

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Children are young human beings. As human beings, children evidently have a certain moral status. There are things that should not be done by them for the simple reasons that they are human. At the same time children are different from adult human beings. It seems reasonable to think that there are things that children may not do that adults are permitted to do. In the majority of jurisdictions, for instance: children are not allowed to vote, to marry, to buy alcohol, or to engage in paid employment.

Most jurisdictions accord children legal rights. Most countries though not all in the United States of America have ratified the *United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child* on December 16th, 1991. That means the United State government has to make sure that every child has all the rights outlined in the treaty except in those areas where the government has entered a specific reservation. The United Conventions defines a child as any human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. When the treaty comes into force, every child in the United State has over 40 specific rights. These include: 1. The right to life, survival and development, 2. The right to have their views respected and to have their best interests considered at all times, 3. The right to a name and nationality, freedom of expression, and access to

information concerning them, 4. The right to live in family environment or alternative care and to have contact with both parents wherever possible, 5. Physical or mental Health and welfare rights, 6. The right to education, culture, and arts, 7. Special protection for refugee children, children in the juvenile justice system, children deprived of their liberty, and children suffering economics or other forms of exploitation, 8. The right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, 9. The right of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly, 10. The child has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks, 11. The right of every child to benefit from social security, including social insurance, and shall take the necessary measures to achieve the full realization of this right in accordance with their national law (Stanford P, 2002: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rights-children>).

Dave Pelzer, an author of the trilogy *A Child Called It*, gives positive responses to things above. It is one of the best seller international memoirs. *A Child Called It* firstly was published on September 1st, 1995. It contains seven chapters, which are explained beautifully in 100 pages. It is a real life story about a boy who was brutally beaten and starved by his mother. Because it is a part of the trilogy, it is very difficult to read at the first time. The writer needs to read the second and the last memoir of the trilogy to get the whole understanding about the story.

Dave Pelzer is an American writer, autobiographer, and motivator speaker that was born on December 29th, 1960. He is a son of Stephen Joseph

Pelzer and Catherine Roerva Christen Pelzer. He is the second of five boys. Dave Pelzer married an editor – Marsha Donohoe in 1999; they have a son - Stephen Joseph Pelzer. Dave Pelzer has written six books, *A Child Called "It"* (1995), *The Lost Boy* (1997), *A Man Called Dave* (1999), *Help Yourself* (2001), *The Privilege of youth* (2004), and *Moving Forward* (2009). His first three books are part of trilogy of his life. The fourth one is a self – help book.

The story begins from the real story. At first, David and his family live in an average middle class home in Daly City California. David has four brothers and he is the oldest of five boys. His father- Stephen Joseph is a firefighter. David Pelzer lives a healthy and normal life with his parents and brothers. His mother- Catherine Roerve is a devoted mother and housewife. Every summer she plans an exiting vacation for her family. His mother, however, unexpectedly transforms into a monster, venting her anger on her helpless children. David is submerged in freezing cold water by his mother, forced to eat his own vomit, slept in the basement under the stairs and forced to sit on a burning stove. His mother also stabs him in the stomach, starves him for 10 days and makes him drink ammonia.

These are just a few of the torturous games that his mother used to play. She treats him not like her son, but like an "it". David suffers from both mental and physical abuse. His father is David's hero during the day's mother torturous because while he is home, David is safe. His father promises that he will try to help his son. In order to survive from his mother's sick games,

David uses willpower. Through all of her tortuous games, David's inner strength begins to emerge.

Secondly, when David was nine years old he suffers from his mother's treats. He is tormented in that house as a child. It becomes a prison to David. His father knows that David suffers from both mental and physical abuse but his father does nothing. One day his parents quarrel because his father tries to keep David. His mother expels David from their house. He has the opportunity to runaway and does so. David is free from his mother's torturous. He quickly returns and his life of torture continues. Then, David meets Ms Gold – she works in Child Protective Service. She always helps David to get a freedom. David lives in one of Parents Institution with Canteze family. Here, David meets children which have same background of life. They suffer from both mental and physical abuse from their parents. There is one of his new family who does not like David so he mixed up with many problems. He has a hard struggle to adapt to new environment.

Then he goes to go new school. In the new school, David's friends do not respect him but a few of them treat coarsely. At school, he finds a new gang who invites him to burn down a school. One Day, David has a big problem that he becomes a defendant for being part of a plan to burn a school. David delivers in the Hillcrest, the San Mateo Country Juvenile Hall (a place as a prison). When David learns that his mother is working to have him committed to a mental hospital, he becomes a model student there. During six months, David must move three times for one parent institution to another.

Certainly, he finds a new family, new environment, and new friends. David adapts again and again. He has no choice. Through all of his sufferings and during in the parents institutions, he gets unforgettable experiences.

Thirdly, David still remembers all about of the last day of his abuse by his mother. He describes how his mother treats him. Further, David married for several times, he can not keep his marriage which eventually ends in divorce. His marriage ends in divorce because his wife needs much money and more attention from David. Dave's job makes him use the time outside. He also helps children in youth service and juvenile hall. It makes his wife become angry. Beside that, his wife also uses much money without clearly reason. He feels to sustain on his first marriage. On the other side, his father struggles for David until he dies by cancer.

Then, he enters Army Parachute School and joins air force. Dave is the recipient of the *J.C Penney Golden Rule Award* in 1990, making him the California Volunteers of the Year and he also got *appreciation as one of Ten Outstanding Young Persons of the World in Kobe, Japan*. In 1994, Dave gathers together of one famous alumnus group which has member like as *John F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon, Anne Brancroft, Orson Welles, Elvis Presley, Walt Disney, and Nelson Rockefeller*. He also carries the coveted Centennial flame for the 1996 Olympics. In the end of his new book, he includes a poem. He writes to his mother after she dies. "Mom – I love you and more than that, I forgive you.....Now like you, please, please, let the monster under the bed be put to rest."

A Child Called It memoir has grown many comments from the people that have read it. It is included positive and negative responses about the memoir. The first is a positive response to the memoir. Firstly, it comes from Victoria. She says that this book is such a wonderful book but it makes she cry when reading this memoir. Secondly, this book inspires some people do not abuse to anyone anytime. Thirdly, most of the readers admire Dave for instead of letting his child abuse over run him and take over his life. He uses it to his advantage to make him a better person and an inspiration to all. He gives a lot of kids who are abused the courage to tell someone and to get the help they need (Craft, 2004: [http://adoption. about. com/u/ua /newsend reference/ davepelzerstory.01.htm](http://adoption.about.com/u/ua/newsendreference/davepelzerstory.01.htm)).

The second is a negative response to the memoir. Firstly, it comes from Kiwiria from Denmark. He says that this book is a horrible book. He knows that it is the first part in trilogy, but he doubts to read the other of two books. It is too depressing (Kiwiria, 2007: <http://ebookstore.sony.com/mbus/pood/ebook/dave-pelzer/a-child-called-it/Rr4000000000000000341896?&reviewpage=3>)

Secondly, the negative response comes from Erick A from New Jersey. He says that *A Child Called It* book is not very well written. However, he comes away with having read some very disturbing and disgusting passages that describe in detail a case of horrendous child abuse. It does not work very well as a memoir. There is no advice that will put this in any short of self-help category and if its intention is to provide hope to victim's of

abuse (Erick A, 2008: http://www.fosteringperspectives.org/fp_vol4no2/dave_pelzers_books.htm).

Thirdly, the negative response comes from Carrie Baltimore from Maldives. She says that there is only one problem of this book. She can not believe a book so poorly edited became a New York Time Bestseller. On one page, she finds three grammatical errors for example the man uses commas like they are going out of style and uses “everyday” instead of “every day” and these pages are small with large type (Baltimore, 2007: http://ebookstore.sony.com/mbus/pod/ebook/dave-pelzer/a-child-called-it/R4000000_00000000341896?&reviewpage3).

A Child Called It book has been on the New York best-seller list for over six years. It had been on The Time’s nonfiction paperback list for a combined total of 448 weeks, which is unprecedented in the paper’s record-keeping. These are large single purchases of hundreds or thousands of copies of a book from bookstores or online booksellers. *A Child Called It* book also had been nominated for the Pulitzer Price. Dave is the one of the only authors to have four books simultaneously on the New York Times Best Seller List and the first author to have three books simultaneously on this list in trade paperback. Dave has one international best seller and has four books simultaneously on the New York Times Best Seller List.

There are some considerations why *A Child Called It* is taken into account. This is an interesting memoir. It can be looked from the story of the memoir, struggle to survive, and the major character of the memoir. For the

first interesting one is the story of the memoir that shows an abused child who searches for the love of a family as a foster child in America. The figure of Dave Pelzer is a reflection of youth at risk that is forced to face a hard life without love of his biological family.

The second is struggling to survive through his mother's emotional and physical abuse. He refuses to let his mother win. He has no one to help him so he learns how to keep for himself. David's courage and his spirit saves him from all of the suffering that he endures at such a young age. The third is major character of the memoir. Dave is a major character of the memoir as a passion and sincere a child whose life changes when his mother unexpectedly transforms into a monster, venting her anger on her helpless child. At the time, he was five years old. He is a smart, passion, lover, introvert and kind child. It can be looked at during his struggle to survive, he is a clever student of his class, he has passion meanwhile his mother's emotional and physical abuse and he can not explain when one of his teacher talks his clothes and why his body injured.

One of the dominant issues that is most reflected in *A Child Called It* memoir is about child abuse. Child abuse is the physical, sexual or emotional maltreatment or neglect of children by parents, guardians, or others. While most child abuses happen in the child's home. Large numbers of cases of child abuse have been indentified within some organizations involving children, such as churches, schools, child care businesses, and in particular native residential schools, or in government agencies. It also

sometimes occurs almost anywhere. For example kidnapping, random murders, etc (Howard, 1987: [http://en.wikipedia.org/child abuse](http://en.wikipedia.org/child%20abuse)).

Based on the background that has been explained above, the researcher conducts a research entitled CHILD ABUSE IN DAVE PELZER'S *A CHILD CALLED IT: A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH*.

B. Literature Review

There are two researchers who have conducted the study of *A Child Called It* memoir. The first previous research was done by Rahayu (UMS, 2004) entitled *Traumatic Experience in Dave Pelzer A Child Called It: An Individual psychological Approach*. The second previous research was done by Purwanti (UMS, 2004) entitled *The Importance of Childhood in Dave Pelzer A Child Called It: A Sociological Approach*.

The different of this study and two previous studies are in the theme. The researcher uses the same perspectives. Here, the researcher presents the study of child abuse in Dave Pelzer using a sociological approach. The writer uses *A Child Called It* memoir by Dave Pelzer as the data source to be analyzed.

C. Problem Statement

The problem of the study is how the demands for child abuse are reflected in Dave Pelzer's *A Child called It*.

D. Limitation of the Study

The limitation of the study is the analysis of child abuse on the first memoir of trilogy by Dave Pelzer *A Child Called It*.

E. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study is as follow

1. To analyze the structural element of the *A Child Called It* memoir.
2. To analyze the *A Child Called It* memoir based on A Sociological Approach.

F. Benefits of the Study

Two kinds of benefits which can be gained from the study are as follows:

a. Theoretical Benefits

The study is expected to give additional information and contribute to the large body of knowledge, particularly to the further studies of Dave Pelzer *A Child Called It* by using A Sociological Approach.

b. Practical Benefits

The study is expected to give the writer understanding about child abuse case.

G. Research Method

The research method of this research paper is broken down into four aspects:

1. Type of the Research

Type of this study is qualitative research. It refers to refers based on qualitative data taken from the memoir *A Child Called It* by Dave Pelzer.

2. Type of the Data and Data Source

Type of data of this study is text consisting of words, phrases, and sentences. Meanwhile, the data sources in this study are categorized into primary data sources and secondary data sources.

a. Primary data source

The primary data are taken from the *A Child Called It*. It comprises such things as words, phrase, dialogue, and narration in the memoir.

b. Secondary data source

Secondary data sources are some reference and materials relating to primary data source such as biography of the author, website about the memoir.

3. Method of the Data Collection

In conducting the study, the writer uses the method of note taking in steps of collecting, are:

- a. Reading the memoir repeatedly to get deep understanding.
- b. Taking important notes in both primary and secondary data.
- c. Browsing the internet to get several information and articles related to the object of the study.
- d. Selecting the data by rejecting the irrelevant information which does not support the topic of the study.
- e. Drawing conclusion based on the analysis of the data.

4. Technique of the Data Analysis

The method employed in analyzing the data is descriptive qualitative analysis. It concerns with the relationship between the memoir and the sociology theory to show what child abuse are reflected in the story in the character in Dave Pelzer *A Child Called It*.

H. Research Paper Organization

This research paper is classified into six chapters. The first chapter deals with the background of the study, literature review, problem statement, limitation of the study, objective of the study, benefit of the study, research method, and research paper organization. The second chapter deals with the underlying theory of sociological approach an analyzing Dave Pelzer *A Child Called It*. It includes the notion of sociology of literature, the notion of the structural of the novel and the theoretical

application. The third chapter deals with social historical background of American Society in the twentieth century. The fourth chapter deals with the structural analysis of the novel and discussion, which includes the structural elements of *A Child Called It*. The fifth chapter deals with the sociological analysis of the memoir and the discussion. The last chapter deals with the conclusion and suggestion.