because she was very upset. Her eyes filled with tears. The boys found out that I told on them, and the teacher punished me by hurting my back. When my back healed,

a scar formed that looks like a tree. That tree is still there today." "Did they use the skin from a cow to make something for you?"

"They also took my milk."

"Did they hurt you even though you were carrying a baby inside you?"

"They also took my milk."!(Morrison,2004:14)

From quotation above, the writer found out there was feeling of sadness, that how is the schoolteacher and boys in Cincinnati make a bad things to sethe. And it's make her psychological hampered her feel bad about it.

### **Paul D**

"After the war ended, both white and black people didn't seem to realize it. Some black people were wandering around the back roads and paths, looking for their relatives or friends who had promised to help them if they ever came near Chicago. Some were running away from their families because they couldn't take care of them, while others were running towards their families. Some were also running away from bad situations and taking over land. There were boys even younger than Buglar and Howard, as well as families with women and children. And in other places, there were men who were alone and seemed haunted". (Morrison, 2004:47)

From quotation above, Paul D feel sadness. The live of slaves very sad, some of them didn't have full family. Such as a parents and children, husband and wife, ect. So the bad experience, it make they restricted to knowing another people around them.

### **Denver**

Denver, who was feeling warm and nervous, was now feeling very lonely. She lost her brothers and her grandmother, which made her feel really sad because there was no one to play games with or hang out with on her porch. But the worst part was that her mother wasn't paying attention to her anymore, and

she really wanted the baby ghost to do something mean to show that she cared. ( Morrison, 2004: 10).

From quotation above, the writer found out there was feeling of sadness, Denver feel loneliness because all of them near to her did go away. And her mother didn't care what she do.

### **Beloved**

Beloved closed her eyes and told Denver that her name is Beloved when it's dark. Denver asked what it was like where Beloved was before. Beloved said it was dark and she felt small, just like she was in their current place. Denver asked if she was cold, but Beloved said she was actually hot and there was no air to breathe and not much space to move in. (Morrison, 2004: 67)

From quotation above, Beloved feel sadness. Beloved is a reincarnation of Sethe's old daughter. She introduce her self to Denver and tell how she life. Her life in the dark, hot and can't breathe.

"Why did you come back?"

Beloved smiled and said that

she wanted to see Sethe's face. ( Morrison, 2004:-67)

From quotation above. Beloved tell her reason to came back just for see again her Ma'am, Sethe. She miss her family and want to stay with them.

### **Baby Suggs**

Baby Suggs had a hurt in her hip that bothered her every day, but she didn't tell anyone. Only Halle, who had been paying attention to her for four years, noticed that she had to use her hands to move her leg when getting in and out of bed. Halle talked to Mr. Garner about helping Baby Suggs leave so she could rest. (Morrison, 2004:129)

From quotation above, Baby Suggs feel sadness. As a slaves her body actually sick, but she didn't talk to anyone there. She just keep it, but Halle knowing it so he buy for her free.

## **Feeling of Helplessness**

### **Sethe**

"A woman was thinking that a baby's mom might die near the Ohio River where there were wild onions. She didn't want to die and leave the baby alone, but the idea of the baby being alive while she was dead made her sad. She made a noise and a person stopped nearby. The person asked who was there and she knew it was a white boy who might harm her. She was trying to get to her children and had gone through a lot of hard things already. She didn't want to die in a difficult way. (Morrison, 2004:28)

Based on that quotation above, Sethe have life so hard make her feel helplessness to live, worried about her life, her children. Her family was broked, her husband and children didn't live anymore with her.

### **Paul D**

He wanted the girl to leave, but Sethe had allowed her to stay and he couldn't make her leave because it wasn't his house. It was easier to scare away a ghost than to force a helpless girl of color to leave in a dangerous area where racist people were. The dragon, which needed black people to survive, freely crossed the Ohio River whenever it wanted. (Morrison, 2004:60).

From quotation above, Paul D feel helplessness to Beloved stay with them. Because he thought Beloved will harry them when she stay there.

Well, um, there's something happening to me because of a girl named Sethe. It's not a weakness that I can fight against, like a regular weakness. She has changed me and I can't undo it. (Morrison, 2004:116).



From quotation above, Paul D feel helplessness to his life what did happen to his life especially about his relationship with Sethe.

### **Halle**

The day I came here, you told me someone took your milk. I didn't know what made him upset. That was the reason, I suppose. All I knew was that something made him very sad. Even though he spent many years here on weekends and at night, it didn't affect him. But whatever he saw happen in that barn that day made him very upset.

"Even if he were alive and saw it, he wouldn't step in my door. It's a shame."

"It broke him, Sethe." Paul D looked up at her and sighed. "You may know it all. The last time I saw him, he was sitting by his friend. He had no butter on his face." ( Morrison, 2004:62).

From quotation above, Helle felt broke when he saw the white men raped to his wife. He can't did anything to help his wife at the time he felt helplessness and until now Sethe even Baby Suggs and all his children didn't ever see him again.

### **Denver**

No matter what superpower Beloved had or how she used it, she belonged to someone. Denver was worried that Beloved wanted to hurt Sethe, but she couldn't stop it because she really wanted to love Beloved. (Morrison, 2004:96).

From quotation above, Denver felt helplessness to choosing her mother or Beloved. She know Beloved have bad plan to her mother but she didn't left Beloved.

## **Feeling of Worthlessness**

### **Baby Suggs**

Baby Suggs knew a lot of people she cared about, but many of them either left or were killed. The remaining people were treated like objects and were moved around or taken by others. Because of this, Baby had six different fathers for

her eight children. What really upset her was that people didn't seem to care about her children and treated them like they were just things in a game of checkers. (Morrison, 2004:20).

From quotation above the write found that worthlessness was " Baby Suggs feel worthlessness of her life did happen to her like about no one her husband life with her "eight children had six fathers".

### **Sethe**

The secret agent said someone would come on Sunday, but they didn't. They also took my milk and saw something, but they didn't come back down. On Monday, the person named Halle didn't come either. I was worried that he was dead, but then I realized I would have heard about it if he was. And now that you've come, I can tell that you didn't know he was dead either. So I think he must have found a better way to live. (Morrison, 2004:62).

From quotation above, the write found that worthlessness was the white men rapid to Sethe it was always haunted to Sethe life. Felt worthlessness and always make a fuss to her husband, why her husband didn't help her.

### **Living life full of Insecure**

Life as a slaves they found so many things make their insecure that is feeling of fear, hopelessness, and uncertainty. In the book "Insecure Societies," it was mentioned that when people are scared of violence, it makes them feel even more insecure. And when people feel insecure, it can make them feel frustrated and sometimes even make them act out in violent ways (Wicaksana, 2016).

### **Feeling of Fear**

Fear is when something happens that makes you feel scared or worried. When you're scared, you might want to run away, fight back, or feel really panicked. (Wittig & Belkin, 1990:168)

### **Baby Suggs**

Baby Suggs was sick in bed and didn't lift her head. She could hear her grandson leaving, but that wasn't why she stayed still. She was surprised that it took him so long to realize that not every house was like the one they lived in. She was stuck between the bad things in life and the mean things in death, and she wasn't interested in either. She was also scared of two boys sneaking away. Her past was just as bad as her present, and she knew that death wouldn't make her forget. So, with the little energy she had left, she thought about colors. (Morrison, 2004:1).

From quotation above, the writer found out there was feeling of fear, Baby Suggs fear all about her life and her grandson. She didn't interest to live.

### **Sethe**

The picture is still there, and if you go to the place where it was taken, it will happen again and be there for you. But you can never go there, because even though it's finished, it will always be waiting for you. That's why I had to take all my children away, no matter what. (Morrison, 2004:33)

From quotation above, Sethe fear the things ever happened to her life will happen to in her children. So she said to Denver that Denver can't go there. Because the picture is still there" the picture it's means all the bad things did happened to her and still remember in her head and it always harried

### **Denver**

Denver is inviting Beloved to come into her room because she wants to take care of her and make sure she is safe. Denver was really worried about how to convince Beloved to stay in her room because she was scared about what might happen if Beloved was left alone. She couldn't sleep well because she was constantly worried about what might happen to Beloved. (Morrison, 2004:60).

From quotation above, Denver fear lose Beloved as her friend so Denver willing to share her room to Beloved as her protection to Beloved from her sick will come back again.

## **Feeling of Hopelessness**

### **Baby Suggs**

Baby Suggs died shortly after her brother left and had no interest in their vacation or hers. Shortly after, Sethe and Denver decide to end the persecution by summoning the ghost that judged them. Perhaps a conversation, an exchange of ideas, etc. would be helpful, they thought. So they held hands and said, come. You can come straight in (Morrison, 2004:2).

From quotation above, the writer found out there was feeling of fear, Baby Suggs don't have hope or hopelessness. So it make she sick until dead shortly

There were three people asking for help and only one causing trouble. You should be grateful because I had eight people causing trouble. Four were taken away, four ran away, and they probably caused trouble for someone else. "Baby Suggs rubbed her eyebrows" (Morrison, 2004:3)

From quotation above, the writer found out there was feeling of fear, because she loss her eight children so she said to Sethe must "be thankful" because you still have children with you

## **Feeling of Uncertainty**

### **Denver**

"What happened to you? I never knew you were acting so distant."

"Leave her alone," said Paul D. "I'm a stranger to her."

"That's it. She has no reason to be capricious with a stranger. Oh baby what is it? Something happened?"

But Denver was shaking and crying so much that she couldn't talk. The tears she hadn't cried for nine years were wetting her breasts, which looked too grown-up for her age. (Morrison, 2004:12)

From quotation above, the writer found out there was feeling of uncertainty, Denver become uncertainty sometimes she cry and feel alone. Because her brothers and her sister ghost in the house.

### **Sethe**

Sethe didn't think about the white dress much until Paul D came. Then she remembered what Denver said about it meaning plans. She wondered if it would be okay to feel and trust in something. She couldn't think clearly while lying next to Paul D, so she got out of bed. (Morrison, 2004:34)

From quotation above, Sethe feeling uncertainty to decide what to do when near to Paul D and think Denver's word. When Sethe was a little girl, she wasn't very impressed with things. But as she grew up and became a woman, she changed.

### **Beloved**

Beloved is feeling very sad and upset. She bends over and rocks back and forth while making small noises. Denver sees that Beloved's eyes are looking at something that isn't there. Beloved says that she sees herself in the darkness. (Morrison, 2004:114)

From quotation above, Beloved feel uncertainty to tell where she from, Beloved always saying, she is from the dark and small place make she can't breath. And this it make Denver confused and can't understand where and what she want.

### **Paul D**

This person is always moving around, walking, running, and hiding. Sometimes they steal things and then move on. They usually can't stay in one place for

very long, except for one time when they stayed with a lady who made clothes for a living. It was a really tough place for Black people to live, but the lady was special and had nice things like new shoes. This made the person feel uncomfortable. (Morrison, 2004:60)

From quotation above, Paul D feel uncertainty to Beloved's life it was different with another Negroes as a homeless, like what she got, shoes, shining. Because did Paul D know all Negroes their live not like that.

## **CONCLUSION**

After doing the analysis and based on the statement of the problem, it can be concluded that the psychological effects of slavery can be seen in some main characters. Namely: Sethe, Paul D, Beloved, Denver and Baby Suggs in the novel Beloved by Toni Morrison. As a slave, Sethe was treated badly by the schoolteacher and his nephew as the master. Sethe is equated with the character of an animal, therefore Sethe feels sad, helplessness, worthlessness, fear and uncertainty. Likewise with Paul D, Beloved, Denver and Baby Suggs, they were treated so badly that it made them depressed and feel insecure because of slavery.

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