

THE EFFECTS OF SEXUAL TRAUMA TOWARDS VIOLENCE IN THE NOVEL *VENGEANCE IS MINE, ALL OTHERS PAY CASH* BY EKA KURNIAWAN

Salniyah¹, Anna Anganita Theresia Latumeten²

Universitas Balikpapan¹⁻²

salniyah77741e@gmail.com

Abstract	Article Information
<p><i>This study examines the effects of sexual trauma on violent behavior in the novel <i>Vengeance Is Mine All Others Pay Cash</i> by Eka Kurniawan's. There are two objectives of this study: 1) To find out the forms of sexual trauma found in the novel, and 2) To describe how sexual trauma effects violence. The study employs two theories: Herman's theory of sexual trauma and Fromm's theory of violence. The methodology used is qualitative research with primary data presented in descriptive form. Data were collected from the novel, while secondary data and other relevant sources were gathered through literature review. The results of the study indicate that the researcher found four forms of sexual trauma: childhood sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and sex trafficking. To examine the effects of sexual trauma on violence, the researcher utilized Fromm's theory, which distinguishes between benign aggression and malignant aggression. The researcher found that the most dominant type of sexual trauma was sexual harassment, which significantly impacts violent behavior. Specifically, sexual harassment often leads to violent behavior categorized as both malignant aggression. In conclusion, sexual trauma, particularly from sexual harassment, has a strong effect on the manifestation of violence in the forms of malignant in the novel.</i></p> <p>Keywords: <i>Vengeance Is Mine All Others Pay Cash, Sexual Trauma, Violence</i></p>	<p><i>Received:</i> 30/10/2024</p> <p><i>Revised:</i> 12/11/2024</p> <p><i>Accepted:</i> 20/11/2024</p>

INTRODUCTION

Sexual trauma represents a profound violation that affects not only the emotional and psychological well-being of individuals but also influences multiple dimensions of their

lives. This trauma encompasses a range of experiences, including sexual exploitation, violence, and coercion, often involving power imbalances and abuses of authority. The pervasive nature of sexual trauma transcends boundaries of age, gender, ethnicity, and social standing, making it a critical issue in both academic research and societal discourse. As Judith Herman (1992) argues in her seminal work *Trauma and Recovery*, sexual trauma inflicts deep emotional wounds that disrupt an individual's sense of self and integrity, leading to lasting psychological and physical effects. Such experiences of trauma may arise from events such as childhood sexual abuse, rape, incest, or other forms of sexual violence, all of which have the potential to significantly impair an individual's mental health, relationships, and daily functioning.

The multifaceted impact of sexual trauma necessitates a comprehensive approach to healing, one that integrates mental, physical, and social dimensions of care. As Courtois (1999) highlights, the shame, guilt, and diminished sense of self-worth often experienced by survivors of sexual trauma can inhibit their ability to form healthy relationships and trust others, underlining the importance of professional support in their recovery journey. Beyond the psychological toll, the societal response to sexual trauma plays a crucial role in shaping the healing process. A collective effort towards transforming norms that perpetuate sexual violence and creating supportive environments for victims is essential. Furthermore, strengthening education on sexual violence and its prevention is key to reducing the prevalence of such trauma and fostering a more empathetic society.

In this context, literature emerges as a powerful medium for exploring the psychological and emotional dimensions of sexual trauma. Through narrative, authors can delve into the complex experiences of survivors, providing insight into their struggles, resilience, and recovery. Literary works not only offer a therapeutic space for understanding trauma but also serve as a tool for advocacy, as they challenge societal perceptions of victims and contribute to the prevention of sexual violence. As Brown (1994) suggests, literature has the potential to offer survivors a renewed sense of self-worth and hope for the future. By engaging with literary representations of trauma, researchers can uncover the intricate ways in which trauma is processed and conveyed, both by survivors and within broader cultural contexts.

This research aims to contribute to the understanding of sexual trauma by examining its representation in literary works, particularly how narratives can aid in the healing process and promote social change. By focusing on the novel *Vengeance is Mine, All Others Pay Cash* by Eka Kurniawan, this study explores the psychological effects of sexual trauma on the characters and analyzes how literature can reflect and shape societal attitudes towards trauma and violence. Using the theoretical frameworks of literary psychology, as well as trauma theory by Herman and violence theory by Erich Fromm, this research seeks to deepen our comprehension of the interplay between sexual trauma, violence, and recovery in literature. In doing so, it highlights the importance of literature as both a reflective and transformative force in addressing sensitive issues like sexual trauma and violence within society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sexual Trauma Theory by Judith Herman

Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) is a foundational text in the study of sexual trauma, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding the profound psychological and emotional impacts of sexual violence. Herman defines sexual trauma as any form of unwanted or unlawful sexual contact, including rape, sexual abuse, incest, and other violent sexual acts. Her work has been pivotal in demonstrating how sexual trauma affects victims both immediately and long after the traumatic event, manifesting in various physical, emotional, and behavioral symptoms. This literature review explores the key forms of sexual trauma identified by Herman, each characterized by distinct dynamics of power, manipulation, and abuse.

Childhood sexual abuse as one of the most devastating forms of sexual trauma. She defines it as any sexual contact or interaction between an adult and a child where the child, due to age or developmental stage, is unable to give informed consent. This includes not only physical acts like touching and penetration but also exposure to pornography and other forms of exploitation. Central to Herman's analysis is the power imbalance between the adult and the child, with the adult holding authority, knowledge, and power over the vulnerable child. Herman explains that such situations often involve grooming and manipulation, making it difficult for the child to resist or understand the abuse. This dynamic of exploitation and power abuse often leads to long-term psychological damage. As Herman notes, the effects of childhood sexual abuse are not limited to the immediate trauma; they frequently lead to chronic feelings of betrayal, helplessness, and entrapment that deeply disrupt a child's emotional and psychological development, resulting in long-term issues such as trust deficits, depression, and identity struggles (Herman, 1997).

Sexual assault, as discussed by Herman (1992), includes non-consensual sexual acts such as rape, attempted rape, and unwanted sexual contact. Herman emphasizes that sexual assault is a crime of violence rather than one of passion. Its intent is to dominate, control, and humiliate the victim, rather than to engage in a sexual act for its own sake. This violent use of sexual acts as a tool for control leaves deep emotional scars on victims. Herman points out that survivors often carry feelings of shame, guilt, and self-blame, which further erode their sense of self and deeply affect their relationships with others. The long-term psychological effects of sexual assault are significant, often resulting in anxiety, depression, and difficulties in maintaining healthy relationships. Understanding sexual assault as a violent crime rooted in power and control, rather than sexuality, is crucial for effective intervention and support (Herman, 1997).

Sexual harassment defining it as unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or any other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that creates a hostile or offensive environment. Though often dismissed as minor, sexual harassment can have profound psychological effects on victims. Herman (1997) argues that the pervasive nature of harassment in the workplace, educational institutions, and other social settings can lead to anxiety, depression, and a loss of self-esteem, which can significantly impact both

professional and personal lives. The hostile environment created by harassment not only damages the victim's mental health but also affects their sense of safety and belonging in their daily environments. Herman's analysis suggests that sexual harassment is often underestimated in terms of its psychological damage, requiring greater attention and intervention to ensure victims' well-being.

In discussing sex trafficking, Herman (1992) identifies it as a modern form of slavery, where individuals, often young women and girls, are forced into commercial sex work through coercion, deception, or violence. Traffickers use a combination of psychological manipulation, physical violence, and threats to maintain control over their victims, subjecting them to extreme physical and emotional abuse. Herman highlights that victims of sex trafficking are often kept in a state of constant fear and dependency, trapped in cycles of violence that are difficult to escape. The traumatic effects of sex trafficking are severe, with survivors often experiencing profound physical injuries, psychological disorders such as PTSD, and long-lasting emotional damage. The extreme power dynamics and exploitation involved in sex trafficking necessitate a multidisciplinary approach to both prevention and victim recovery, integrating legal, social, and psychological support systems (Herman, 1997).

Violence Theory by Fromm

Erich Fromm, a prominent psychoanalyst and social philosopher, explored violence through various psychological lenses, positioning it as both a manifestation and consequence of deeper social and psychological structures. Fromm's approach to violence, particularly psychological violence, focuses on non-physical harm that impacts individuals' emotional and mental well-being. According to Fromm (1973, p.294), psychological violence is pervasive and insidious, often manifesting subtly in the forms of verbal abuse, emotional neglect, and other non-physical means. This form of violence, although lacking physical indicators, can be equally as devastating as physical violence due to its detrimental psychological impact and the difficulty in identifying and addressing it. This capacity enables individuals to be aggressive for the sake of aggression or as an expression of destructive urges, a concept he explored through his classifications of "benign" and "malignant" aggression.

Fromm (1973) describes benign aggression as a form of constructive and defensive aggression. Benign aggression is instinctual and reactive, manifesting when individuals face a perceived threat. This response, characterized by self-defense, assertiveness, and a focus on achieving legitimate goals, is crucial for survival and personal integrity. Fromm posits that benign aggression has a fundamentally protective quality; it aims to preserve life, dignity, and well-being rather than causing harm. He explains that benign aggression is a "defensive reaction" (Fromm, 1973, p.238) and serves a natural function, activated in situations where individuals are compelled to protect themselves or their loved ones. This form of aggression does not derive from malicious intent but rather from a fundamental drive to safeguard oneself or others.

Malignant aggression represents a destructive force within human behavior, as defined by Fromm (1973). Unlike benign aggression, which is reactionary, malignant aggression emerges from intrinsic impulses rooted in desires for dominance, control, or pleasure

derived from inflicting suffering. Fromm (1973, p.218) highlights the pathological nature of malignant aggression, driven by psychological factors such as sadism and a lust for power. This form of aggression, he argues, is not defensive but proactive, aimed solely at harm without provocation or need for self-preservation. It manifests in behaviors ranging from physical violence to emotional manipulation and exploitation, marking a deviation from the protective instincts of benign aggression.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach, focusing on the psychological analysis of themes related to sexual trauma and violence as portrayed in the novel *Vengeance is Mine, All Others Pay Cash* by Eka Kurniawan. The primary objective To describe sexual trauma affects violence in the novel *Vengeance is Mine, All Others Pay Cash* by Eka Kurniawan within the narrative, drawing upon Judith Herman's theory of sexual trauma and Erich Fromm's theory of violence to analyze the psychological dimensions of the characters' experiences and behaviors.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Forms of Sexual Trauma in *Vengeance Is Mine, All Other Pay Cash*

This research uses trauma sexual theory by Herman. The researcher found four forms that fit Herman's explanation. They are childhood sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual harassment, sex trafficking, and sexual exploitation.

1. Childhood Sexual Abuse

Mr. Toto was holding Iteung close from behind. The man was sitting on a chair, embracing her, and Iteung was sitting on his lap. His left hand was holding the little girl's breast and the other hand was feeling around under her skirt. Iteung tried to get away, but Mr.Toto held even tighter.

"Sir, let me go, sir."

"Just a minute, Iteung" (Kurniawan, 2014, p.138)

The Action of Mr. Toto "holding the breast" and "fingering under the skirt of Iteung" belongs to the category of direct sexual abuse of children. Iteung tries to resist and asks to be released, indicating that he feels uncomfortable and depressed by the act. This experience has the potential to cause serious trauma to Iteung, including shame, helplessness, and possibly PTSD. Mr. Toto uses his position to exploit Iteung, demonstrating the dynamics of power and exploitation in this situation. This quote falls into the category of Childhood Sexual Abuse as claimed by Herman's theory. The Action Of Mr. Toto, which involves unwanted sexual touching and coercion, shows the core elements of child sexual abuse. The reaction of Iteung, who tries to resist and asks to be released, reflects the helplessness and psychological

trauma she faces. This situation demonstrates the dynamics of power and exploitation that often occur in cases of child sexual violence. Thus, this quote clearly describes the main elements of sexual violence against children.

2. Sexual Assault

“Is this what you wanted to see, kid?” Scarface demanded.

Ajo kawir, terrified, shock his head and tried to get away. But the Clove Smoker took out his pistol and, putting it to the boy’s head, ordered, “Stay still and watch!” (Kurniawan, 2014, p.25)

Ajo Kawir showed fear and tried to escape, indicating that she did not agree to the situation. Clove Smoker uses a threat with a weapon to force Ajo Kawir to stay in place and watch. There is no indication that Ajo Kawir has given consent to the action. Instead, he tried to escape, showing disagreement and indifference. The act of coercion and intimidation against Ajo Kawir’s using the threat of a weapon. Forcing Ajo Kawir to see the rape they commit, the context of coercion and intimidation can create a very dangerous and traumatic situation for the victim. The excerpt aligns with Herman's view of sexual assault due to the forced sexual contact and the potential for lasting psychological trauma.

3. Sexual Harassment

“I might lose, but I don’t care, he has to feel my fists. He threw some more punches and the lip of the-kid-he-wanted-to-beat-up split. The-kid-he-wanted-to-beat-up was completely taken off guard, but after the third punch he began to fight back. This one is for stepping on my shoes, this one is for tearing up my books, and this one is for the time you pulled down my jogging pants in front of the girls.” (Kurniawan, 2014, p.199)

In this quote, a boy attacked "the-kid-he-wanted-to-beat-up" with an intense blow. This attack is followed by a given reason for each blow, namely revenge for previous actions. One reason given was "for the time you pulled down my jogging pants in front of the girls," which indicates sexual abuse. Taking off the jogging pants in front of someone else is a form of sexual harassment as this act is aimed at humiliating and degrading the victim before others. It creates intimidating and offensive situations. The physical assault carried out by the boys also demonstrates the dynamics of power and control that the victims of harassment seek to restore through violence. The act of pulling out the pants jogging in public is a form of sexual harassment that aims to humiliate and disgrace the victim. Herman also stressed the psychological and emotional impact of sexual harassment. These acts of public humiliation can cause significant emotional trauma to the victim.

4. Sex Trafficking

“He began to bring his friends. At first he just brought one, but then he brought somebody different, and then another day he brought two at once. At first the

young widow refused to service them, but her landlord threatened to drag her and the two children out of the house and toss them in the street.” (Kurniawan, 2014, p.41)

Mr. Lebe was free to go in and out of the room the widow Mr. Lebe began to bring his friends, as in this quote “He began to bring his friends. At first he just brought one, but then he brought somebody different, and then another day he brought two at once”. Young widows are forced to serve guests brought by someone under threat of violence or expulsion from home. This quote shows the elements of sex trafficking, because young widows are forced to serve the people brought by someone, and threats to him and his children indicate forced sexual exploitation. This situation reflects a pattern of sex trafficking in which victims are forced to serve the sexual needs of others and are in a very vulnerable and depressed position. The quotation reflects elements of "sex trafficking" by Herman's definition, as it describes forced sexual exploitation under the threat of violence or expulsion. In addition, these situations may also reflect forms of sexual violence that cause trauma, but in this context, sex trafficking is more appropriate as a primary category due to the presence of elements of exploitation and coercion.

The Effects of Sexual Trauma Towards Violence in *Vengeance Is Mine, All Other Pay Cash*

Fromm's theory focuses on two types of violence: benign aggression and malignant aggression. This study discusses how characters in novels that experience sexual trauma have the potential to commit violence. Violence is not always bad or harmful to others. For example, violence is done to protect oneself from repeated sexual trauma. Or violence committed self-harm because the effects of sexual trauma experienced make the victim experience a deep psychological disorder.

1. The Effects of Childhood Sexual Abuse towards Benign Aggression

“Papa, I want to take some extra classes” the girl said to her father.

“Oh, so it turns out my daughter has a little bit of initiative! What kind of classes do you want to take, child? Piano? Dance? Flower arranging? Sewing?”

“I want to learn how to fight.” (Kurniawan, 2014, p.142)

Childhood sexual trauma often leaves a sense of helplessness and loss of control over one's body and life. In the case of Iteung, her desire to learn how to fight may reflect an attempt to regain control and feel lost strength as a result of the trauma. Learning to fight can be seen as a direct and literal self-defense mechanism. Iteung may feel that by learning to fight, she can protect herself from potential threats and no longer be a victim in similar situations in the future. Iteung's desire to learn how to fight can be categorized as "benign aggression." It is a defensive and protective response, aimed at defending itself from a real or perceived threat. From this perspective, learning to fight is Iteung's way of preparing herself for dangerous situations and overcoming the fears arising from traumatic experiences. By learning martial arts, Iteung tries to regain control of his life. This can be seen as a way to

cope with the feeling of helplessness caused by trauma. In Fromm's context, this is a constructive and defensive form of aggression, not a destructive one. The childhood sexual trauma Iteung experienced affected her behavior by creating a need to protect herself and feel empowered. Her desire to learn to fight is a manifestation of this effort and can be seen as a form of "benign aggression" according to Fromm. This aggression is a reasonable defensive response to a perceived threat, and a way to overcome a sense of helplessness and regain control of her life.

2. The Effect of Childhood Sexual Abuse towards Malignant Aggression

"I might lose, but I don't care, he has to feel my fists. He threw some more punches and the lip of the kid he wanted to beat up split. The kid he wanted to beat up was completely taken off guard, but after the third punch he began to fight back. This one is for stepping on my shoes, this one is for tearing up my books, and this one is for the time you pulled down my jogging pants in front of the girls." (Kurniawan, 2014, p.120)

The character in this quote suffered a series of acts of bullying that belonged to the categories of psychological and physical violence, such as kicking his shoes, ripping his book, and being humiliated in public. This character's response to the traumatic experience is to commit physical violence as a form of revenge. He kicked the face of the boy who was the target of his anger, causing wounds and unpreparedness to his opponent. This action reflects the change from a passive victim to an active aggressor. The decision to use this violence demonstrates an attempt to overcome emotional pain through destructive physical action. The actions of the character in this quote can be categorized as "malignant aggression". His actions are not only defensive but also aimed at destroying and avenging. Although the character's actions may be motivated by the desire to protect his dignity and avenge the ill-treatment he suffered, the methods he used showed destructive and destructive characteristics. His actions go beyond self-defense and enter the territory of "malignant aggression" because his intentions are to destroy and avenge. His actions to avenge and destroy the lives of the bullying perpetrators show an effort to overcome the trauma and regain control of the situation. However, the act is motivated by hatred and the desire to destroy, it can be categorized as "malignant aggression" according to Fromm. Malignant aggression is more related to destructive and destructive violence directed at others.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals a strong link between recurrent sexual harassment and the development of violent tendencies, both self-directed and outwardly expressed, shaped significantly by the novel's plot. Sexual harassment, marked by unwanted sexual advances that may be verbal or physical, plays a critical role in shaping characters' responses to trauma and the effects of sexual trauma-induced violence into two forms: benign aggression and malignant aggression. *Benign aggression* involves defensive actions, where victims resort to aggression as a means of self-protection against further harassment. Conversely, *malignant aggression* encompasses more destructive responses, reflecting the intense pain and trauma experienced

by victims and often manifesting as harm directed towards oneself or others. Both forms underscore the significant psychological impact of sexual harassment on the victims. Benign aggression is more prominent as a response to sexual harassment, influenced heavily by the novel's storyline. This outcome suggests that the narrative's specific plot shapes the characters' aggressive responses to trauma, which may vary across different literary contexts or research objects.

REFERENCES

- Adi, R. (2004). *Metodologi Penelitian Sosial dan Hukum*. Jakarta: Granit.
- Aji, I. S. (2018). The Struggle of an Impotence Man. *Psychology*.
- Anshori, M. F. (2016). Trauma Tokoh Ajo Kawir Dalam Novel Seperti Dendam, Rindu Harus Di Bayar Tuntas Karya Eka Kurniawan. *Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra*, 5(6).
- Brown, L. (1994). *Subversive Dialogues: Theory in Feminist Therapy*. New York: Basic Books.
- Courtois, C. (1999). *Healing the Shame That Binds You: A guided journal for survivors of childhood sexual abuse*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Denzin N.K, & Lincoln Y.S. (1994). *Handbook Qualitative Research*. New Delhi: Sage Publication.
- Endraswara, S. (2013). *Metode Penelitian Sastra*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Widyatama.
- Fromm, E. (1973). *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winson.
- Herman, J. L. (1992). *Trauma and Recovery*. New York: Basic Books..
- Jarvis, M. (2006). *Sport Psychology*. London and New York : Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Kurniawan , E. (2014). *Vengeance is Mine, All Others Pay Cash*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Building.
- Meger, E. (2016). Sexual Violence as a Crime Against Humanity. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 60(1).
- Moelong, L. (2011). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Edisi Revisi*. Bandung: PT. Remaja Ros.
- Moleong, L. J. (2017). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Ratna, N. K. (2010). *Sastra dan Psikologi: Pengantar Pemahaman Psikologi Sastra*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Sisca, & Moningga. (2009). Resilience Perempuan Dewasa Muda. *Jurnal Psikologi*, 2(1).
- Sugiyono. (2008). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif Kualitatif dan R&D*. Bandung: ALFABETA.

Suhandjati, S. (2004). *Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan: Perspektif Sosiologis*. Yogyakarta: PT. Refika Aditama.