

## Hannah Peace's Suicide in Toni Morrison's *Sula*: A Psychoanalytic Approach

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### ABSTRACT

This research discusses Hannah Peace's suicide by exploring her past life, from her childhood until she decides to commit suicide. This research aims to find core issues faced by her and what triggers her to commit suicide. Psychoanalysis theories and theory of suicide proposed by Shneidman are applied in this research. The results show that her suicide is caused by psychological pain which stems from many painful experiences in her past life. After exploring her distressing experiences, it can be said that Hannah faces two core issues, which are fear of abandonment and fear of intimacy. However, her suicide is not merely caused by psychological pain. There are two factors which lead to her suicide: intrapsychic and interpersonal factors. Intrapsychic factor refers to the internal psychological processes of an individual, while interpersonal factor refers to the relationship between an individual and other people.

**Keywords:** *psychoanalysis, suicide, psychological pain, fear of abandonment, fear of intimacy.*

### INTRODUCTION

Toni Morrison is considered one of the greatest African-American authors in the history of English literature. She has won many awards during her lifetime. Most of her works are well-known and often gain positive critics. Morrison is the first African-American woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. She was also awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1988. Moreover, there were two U.S. Presidents who gave her tribute. First, the 39th U.S. President, Jimmy Carter, nominated her to the National Council on the Arts. Second, President Barack Obama bestowed her the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2012.

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We decide to focus on Toni Morrison's second novel, *Sula*. The novel was nominated for National

Book Award in fiction in 1975. *Sula* is entertaining, gloomy, and tragic simultaneously. The unpredictable plot surprises and increasingly attracts the reader's curiosity. Moreover, the issues in this novel are touching, such as the issues about friendship and betrayal, self-harm to get insurance, and the discrimination faced by African-Americans. There is also one interesting issue in *Sula*, that is suicide.

In this research, we focus on Hannah Peace. She is challenging to be discussed because many characters in the novel face difficulties and problems, but she is the only one who commits suicide. A sample character who does not commit suicide even though dealing with difficulties is Shadrack, who gets trauma after returning from the war. Then, he initiates National Suicide Day. He is afraid of death because he sees people are brutally killed in the war. He is unable to anticipate his anxiety, and then he becomes a little bit crazy and weird. National Suicide Day is his way to make death only occurs just one day. Although he struggles with his anxiety and initiates National Suicide Day, he never commits suicide. Another example is Sula Peace. Her life is full of problems. She is indirectly considered as the cause of Chicken Little's death. She lost her only friend because of having an affair with her friend's husband. Moreover, the society avoids her. However, Sula also does not commit suicide.

In this research we examine Hannah's suicide by looking at her psychological history. We analyze Hannah's childhood until the moment before her death to find core issues which she faces during her life and the triggers which drive her to commit suicide. In this research, The psychoanalysis theories and Edwin S. Shneidman's theory of suicide are considered the appropriate theory for the research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Some studies on Toni Morrison's *Sula* have been conducted previously. Timofte (2010), for example, investigates the connection between various types of oppression based on body differences and how the characters in *Sula* react to the disabled body.

Timofte (2010) describes characters' disability is their way to survive (p. 25). For example, Eva accepts her condition (living with one leg) because she gets money from insurance right after she loses her leg. Another example is Shadrack, who gets trauma after the war. Timofte (2010) believes his madness is his strategy for survival. He initiates National Suicide Day to ease his fear of death.

Another study by MoonShiriya (2013) focuses on African-American women's struggle in the novels *Beloved*, *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*. MoonShiriya (2013) argued that Toni Morrison tucked the historical fact of African-American people's struggle against racial dimensions of the society in her works (p. 29).

Talmantaité (2008) examines metaphoric death related to expressions and symbols in Tony Morrison's novel *Sula* and their functions in literary discourse. Talmantaité (2008) argued that Tony Morrison applies death metaphors which are related to Western and African-American culture. The death metaphors are used for signalling the important coming events, emphasizing the tension peak of the events, producing visual, aural, olfactory images in the mind of the reader, constructing the inner reality of the character, constructing the represented reality fiction, expressing the emotive and referential meanings in a condensed unified way, and adding intertextual dimensions to the narrative by evoking associative thinking in the mind of addressee (p. 40).

Next, Ospina (2014) employed historical criticism, sociological criticism, new historicism, and feminist criticism to investigate the negation of the other in the novel *Sula*. Ospina (2014) believes that in order to achieve harmony and balance, a community needs to have a variety of its individuals. Thus, a community must be flexible or they will lose the opportunity to progress if there is not any diversity among its individuals. In *Sula*, people in Medallion assume Sula as evil being because she does not follow the conventional standard of her community. Most of the people in Medallion see Sula as something weird due to her free-will and adventurous soul. However, when Sula dies, the community loses its center. The community loses the key element to measure themselves, whether they need to change or to see

what is wrong with them. On the other hand, Sula's isolation makes her difficult to define herself. It makes her lack of order, guidance, and goals in life. Therefore, everyone needs each other to achieve the harmony and balance of the world (p. 52).

Finally, Sy (2008) focuses on how women's friendship helps black women to support each other or to soothe pain linked to oppression in the novels. Sy (2008) focuses on Sula and Nel's friendship in *Sula*, Enitan Taiwo and Sherifat Bakare in *Everything Good Will*, Christine and Heed friendship in *Love*, and Ramatoulaye and Aissatou in *So Long a Letter*. There are diverse oppressions faced by the characters in each novel, such as racial issue, class oppression, patriarchal constraint, political instability, and unhappy marriage, polygamy, etc. Sy (2008) states that all of the novels try to convey that female friendship is a strategy to fight back those oppressions. She believes women develop female solidarity which offers them comfort, security, and healing by friendship (p. 19). They give and receive emotional support, sharing stories and experiences, caring for each other, filling in gaps in their lives, which help women to survive from those painful experiences.

While the previous studies focus more on *Sula*, the present study focuses on Hannah Peace, Sula's mother. Different from the previous studies, this study uses the psychological approach in analyzing the novel. The discussion emphasizes on her suicide. The psychological approach is used for analyzing her suicide by linking her psychology history and her suicide. In short, the present study is new and different from the previous studies which has been conducted.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Although many critics argue it is impossible to analyze literature using psychoanalysis since the literary characters are not real people, Tyson (2006) believes that psychoanalysis can be applied in literature since the literary characters portray human beings' attitudes and experiences in real life, regardless they are not real people (p. 35). The use of psychoanalysis is for exploring a literary character's problems and behaviors from the

perspective of psychology. In this research, it is used for understanding Hannah Peace's behavior. While quoting to Sigmund Freud, Tyson (2006, p. 12) said:

Psychoanalytic lens focuses on the individual human being by looking through the psychological history that begins in childhood experiences in the family and each with patterns of adolescent and adult behavior that are direct result of that early experience.

Hannah's behavior has something to do with her past conflicts and bad experiences. In conclusion, we focus on her conflicts which happen during her life to understand Hannah's actions and decisions.

Freud (1949) divides the psychical apparatus into three parts, which are id, ego, and superego (p. 15). Id consists of eros and destructive instincts. Eros refers to life instinct or the instinct to preserve life, while destructive instincts refer to the instinct to die or destroy things. However, the death instinct is postponed by ego since ego has the task to avoid the unpleasure. Ego has the responsibility to decrease the tensions produced by the stimuli from id. Moreover, superego also affects ego. Superego sometimes contradicts with id because it emphasizes on what can be morally accepted by the society. Ego is responsible for mediating id and superego and satisfying both of them. Ego has to be stronger than id and superego for keeping the balance. The unpleasure can dominate the mind if ego is less stronger. That condition is dangerous because the death instinct might controls the mind. In line with Freud's theory, Hannah's suicide has something to do with the death instinct which dominates her mind. In this research, we focus on what provokes her death instinct.

Humans definitely encounter bad experiences. Those experiences trigger the unpleasure memories in the mind. Freud adds that when the unpleasure memories dominate the mind, it can cause anxiety. Anxiety is not always bad, otherwise, it reveals an individual's core issue. The term 'core issues' is a psychological problem which causes some sort of recurring self-destructive behavior (Tyson, 2006, p. 17). There are six core issues, which are fear of intimacy, fear of abandonment, fear of betrayal, low self-esteem, insecure or unstable sense of self, and oedipal fixation/oedipal complex. Freud believes

there is a system in mind called defenses which keep bad memories in the unconscious, so an individual is not overwhelmed by them (Tyson, 2006, p. 15). However, defenses are weaker when an individual is sleeping. Dreams can be a clue for revealing an individual's anxiety (Tyson, 2006, p. 18). In this research, Hannah's core issues are discussed in order to find the triggers of her suicide.

In analyzing Hannah's suicide, this research applies Edwin S. Shneidman's theory. He states suicide is caused by the unbearable psychological pain called psychache (Leenaars, 2010, p. 7). Psychache refers to the hurt anguish, soreness, aching, or other psychological pain in mind. Psychache comes from the unfulfilled psychological needs, such as affiliation, counteraction, defense, inviolacy, shame-avoidance, succor, and order and understanding (Shneidman, 1998, pp. 248-249). Suicide is intrapsychic and interpersonal. Intrapsychic factor relates to an individual's internal psychological processes, while the interpersonal factor refers to the relationship between an individual and other people. Intrapsychic and interpersonal factors are related to each other.

In accordance with Shneidman's theory, we focus on Hannah's painful experiences from her childhood until the moment before her suicide. Painful experiences cause pain for Hannah. Hannah's relationship with others is also explored because it also has a significant role in her suicide. By exploring those elements, her unfulfilled psychological needs can be identified. Moreover, by knowing her painful experiences, the moment which makes Hannah really wants to commit suicide and reminds her of other painful experiences in the past can be found.

## METHODS

The library research method is used in this research. Sources for this paper are taken from written materials, web sources, books, articles, and journals. The primary data of the study are words or sentences in *Sula* which show Hannah's actions, feelings, thoughts, the dialogues, and the description from the author related to her

psychological aspects. The secondary data are obtained from other books, articles, and journals in written and online materials which support the discussion.

In collecting the data, the first step is reading the novel several times and taking important information which supports the analysis, in the forms of words or sentences which show Hannah's feelings, thoughts and actions, the dialogues, and the descriptions from the author which related to her psychological aspects. Those become the primary data of the study. The primary data are used to get a more in-depth description and explanation about Hannah, such as her family condition, personality, behavior towards each other, and the crucial incidents in her life to find what drives her to commit suicide. The next step is reading other books, journals, essays, articles in written and online materials which support the discussion. Those are the secondary data. The secondary data are used for deciding the relevant theories in analyzing Hannah's suicide. The last step is relating all of the important notes from the primary and secondary data.

After collecting the data, both primary and secondary data, the next step is applying the psychoanalytic approach in *Sula*. We focus on the events connected with Hannah's suicide, such as her family condition, her personality, her behavior towards each other, and the crucial incidents in her life. We use the primary data to find her painful moments, how the painful moments affect her, and what triggers her to commit suicide. Then, we apply Shneidman's suicide theory to find out the explanation of her suicide. The other secondary data are also helpful to support the analysis. The next step is formulating the findings from the analysis. The last step is drawing a conclusion from the findings and write a report about it.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hannah is described as a person who has more negative sides than positive ones. She is an unloving mother. She also likes to have affairs with her neighbor's husband. In understanding Hannah's destructive behavior, the researcher breaks down

what happened in her childhood until adulthood. There are several painful moments in her life. By exploring her painful moments, core issues which are faced by Hannah can be found. From six core issues proposed by Lois Tyson, Hannah Peace faces two of them, which are fear of abandonment and fear of intimacy.

### **Fear of Abandonment**

Fear of abandonment is the fear of being left. It could be being left physically or emotionally. Hannah's childhood is full of trauma. She experiences many losses when she is still a child. Hannah Peace has an unstable family condition. The condition of her home is not friendly for a child since her father, BoyBoy, likes to abuse her mother. There must be a lot of fights between her mother and father. If a child sees many conflicts in her home, it will shake her psyche. She will feel the parents do not love her or she is haunted by fear. It is also obvious that Hannah seldom gets love or attention from the father since his father is seldom home. She completely loses his father when he leaves the family. His sudden leaving certainly frustrates her because a child simply needs a father.

Hetherington states, "Daughters of divorce sought attention from men more often, reported being the most active sexually and had the lowest self-esteem. The effects of early father separation were more profound than later separation (cited in Krohn and Bogan, 2001, p. 598). Hannah is left by his father when she is still a child. Therefore, the separation from his father has a deep influence on her. Moreover, BoyBoy does not play his role as a father before the separation. He is seldom home, which implicates there is little interaction between Hannah and him. However, when he is home, he likes to abuse her mother. The violence at home certainly frightens the children. Hannah might be afraid of her own father.

The abandonment by her father influences Hannah's behavior in the future. She is longing for men's attention since her father never gives her affection. After her husband's death, Hannah has many affairs. Morrison (1975) describes, "What she wanted, after Rekus died, and what she succeeded in having more often than not, was some touching every day" (p. 38). The quotation implies Hannah

needs affection from men in the act of sexual activity. However, instead of having a relationship with single men, Hannah has affairs with her neighbors or friends' husbands.

Since Hannah's father does not play a significant role in her life, she does not know the boundaries of male and female relationships which are still tolerated and not. Moreover, Hannah's father also has many affairs with other women. Hannah's deviant behavior is caused by it. She thinks having an affair is something normal. She thinks what she does is only her way to fulfill her needs. Furthermore, Hannah usually makes love in her house, even in the bedroom which she shares with her daughter, Sula. She is not worried if her daughter would see it and copy her manner. Since Hannah becomes a single parent, she must take the role of a father, but she could not because she herself has never felt the presence of a father.

Besides the abandonment from her father, Hannah Peace is also abandoned by her mother. She even asks, "Mamma, did you ever love us?" (Morrison, 1975, p. 58). Her question implies she is worried about her relationship with her mother. On the other hand, she also feels disappointed with her mother because she feels she does not get enough attention and affection.

After her father's leaving, Hannah has to accept the fact that she is also far from her mother. Eva, Hannah's mother, is supposed to raise her three children alone. Eva is really confused because she does not have enough money to support the family or to do a new business. The family situation is getting worse. Her family faces a financial problem. BoyBoy does not leave much money or valuable property for them. Morrison (1975) describes Hannah's family condition, "When he left in November, Eva had \$1.65, five eggs, and three beets and no idea of what or how to feel" (pp. 27-28). Therefore, her mother should work and she is certainly seldom at home. Such conditions must have been very difficult for Hannah because she is still young and still very much dependent on her mother. In addition, as her father has just left her, she really needs a mother's comfort.

Surprisingly, Eva suddenly leaves her children for quite a long time. Although Hannah is taken care of by one of her neighbors, but according to

Robertson, if a child is taken from his mother's care when the child is so possessively and passionately attached to her, it is indeed as if his world had been shattered (Bowlby, 1980, p. 17). Hannah's sudden separation from her mother completely frustrates her. Instead of going back the next day, her mother disappears for eighteen months without any news. As a young child who is still dependent on a mother, Hannah always expects her mother's return every day. She is definitely frustrated. Parents are the ones whom the child can trust since they must be the first to be there for the child, and to provide the child's needs, including comfort and protection. Moreover, her mother is the only parent she has. Therefore, losing her only one parent is surely very stressful.

After looking at Hannah's life history, she already 'loses' both of her parents since she is a child. Her parents do not give her love or affection as they should. The impact of what Hannah experiences in childhood continues until her adulthood. How she treats her child, Sula, is similar to how her parents treat her. She cannot be emotionally attached to her daughter. There is no interaction between them showing the mother-daughter bond. Furthermore, Hannah explicitly tells her friends that she does not like her daughter (Morrison, 1975, p. 48).

The experiences of being abandoned by her father and mother create anxiety in Hannah's mind. Those painful experiences not only cause her destructive behavior, but also creates fear of being abandoned emotionally by her mother. It is indicated from her question, "Mamma, did you ever love us?" (Morrison, 1975, p. 67). From the question, she urges for closeness between them. Parent's recognition can increase an individual's self-esteem and self-worth. If an individual has self-esteem and self-worth, she feels happy with her life. Hannah is afraid of being abandoned emotionally by her mother for she expects reliance on and comfort from her mother in which she can share everything in her mind without feeling awkward. She does not have anyone, except her mother. Her sister lives far away and has her own family, her brother becomes insane after returning from the war, her husband is dead, and Hannah's relationship with her daughter is also stiff.

## Fear of Intimacy

Fear of intimacy is defined as the fear of closeness. Intimacy in this context refers to emotional intimacy which does not include physical intimacy. Physical intimacy happens when there is body contact between people, such as eye-contact, hugging, draping arms around each other, kissing, holding hands, or sexual activity. Emotional intimacy happens when two people open about each other's feelings, mind, and emotions such as when two people trust each other and share their deepest thoughts and feelings. In addition, there is reciprocity in the form of caring, affection, and understanding.

Fear of intimacy faced by Hannah is the fear of getting emotionally attached with men. After her husband's death, she has many lovers who are her friends and neighbors' husbands (Morrison, 1975, p. 36). She sleeps with them, however, she never has the intention to have a relationship with them. Relationship in this case is an intimate relationship, when two people are deeply in love, committed to stay together and to be faithful to each other. The relationship has the possibility to end in marriage and build a family. Otherwise, Hannah's relationship only involves physical intimacy.

The middling women, who had both husbands and affairs, because Hannah seemed too unlike them, having no passion attached to her relationships, and having no capable of jealousy (Morrison, 1975, p. 38).

The quotation implies that she does not have the intention to have a serious relationship with the men whom she has affairs with. What she wants is only sex. Having a commitment is difficult for her. This happens because she unconsciously feels insecure in her relationships. This is her way to anticipate another rejection and loss. As a result, Hannah likes to move from one relationship to another relationship.

There are three advantages if she has a lot of affairs. First, her need for sex is fulfilled. Second, she is not really attached emotionally to the men. So, when she and the men are bored, they can separate without any significant pain or regret. Third, she will not feel apprehensive if the men show signs of leaving her since she still has other

men. In short, she can meet her biological need without being too close to the men.

Hannah prefers married men to single men because of the influence of her fear of intimacy. Having a relationship with married men is safer because the fact that they had wives, children and mortgages would keep them from going overboard with their affections (Jones, 2018, para. 3). The men will think twice about divorcing their wives. Their affairs with other women are just for fun and satisfying their biological needs which cannot be satisfied by their wives. Otherwise, single men are still concerned with commitment. They want more from their relationship because they want marriage and have children. In conclusion, Hannah prefers married men because she avoids emotional intimacy.

### **The Triggers of Hannah Peace's Suicide**

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, Shneidman (1998) believes psychache is the root of suicide is suicide. Psychache comes from the unfulfilled psychological needs. From the seven psychological needs that Shneidman (1998) proposes, Hannah lacks two of them: lack of needs of affiliation and lack of order and understanding. Suicide is intrapsychic and interpersonal. There are triggers from the inside and outside. The intrapsychic factor relates to the internal psychological processes of the suicidal person, while the interpersonal factor refers to the relationship between the suicidal person and other people. The intrapsychic and interpersonal factors are related to each other. The relationship with other people influences how an individual's psyche works, and the psyche of an individual also influences how she reacts to someone else.

#### ***The Unfulfilled Psychological Needs for Affiliation***

Affiliation is a sense of belonging to a friend. The definition of belonging to a friend is having a person who is not a part of the family, but is trustworthy, loyal, honest, always there in hard times, and helps to seek solutions for problems. There is mutual trust, affection, and understanding. In Hannah's case, she has friends, but she is not close to them. It is quite severe because an individual who has a cold

relation with her parents can at least have a friend to help and support her. In addition, people in her society have a bad impression on her.

Hannah has problems with her social life. Although in the novel it is mentioned that Hannah has 'friends' (Patsy and Valentine) when she confesses that she does not like Sula and when she refers to "her friends' husband" which indicates that she has friends, there is no evidence which indicates the closeness between Hannah and her friends. On the other hand, Morrison (1975) describes, "Hannah's friendships with women were, of course short-lived, and the newly married couples whom her mother took in soon learned what a hazard she was" (p. 38). Therefore, she actually does not belong to any friend. She does not have anyone whom she really trusts, leans on, shares her feelings with, hangs out together with, or comforts and understands her difficulties.

The abandonment from parents unconsciously makes it difficult for Hannah to mingle. Since she neither gets comforted nor understood by her parents, she does not understand how to protect someone's feeling which is shown through her habit of having affairs with her friends' husbands that certainly hurts her friends' feelings. In addition, she is willing to have an affair with the newly married. This behavior is the effect of the abandonment by her father. Since she avoids being emotionally attached with men, she loses her mind by having affair with them. Consequently, nobody in her neighborhood accepts her, instead, they avoid her. People blame her for ruining people's marriage. Even, she is labeled as "the whore" (Morrison, 1975, p. 38). Nobody wants to be her friend. Therefore, the needs to be close or belong to a friend are not fulfilled.

Friendship is essential in an individual's life for it is one of the basic human needs. Friends can make someone happy and reduce stress. Having a friend increases one's self-worth. By having friends, an individual knows that some people still care. Friendship teaches affection, appreciation, laughter, forgiveness, support, mutual help. Friends offer a safe place to be oneself. Being with friends can reduce loneliness. Friends can distract someone from thinking about life problems all the time, such as by conversing and joking treating her, or taking

her on a short vacation. They also help someone overcome her problems by listening to her and finding the solution and choices that keep her strong.

Since Hannah does not have friends, she deals with her problems alone, storing her own problems and bottling them up makes her mental burden's increase. When emotions are not released, the negative energy which comes from the negative emotions do not go away from the body and will be held back in the body, especially the mind. Those negative energy leads to pain and suffering which provokes Hannah to commit suicide.

### ***The Unfulfilled Psychological Needs for Order and Understanding***

Besides the psychological need for affiliation, Hannah also does not meet her psychological need for order and understanding. The psychological need for order and understanding is the need to put things, events, or ideas in order to make sense of both the outer world and the inner world; to know what is going on; to want to know the answers to general questions; to theorize; to be curious; to be oriented; to make some sense of the universe; and to want to know (Leenaars, 1996, 249).

The need for order and understanding is defined as the need to explain everything that happens. The need to ask questions in order to make everything becomes clear. Hannah needs the answer to the question why her mother cannot love her. She even questions her mother whether her mother loves her children or not. However, instead of giving her understanding or trying to explain it affectionately, her mother gets offended. Hannah is considered an insolent and ungrateful child for asking that question. Instead of feeling relieved, Hannah may feel humiliated.

There is an incident in Hannah's life which quite harms her psyche. The incident is the murder of her brother by her own mother, Eva, who burns her own son using newspaper which has been on fire. She locks the door so that nobody can help him. Eva calmly returns to her room regardless of the panic around her. Hannah, who tries to help him, cannot open the door. She runs to her mother's room to tell her what is going on, but she knows from Eva's reaction that her mother is the one who

kills her brother. Morrison (1975) describes, "Eva looked into Hannah's eyes, "Is? My baby? Burning?" The two women did not speak, for the eyes of each were enough for the other" (p. 41).

Hannah urges for an explanation about that incident. Hannah looked into her mother's eyes, "But what about Plum? What'd you kill Plum for, Mamma?" (Morrison, 1975, p. 60). Witnessing her own brother's death and knowing that her own mother kills her brother is definitely a traumatic event which lasted for the rest of her life. She is overwhelmed by it. Her defenses work hard to keep the bad memory in her unconscious. As the influence from defenses, Hannah does not immediately ask for clarification from her mother after the incident. She keeps the questions for herself to avoid interaction which reminds her of her brother's incident. It is too painful and tense for her. Hannah has a dream about her brother's death. Once, Hannah told her mother about her dream of the red dress wedding before her death (Morrison, 1975, p. 64).

Eva mused over the perfection of the judgment against her. She remembered the wedding dream and recalled that weddings always meant death. And the red gown, well that was the fire, as she should have known. (Morrison, 1975, p. 67)

Her mother's interpretation of the symbol in Hannah's dream might be the same as Hannah since they come from the same society and culture. This dream refers to her brother's death. The symbol of death and fire proves it. In line with Tyson's theory, the incident could appear in her dream because the unconscious's repressed memory has crossed her defenses when she is sleeping. Defenses are weaker during sleep, then the bad memory in the unconscious comes up. When Hannah is sleeping, her defenses does not work optimally. Therefore, the dream comes in a disguised form and not in an exact way as it is in reality. In her dream, she is the one who wears a red dress. Hence, this dream could be a sign of her death. Hannah's death is the same as her brother, which is burned by fire.

The death of Hannah's brother is too distressing for her, therefore, she needs the answers for making it sense for her. The killing assures Hannah that her mother does not have a single love



for her children. She needs clarification from her mother. Her mother is paralyzed for a moment after her question and then answers as below.

“He was a man, girl, a big old grown-up man. I didn’t have that much room. I kept on dreaming it. Dreaming it and I knowed it was true. One night it wouldn’t be no dream. It’d be true and I would have done it, would have let him if I’d’ve had the room but a big man can’t be a baby all wrapped up inside his mamma no more; he suffocate. I done everything I could to make him leave me and go on and live and be a man but he wouldn’t and I had to keep him out so I just thought of a way he could die like a man not all crunched up inside my womb, but like a man.” (Morrison, 1975, p. 62)

For Hannah, her mother’s answer does not make sense at all. How a mother could kill her own helpless child. Her son needs help. The experiences in the war make him insane. If a mother loves her child, she will undoubtedly do everything and supports him, whatever happens. Hannah herself is helpless at that time. This murder incident reminds her of bad memories in the past, from being abandoned by her father, losing her husband, the fact that the society does not accept her, and the fact that she and her mother are not close since her childhood. All of these life ordeals inflicts her fear of being abandoned emotionally by her mother. Hannah cannot accept the emotional abandonment by her mother because it means she does not anyone whom she can rely on.

### ***Hannah’s Suicidal Mind Processes***

The painful experiences in Hannah’s life put her in a crisis. Those painful experiences depress her psychological needs. Her depressed psychological needs create psychological pain. Psychological pain triggers her to kill herself. Hannah may reach her limit for enduring sustainable pain. A steady toll of traumatic life (e.g. loss, rejection, failure, etc) can weaken an individual’s ego (Leenaars, 1996, p. 225). Hannah’s ego is weak due to her repeated painful experiences. Her father and mother abandon her, she loses her husband and knowing her mother kills her brother. Her weak ego makes her ability to cope with her problem becomes weak. She cannot avoid

unpleasant feelings and pursue pleasure. Her weak ego also makes her mind cannot control the instinct from id. The repetition of the distressing experiences in Hannah’s life inflict her suicidal thoughts and tendencies as well as weaken her life instinct. Her ego is too weak for balancing it. Her mind is fixated on the unpleasure or the pain.

In addition, Hannah does not have any support system. Her family cannot help her deal with her problems. Her mother does not care about her. Her sister lives far from her. Her brother even goes insane. He gets a severe mental issue after the war. She can relies on nobody. She cannot be open about her problems since she and her family are not close emotionally. Moreover, she also does not have friend. She does not have anyone who can help her, support her, listens to her during her difficult times. She does not have social life which can distract her from thinking about life problems. The society rejects and avoids her. Therefore, Hannah endures her pain alone.

Hannah does not have a place to channel her emotions. The negative emotions (loneliness, anger, humiliated, depressed, hate) dominate her mind and evoke her suicidal tendencies while there is no reason she can have to keep living. She does not have someone or something which can make her happy. Since her suicidal thoughts dominate her mind, therefore, her mental is constricted. Mental constriction is the state when an individual cannot think clearly, narrowing of focus, tunnel vision, etc. (Leenaars, 1996, p. 225). An individual is too focused on the negative one. Hence, it is difficult for an individual to think about something positive or find the solution, except suicide.

Hannah cannot endure her pain anymore right after the moment she asks her mother about “Mamma, did you ever love us?” and her brother Plum’s incident. The moment when Hannah asks clarification about her brother’s death completely provokes her death instinct. That incident reminds her about her distressing experiences, on being abandoned by her father, her husband’s death, and being mocked and avoided by her society. That incident also proves that her mother does not really love her. It is convinced by her mother’s reaction. When Hannah asks about whether her mother loves her or not, her mother gets offended by saying

Hannah is an ungrateful child. Her mother's answer for the question about her brother's incident also proves that her mother does not love her. It is reinforced by the fact that when Hannah is still a child, her mother surprisingly disappears for eighteen months without any news. Moreover, there is no single piece of evidence on how Hannah's family showing warm affection to her.

Being abandoned by her family and society make her self-esteem and self-worth lower. Her low self-esteem and self-worth influence how she thinks and faces problems. Low self-esteem and self-worth makes her feels unhappy with her life. She might think she does not have purpose anymore in this world. Nobody would realize if she is gone. Being rejected causes deep pain which makes Hannah wants to commit suicide. She sees suicide is the solution, the way to stop all of her pain. The way to channel all of her emotions.

In conclusion, Hannah's suicide involves the internal and interpersonal factors which are influenced by her conflicts with her family and friends. Those conflicts frustrate her psychological states, which are the needs to belong to a friend (affiliation) and the needs to know the situation in a reasonable way (order and understanding). Since there are many painful moments in her life and she does not have any help or support from anyone, it pushes her death instinct rather than her life instinct. Her mind concentrates more on her conflicts because she endures her problems alone. She considers suicide as the best solution because death can stop all of her sufferings.

## CONCLUSION

After analyzing Hannah's childhood until her adulthood, we found that her suicide has something to do with her painful experiences in her past. She is abandoned by her parents, she loses her husband, and people in her society mock and avoid her because she has affairs with her friends and neighbors' husbands. Moreover, she also experiences a traumatic incident before her death, which is her mother has apparently killed her brother. Those painful experiences cause

psychological pain. This psychological pain triggers Hannah to commit suicide.

From Hannah's painful experiences, it is found that Hannah faces two core issues, which are fear of abandonment and fear of intimacy. Her childhood is full of rejection which influences her personality. She is abandoned by both of her parents. The result of being abandoned by her father is the fact that she always long to have men in her life. She wreaks her longing for men's attentions from men through sexual affairs. However, her behavior is too distorted since she likes to have many affairs with her friends and neighbors' husband after her husband's death. Hannah's cold relationship with her daughter is the impact of being abandoned by her mother in her childhood. Furthermore, she is unconsciously afraid of being abandoned emotionally by her mother. The abandonment causes new core issue, which is the fear of intimacy. This fear of intimacy makes Hannah unable to have an intimate relationship with men since she avoids being abandoned again. The reason why she prefers married men to single ones is for avoiding emotional intimacy. Her relationship with men is just for satisfying her sexual desire.

From the discussion, it can be said that Hannah's suicide involves her internal psychological processes (internal factor) and her relationship with others (interpersonal factor). The root of her suicide is her psychological pain which comes from her conflicts and painful moments in the past. Those experiences frustrate her psychologically, which are the needs for affiliation and the needs for order and understanding. The recurring painful experiences weaken her ego to seek pleasure (solution) for her anxiety. It makes her mind get indulged more on the problems than the solutions. Other than that, she neither has family nor friend who can support and help her. All of these aspects push her death instinct more than her life instinct. On the other side, she does not have anyone to lean on. The peak of her limit is when she knows her mother burns her brother and the fact that her mother never really loves her. Those facts really hurt Hannah and the pain is too unbearable for her. Therefore, she decides to commit suicide to stop all of her pains.

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