

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology applied in this study. It consists of the research question, purpose of the research, data source, research design, research procedure, and data presentation.

#### **3.1. Research Question**

The goal of this study is framed into this research question:

How are the concepts of Family Systems Theory realised in the issue of child abuse in *A Child Called 'It'*?

#### **3.2. Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this study is to find out the way child abuse in a family is portrayed from Family Systems Theory perspective in a novel entitled *A Child Called 'It'*.

#### **3.3. Data Source**

This study uses a novel entitled *A Child Called 'It'* by Dave Pelzer as the data source. *A Child Called 'It'* is the first sequel of Dave Pelzer's trilogy: *A Child Called 'It'*, *The Lost Boy*, and *A Man Named Dave*. This novel was firstly published on the 1st of September 1995 and this novel, as well as the other ones, is classified as autobiography since the novel is written based on Pelzer's childhood experiences. *A Child Called 'It'* gains popularity among readers since some readers find similar experiences that also happened in their childhood life. Considering the responses of the readers, this novel was listed on New York Bestseller List for several times (Jordan, 2002). The first novel is chosen because it contains the issue of child abuse in the family. Meanwhile, the second novel is more about David's self-development when he lives with his foster parents and the last novel is about David's life when he is adult.

The first novel of the trilogy introduces the members of the Pelzer family which consists of a father named Stephen Joseph Pelzer, a mother named

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Catherine Roerva Pelzer, and five sons: Ronald Pelzer, David Pelzer, Stan Pelzer, Russell Pelzer, and Kevin Pelzer. Besides the family members, this novel also reveals several minor characters who are involved in David's childhood life, for example his teachers, police officers, and his friends. This novel mainly tells the story of David Pelzer's childhood life from when he was four years old to twelve years old. David's life is portrayed as terrifying which is full of physical and emotional abuses from his mother.

The physical abuses that David gets are being burned, choked, kicked, slapped, and stabbed by his mother. The mother once tries to burn one of David's arms using the flame of gas stove but her attempt is failed by the arrival of David's brother from school. The mother has several favorite physical punishments for David. One of her favorites is forcing David to drink ammonia and Clorox which are bleaching products for clothes. Besides ammonia and Clorox, David is also forced to swallow liquid dish soap. Sometimes, the mother locks him in the bathroom without air ventilations and she also pours ammonia and Clorox to the bathroom floor in order to make him hard to breathe. The most frightening moment is when the mother stabs his stomach which David calls it as an accident.

Besides physical abuses, David also receives mental abuses from his mother. The mother does not allow David's brothers to play or talk to him. David is not allowed to eat a proper meal and his mother only allows him to eat a morsel of food which are left from his family's plates. David realizes that he is the reason why his father and mother always argue at home. His mother cannot stop torturing David but his father does not agree and tries to stop his wife's from torturing David everyday. The never-ending quarrels between his father and mother affect little David's self-worth. Another emotional abuse which is done by his mother is she stops calling David's name and each time she wants to refer to David, she calls him 'it'. Even though his mother calls him 'it', other members of the family still call David by his name.

Overall, the first novel covers the childhood life of David which is full of torture from his abusive mother. The setting of time of this novel is when David is

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four to twelve years old. This novel is open-ended which indicates the continuation of the story in the second novel entitled *The Lost Boy*. However, the second and the third novel will not be discussed in this study.

### **3.4. Research Design**

In order to produce a thorough analysis of how child abuse is portrayed from Family Systems Theory perspective in *A Child Called 'It'*, this study applies a descriptive qualitative method. This method is chosen since the findings will appear in the form of narratives rather than in the form of numbers. A descriptive qualitative method is appropriate to be applied in this study since this study explores people's experiences (Hancock, Ockleford & Windrige, 2009), in this case the childhood experience of the author of *A Child Called 'It'*.

The data in this study are analysed using qualitative data analysis. The most essential feature of qualitative method is text as the main focus (Kuckartz, 2013). According to Pope, Ziebland and Mays (2000), qualitative research provides a lot of textual data. By using qualitative method, the way researchers view the function of a text may be different depending on their own goals (Austin and Sutton, 2014). The first possibility is a text is viewed as a medium to learn how people behave in society, for example the way they behave, think, and feel at a certain time. They look for social experiences from a text that they observe. The second possibility is a text is viewed as a final outcome which has an abstract interpretation. It means that there is no absolutely wrong or false interpretation. In this study, the novel is viewed as the medium to learn about how people behave in society and also to seek social experiences from Family Systems Theory perspective.

### **3.5. Research Procedure**

This research applies two main procedures in order to answer the research question. The procedures are explained as follows:

#### **3.5.1. Data Collection**

The data in this study were collected through comprehensive reading based on Family Systems Theory perspective. In other words, the first step of

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collecting the data was doing a close reading activity. The process of close reading activity itself took six times. The first reading was for understanding the story as a whole. After the first reading, the second reading was carried out with the purpose of noting abusive actions committed by the mother. Then, the third reading was conducted in order to highlight the types of interlocking concepts which were presented in the novel. The next close reading activity was continued to highlight the literary elements. The fifth and the sixth reading were conducted as the final reading and to check whether there were missed data from the previous reading activities. After reading the novel comprehensively, the connection between Family Systems Theory and child abuse in a literary work was expected to be found. Through eight interlocking concepts of Family Systems Theory, literary elements, and the theory of child abuse, the portrayal of child abuse from Family Systems Theory perspective could be discovered.

The next step after doing a close reading activity was scanning the data included in the novel *A Child Called 'It'* from Family Systems Theory perspective along with its type of child abuse and literary elements. Since this study focuses on child abuse in a family, Family Systems Theory is considered applicable because this theory describes family members as separable units. The data collected were in the form of sentences which were quoted directly from the novel *A Child Called 'It'*. The collected data must contain the aspect of child abuse or the interlocking concept from Family Systems Theory that is related to child abuse. Then, the data were presented as textual evidences of child abuse.

### **3.5.2. Data Analysis**

After collecting the data from the novel *A Child Called 'It'*, the following steps were categorizing and selecting the data collected through Family Systems Theory perspective and literary elements. Each textual evidence was categorized based on its interlocking concept, type of child abuse, and literary element. In the process of categorizing the data, there was also the process of selecting the data. The process of selecting the data might increase or

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decrease the number of textual evidences. It depended on the appropriateness of the textual evidences to the concept of Family Systems Theory and child abuse.

When the data had been selected thoroughly, then the data were analysed by finding out which type of child abuse and interlocking concept that appeared in the novel combined with literary elements of the novel. The result gained from this process will be elaborated and interpreted. This process will lead to the answer of research question of this study.

### 3.6. Data Presentation

The format of data presentation is in the form of tables which contain the excerpts from the novel and descriptive explanation. The table covers the textual evidences of child abuse in the novel followed by the page number, type of child abuse, setting, type of interlocking concept, and analysis. Since *A Child Called 'It'* is also analysed by using Family Systems Theory, a family genogram is also needed. A detailed family tree or genogram can be drawn in order to get a clear vision of relationship between the main character's family members as a whole. The example of genogram along with its symbols and table can be seen in Figure 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3:

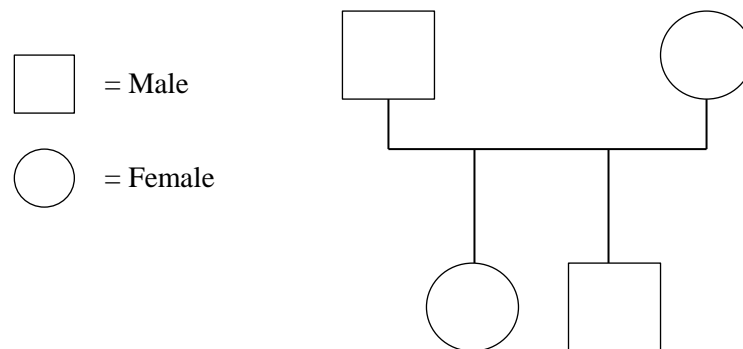


Figure 3.1. An example of genogram

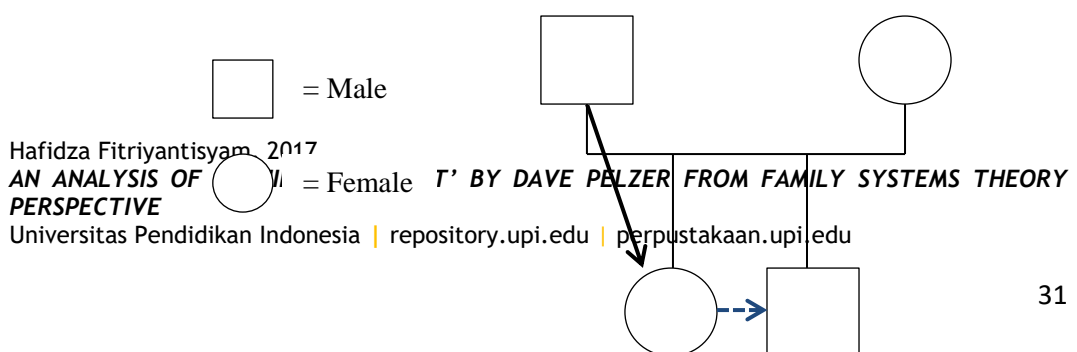


Figure 3.2. An example of genogram emotional relationship

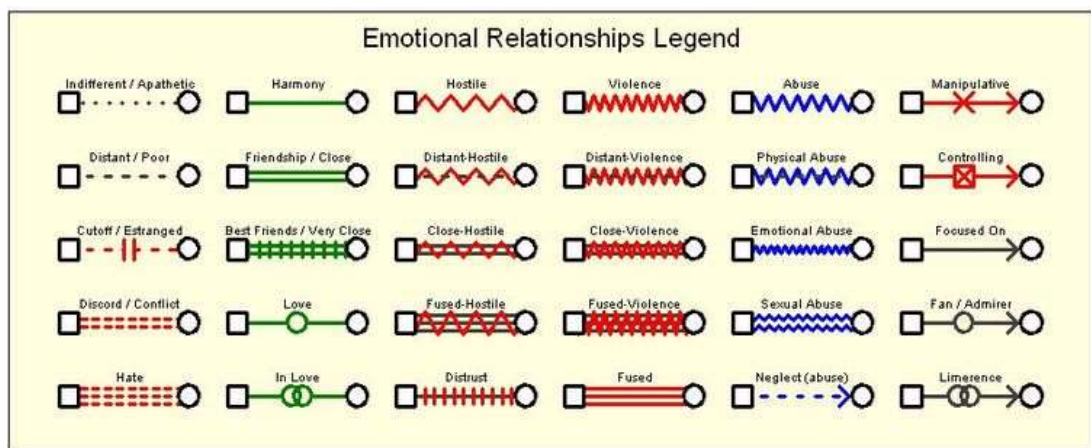


Figure 3.3. Emotional relationship legend  
 source: <http://www.statemaster.com/encyclopedia/Genogram>

As mentioned previously, the data will be put in the table based on its page number, type of child abuse, setting, type of interlocking concept, and analysis. The following table is the example of the datum which is written down in the table:

| No | Textual Evidences of Child Abuse                           | Page | Setting         | Type(s) of Emotional Abuse | Type(s) of Interlocking Concept | Analysis   |
|----|--|------|-----------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| 1  | Then she would order me to say over and over again, "I'm a | 21   | Child's bedroom | Emotional abuse            | Differentiation of self (low)   | This part shows the emotional abuse that David gets. In this part, |

|  |   |  |  |  |  |   |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|---|
|  | bad boy! I'm a bad boy! I'm a bad boy!" |  |  |  |  | the mother starts labeling David as a bad boy and forces him to think that way about himself. |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|---|

Figure 3.4. Table data