THE INFLUENCE OF CHILDHOOD ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF
INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITY REFLECTED IN DAVE PELZER’S A CHILD
CALLED “IT” (1995):
A BEHAVIORIST APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This research is aimed to show the influence of childhood toward the personality development of human which is analyzed by using behaviorist approach. The objectives of the research are to analyze the novel based on the structural elements and to analyze based on the behaviorist approach. This research belongs to qualitative research. The data source of the research are divided into two, primary data source and secondary data source. Primary data source is from A Child Called “It” book by Dave Pelzer and secondary data sources are from library book, website, and other sources that support this research. The method to analyze this data is descriptive analysis. After analyzing the book, the researcher finds a conclusion. Based on the behaviorist analysis, it can be concluded that in this book, the author illustrates that environment gives strong influence on people’s personality especially on childhood. Childhood is the time where the children learn about everything.

Keywords: Childhood, A Child Called “It”, Behaviorist Approach
A. Introduction

*A Child Called “It”* is a memoir book by Dave Pelzer published by Health Communication in 1995. It was the first book written by Dave. The book consists of 157 pages, it was trilogy book written by Dave. Beside *Child called “it”*, Dave also wrote *A Lost Boy*, and *A Man Named Dave*.

*A Child Called “It”* book tells about a child that struggles to live although his mother always tortures him. His mother treated him like a game. Many unpredictable games that his mother did until him nearly died. Cleaning the house, glass punishment, forced to drink ammonia, deprived of food, forced to eat feces of this brother, even stabbed with a knife.

In the school he was hated by his friends because he always stole his friend foods. But if he did not do it, he will die because he deprived of food by his mother. No one can help him because his mother always told other that David was a brat. His father and his brothers cannot argue what his mother said. He got that torture for 8 years until he was 12 years old. In 1973, finally he can get away from his mother with a help from his staff school, his teachers, a school nurse, and a police.

The researcher finds many other researchers that also analyze this book that can’t be written all of them. From muhammadiyah University of Surakarta the researcher finds Yuniati Kholifah (2011) from School of Teacher Training and Education Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta with the title *A Child Struggle to Survive in A Child Called It Novel By Dave Pelzer (1995): A Humanistic Psychology*. She focuses to analyze about the struggle of David to live although he always gets tortures from his mother. Endang Sumiati (2011) also from School of Teacher Training and Education Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta with the title *Child Abuse in Dave Pelzer’s A Child Called It: A Sociological Approach*. She focuses in child abuse that experienced by David.
From Gunadarma University the researcher finds Lucy Irwati Anwar (2008). Different with others, she does not analyze about David but she analyzed David’s mother Chaterine Roerva. The title is Alcoholism on Roerva in Pelzer’s A Child Called “It”. Ruruh Handayani (2005) also from Gunadarma University. The title is The Psychological Analysis on Dave in A Child Called “It”.

Fifth is from North Sumatera University, Hendrik Tambunan (2007) with the title The analysis of Child Abuse in Dave Pelzer’s A Child Called “It”: One Child’s Courage to Survive. Sahruman (2013) from Brawijaya University with the title Dave Pelzer’s Psychological Condition as a Child Abuse Victim in Dave Pelzer’s A Child Called “It”. In scholarly journal the researcher finds Jennifer Percival (2003) with the title Nursing Standard.

In this research, the researcher focuses on the influence of the major character’s childhood toward his personality development. This research is analyzed by using behaviorist approach according to J. B. Watson theory. The researcher is interested to analyze the book with the issue of this research is the influence of childhood of the major character toward his personality development. It is analyzed by using behaviorist approach. So, the researcher constructs the title THE INFLUENCE OF CHILDHOOD ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITY REFLECTED IN DAVE PELZER’S A CHILD CALLED “IT” (1995): A BEHAVIORIST APPROACH

B. Research Method

The researcher uses qualitative research in this research. The data sources are literary and library data. It purposes to analyze the Influence of Childhood on the Development of Individual Personality reflected in Dave Pelzer’s A Child Called “It” using behaviorist approach.

The object of the research is The Influence of Childhood on the Development of Individual Personality Reflected In Dave Pelzer’s A Child
Called “It” (1995): A Behaviorist Approach. The researcher uses two types of data source. They are primary data sources and secondary data sources. The primary data source is *A Child Called “It”* (1995) book by Dave Pelzer. The secondary data source is literary books or any information related to conflicting desires that support this research.

The researcher uses technique descriptive analysis to analyze this research, in which the researcher identifies the relationship between the story of the book and the childhood that influence personality development in behaviorist approach.

C. Research Finding and Discussion

After analyzes A Child Called “It”, the researcher finds some research findings about the influence of childhood toward the personality development especially for the major character of the book.

1. Behaviorist Theory
   a. Notion of behaviorism

   Behaviorism is “one of the concepts of child development. Some psychologists, especially learning theorists, feel very uncomfortable with theories of behavior that propose such abstract concepts as metal elements, (e.g., ego, conscience, and soul) or mental functions (e.g., assimilation repression, and cognition)” (Helm and Turner, 1981:72).

   The founder of behaviorism is J. B. Watson (1878-1958). Watson was dissatisfied with the field of psychology because it strove to be a science yet was filled with introspective theorizing rather than experimental data (Helm and Turner, 1981:73).

   In 1913 a young and brash psychologist named John B. Watson published an article titled “Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It.” This article signaled the beginning of a new movement in psychology called behaviorism. By 1924, with the publication of his
book Behaviorism, Watson had made significant progress in his effort to redefine the discipline. He argued that if psychology were to be a science, psychologists must stop examining mental states. Researchers who concerned themselves with consciousness, the mind, and thoughts were not engaging in legitimate scientific study (Burger, 1986:341)

b. The Basic Assumptions of Behaviorism

In his work, Skinner makes three basic assumptions, at least two of which are commonly made by psychology in general—indeed, by the entire scientific community (Hall and Lindzey, 1985:464):

1. **Behavior is lawful**

   The assumption that behavior is lawful is implicit in all psychological research it is often not made explicit, and many of its implications remain unrecognized. Skinner, like Freud, deserves recognition for his constant emphasis on the orderliness of behavior, and, perhaps more significantly, for communicating his belief in this lawfulness to a large segment of society (Hall and Lindzey, 1970:480).

2. **Behavior can be predicted.**

   Science not only describes, it predicts. It deals not only with the past but with the future. So one of the criteria for a useful theory is that it must enable us to make predictions about future behavior and to test those predictions (Hall and Lindzey, 1970:464).

3. **Behavior can be controlled.**

   Skinner in (Hall and Lindzey, 1970:465): “We can anticipate and to some extent determine people’s actions, is less enthusiastically received in some circle. Not only is Skinner curious about how behavior works; he is intensely interested to manipulating it, a possibility that he points out is “offensive” to
many people: “it is a opposed to a tradition of long standing which regards man as a free agent, whose behavior is the product, not of specifiable antecedent condition, but of spontaneous inner changes…. It challenges our aspiration…. We simply do not want such a science”.

Reinforcement is a way how to control behavior. By restricting the reinforcement that is given by the respondent, people control the behavior that will shaped after getting the reinforcement (Hall and Lindzey, 1985: 464). There are two type of reinforcement, Positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement.

a. Positive reinforcement

Positive reinforcement refer to an increase in the frequency of a behavior when that behavior is followed by presentation of pleasant stimuli or positive reinforcers (Ryckman, 2008: 517)

b. Negative reinforcement

Negative reinforcement reers to the removal of an aversive or unpleasant stimulus folowing response, thereby increasing the rate of occurence of that response.

2. Behaviorist Analysis

a. Sources of Influence

Many sources that can influence the people’s personality development. Environment around the people also can influences it. In this book the sources of influence is from family and school in which many people in family and school that gives good or bad influence for the major character. In family, his father, mother, and his brothers
gives influence for him. And at school the nurse, the teachers, and his friends also gives influence for him.

b. Values learned

Values learned are something that the main character gets from other character that can influence the personality development. The writer finds some values learned that David gets from other character that influence his childhood. Not only positive values learned that David gets but also negative values learned.

1) To raise the children needs discipline

He will do what his mother command to him quickly or his mother will torture him with many kinds of torments. The torments from his mother makes him become a discipline and capable child. He fears if he does not finish the homework on time, he will get other torments from his mother (A Child Called “It”, 1995: 21).

2) Torture your son if he is fault

Catherine will torture his son if he does a fault or he does not do what she wants on time. Catherine always tortures David if he does not do many kinds of work at home well.

3) Teach your son to lie

Catherine teaches David lie to his teacher at school so that the teachers at school do not know what she does to David. David is forced does it because if he does not want his mother to torture him (A Child Called “It”, 1995: 8).

4) Love your mother although she is a cruel mother

Although his mother always tortures him, David still loves his mother. When his mother is not with him, David wants to meet her because no matter how Catherine is still his own mother (A Child Called “It”, 1995: 25).
5) Love all of your sons

His mother loves Ronald and Stan more than David. Actually Catherine is a good mother for his sons but not good for David. Catherine is proud to Ronald and makes David feel jealous. David wants his mother to love him like she loves Ronald and Stan (*A Child Called “It”, 1995: 29*).

6) Hate people that cannot help you

David becomes a haterchild because he never feels love from him parent. He always gets bad treatment from his mother and his father cannot save him because he is afraid to his wife. And finally his father goes away from the house, his brothers do not care what happened to him so David hates everyone at home (*A Child Called “It”, 1995: 63*).

There are four values that David got from school:

7) Lie if it is for goodness

Lying is a bad nature, but if you do it to save your life, it is no problem. That is what David does to save his life, he lies to his teachers at school so that his teachers do not know what happened to him for eight years. He also lies and acts to his mother so that he does not get more tortures from his mother (*A Child Called “It”, 1995: 7*).

8) Stealing is the best way to get foods.

David starts to steal his friend foods because he never gets food from his mother. His mother always gives him the same food for his stock at school. And then David starts to steal his friend foods. Although he never wants to do it (*A Child Called “It”, 1995: 30*).

9) Stay away from a naughty friend
His friends keep away from David because they do not want David to steal they food and they think David is a naughty kid that must be avoided. When the officer brings David from school his friends yell him “David busted! David Busted!” (A Child Called “It”, 1995: 12).

10) Be honest if it can save you

David gets this value when the nurse knows what happened to him. Finally David tells what happened to him for eight years, and he does not know that what he tells to the nurse will save him. He hopes there are people that can save him from his suffering that he gets from his mother for eight years (A Child Called “It”, 1995: 9-10).

3. Type of Personality

Actually David is a cheerfulchildandloves his family. Beforetheperiod ofsuffering, Davidoften plays with his mother andbrothers, enjoys the beauty of a city parkwhiletheir fatheris working. Butafterhis motherchanged, David’sjoydisappears, onlythe sufferingthat he experienceseveryday. His mother gives many homeworkeveryday, ifhedoes notfinish iton time,his mother will torture him with many kinds of torment. Because of the treatment he gets every day, David’s personality changes become many type of personality. There are good and bad personality.

David’s good personality is Davidsonimble, agile, andhasa lot ofsense toavoidabuse fromher motherandtoget food. Many ways he does to escape from the torment of his mother. Although David is always tortured by her mother, he still loves with his mother. That is the kindness of David. David’s bad personality is he become a thief because of he does not get foods at home. He often lies to his teachers at school to
cover what his mother does to him. David also hates his mother, his brothers, his father, and his friends because they do not care what happened to him.

4. Discussion

According Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, psychology of literature means “the psychological study of the writer, as type and as individual, or the study of the creative process, or the study of the psychological types and laws present within works of literature, or finally the effects of literature upon its readers” (Wellek and Warren, 1962: 81).

In the *A Child Called “It”* the author wants to tell what the major character does in his suffer. Every problem in his life makes him become strong child. He never let everyone know what he experiences. Never give up although no one can save and help him. All experiences from his childhood can make him become a strong child and gets better life until he can writes this to gives motivation that life must go on and do not give to struggle in our life.

D. Conclusion

After analyzing *A Child Called “It”*, the researcher has two conclusions in this research. Based on the structural analysis, it can be concluded that the author delivers a moral message that “to get love and better life always need a struggle”. To delivers the moral message, the author retells a story reflected from the author real story, uses real setting of time and place, builds a plot that can related the elements of story.

Based on the behaviorist analysis, it can be concluded that in this book, the author illustrates that environment gives strong influence on the people’s personality especially on childhood. Childhood is the time where the children learn about everything. Everything that adult people does will be follow by the children. A childhood experience also influences in personality development of a human. In the story of the book, the major character gets
many bad treatments that forces him to do something that should not be done by a child, for example from the story is stealing. But the major character is a strong child that never gives up although he always gets bad treatment by his mother to stay alive. Because the every moment that happened in our life especially in our childhood can influences our personality development.
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