

Exploring Childhood Trauma and Coping Mechanisms Through Ferenczi's Trauma Theory

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Abstract

*This paper aims to achieve objectives to deepen the understanding of the psychological effects of childhood trauma, explore practical therapeutic approaches for addressing trauma, and provide insights into coping mechanisms. The significance of this research lies in its potential to offer strategies for recognizing and healing traumatic experiences in therapeutic settings. Grounded in Ferenczi's trauma theory, this study analyzes the traumatic experiences of the protagonist in Pelzer's novel *A Child Called 'It'* (1995). By examining the protagonist's use of Ferenczi's concept of "identification with the aggressor" and other coping techniques, the findings reveal the complex dynamics of trauma and its long-term consequences, highlighting the importance of therapeutic interventions in mitigating these effects.*

Keywords: Trauma, Fragmentation, Orpha, Soulless Body

Introduction

The research focuses on the novel *A Child Called 'It'* (1995), authored by Dave Pelzer, an American writer known for his autobiographical works. Published in 1995, this memoir of childhood abuse, fully titled *A Child Called 'It': One Child's Courage to Survive*, has been recognized as a New York Times best seller for many years. Despite its acclaim, the book has also sparked controversy, with journalists and some of Pelzer's family members claiming that the events described are not entirely factual, alleging that Pelzer fabricated and shaped specific incidents to garner public sympathy. Pelzer's experiences of childhood abuse heavily influence his literary works. *A Child Called 'It'* details the psychological and physical abuse Pelzer endured from birth until age 12. The narrative recounts the severe punishments, starvation, manipulative games, and a particularly traumatic incident of being stabbed.

Ferenczi's trauma theory and the novel *A Child Called 'It'* (1995) are almost discussing the same theme of child abuse. Ferenczi's trauma theory states that when child abuse increases, it causes trauma and so happens in the novel *A Child Called 'It'* (1995). In this novel, the protagonist has been exposed to punishments and dilemmas that cause him trauma. The researcher has studied the novel's protagonist under Ferenczi's trauma theory.

Statement of the Problem

Pelzer's *A Child Called 'It'* (1995) shows the courage of a child to survive. The protagonist survived suffering and punishments. The child was beaten and punished far beyond everyday

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parental practice. The main concern of the research is to explore the traumatic personality of the protagonist while using Ferenczi's readings.

Research Questions

- i. What are the emotional and psychological ramifications of the protagonist's trauma in the novel *A Child Called "It" (1995)*?
- ii. What coping technique is used by the protagonist of Pelzer's *A Child Called 'It' (1995)*?

Research Objectives

- i. To understand the emotional and psychological ramifications of the protagonist of *A Child Called "It" (1995)*.
- ii. To recognize techniques the protagonist used during his traumatic situation.

Significance of the Research

This research carries significant value in the field of psychoanalytical studies and the field of literature. Exploring the traumatic experiences of *A Child Called "It" (1995)* through Ferenczi's Readings contributes to the understanding of Ferenczi's trauma theory and child trauma in the book *A Child Called "It" (1995)*. This study contributes to the field of literature, psychoanalytic, and trauma studies.

Literature Review

Herman's (1992) concept of "the disintegration of self" in his book *Trauma and Recovery* is prominent in Pelzer's novel *Called 'It' (1995)*. This concept of disintegration is found in Ferenczi's trauma theory. He called it fragmentation and splitting. When children pass through trauma, they disintegrate or split their personalities. Ferenczi states the same concept in his writings: splitting personality results in three or splits of personality. They are the following: soul, orpha, and soulless body.

The study of Husna and Kuswoyat (2022) aims to find the impact of causes and symptoms of trauma on Anna Fox's character. The researchers have used a psychological approach while conducting this research. They found two factors causing post-traumatic stress disorder in Anna's character, its symptoms which Anna was experiencing frequently. Further, they found symptoms of its arousal activity and factors that affected Anna's physical, emotional, mental, behavioural, and spiritual self-due to post-traumatic stress disorder.

Shree (2022) stated that child abuse leads to different mental disorders as they grow older. Children being abused turn into two kinds of personalities; one is called maladaptive individuals, and another form is called adaptive individuals. Maladaptive individuals are those who turn from being victims to victimizers or abusers. An adaptive individual breaks the cycle of violence and abandons a terrified past and all their sufferings and dilemmas. Shaver (2022) studies three main elements that cause suffering in humans. They are abandonment of self, isolation, and loss of significance. According to this research, abandonment of self occurs in the early stages of life in childhood. During this self-abandonment, children abandon their psychological selves in the true sense. According to this study, recalling those traumatic and painful events and experiences causes children psychological and emotional recovery.

Almqvist and Broberg (1997) talk about the way children and their parents deny their reactions to trauma. This process or technique of keeping silent and avoiding talking about traumatic events is a kind of coping strategy. It helps both children and parents to survive those stressful experiences. If both can provide each other what they seek of each other, security, and denial about traumatic situations cause no damage to anyone. The denial of trauma causes adverse effects on the children and parents when a sense of security is not there. The children feel unprotected and abandoned by their parents. It is just like the "confusion of tongues between

child and aggressive adult (parent or other adult)” of Ferenczi’s writings (Ferenczi, 1932, 1933). According to Ferenczi, withdrawal from love is more incredible trauma than rape. It is called double shock or double trauma.

Nielsen et al. (2015) show the symptoms of bullied persons and those who have gone through some trauma are almost the same. This bullying occurs in the workplace (with adults) and school (with children). The main objectives of their research are to show how much association is present between symptoms of PTSD and bullying and to prove whether bullying is a consequence of PTSD or not. They found a correlation of about 0.42 between both samples. According to the study, two out of three (2/3) diagnosed studies propose that PTSD symptoms and bullying are related.

Blass (2015) explains “splitting” with four different concepts instead of its conventional understanding or concept. The first concept about splitting is dissociative splitting, which is the splitting of whole personalities during trauma. The second concept explains that splitting is a repudiate splitting, which helps avoid controlling or repressing disturbing experiences. The other two forms are excellent and lousy splitting. In this research, the researcher is willing to show his contribution to analytic theory and practice while explaining these different concepts about splitting. Hampton (1993) presented the concept of selflessness and the loss of self. Hampton has explained the morality of selflessness and how it causes loss of self when it exceeds the ordinary level.

Children’s Bureau (2019) conducted a *Long-Term Consequences of Child Abuse and Neglect* study. In this study, they have discussed what long-term consequences children will face when they are abused physically or mentally. The work of Mucci (2017) supports Ferenczi’s clinical practices. Mucci tries to say that Ferenczi was the one who brought revolution in the field of psychoanalysis. Ferenczi has principles that are necessary in the current field of trauma and trauma therapy. Some revolutionary concepts introduced are the effects of interpersonal influence, abuse, or violence, and that influence leads to the Identification of the child with the aggressor, resulting in the splitting of personality and fragmentation and dissociation. Dissociation is what is called “regression” by Freud.

Pelaez (2009) discussed how and why Ferenczi’s concepts contradict Freud’s. The paper concluded that Ferenczi’s writings include most of Ferenczi’s original contributions. This research was about the derivation of trauma theory and its elements from Ferenczi’s different writings of 1931 and 1932, as well as to differentiate Ferenczi’s points from Freud’s elements.

Craig and Sprang (2007) wanted to find out how the cycle of violence goes on. They assessed the sample, which included a Child Abuse Potential Inventory (CAPI) and a trauma history screen. During the assessment, different scores were presented to researchers for different groups with varying exposures to trauma.

Research Methodology

Qualitative research has no statistical or mathematical data or graphs for analysis. It is descriptive research. The researcher uses Ferenczi’s trauma theory as a theoretical framework. Ferenczi presents the frameworks of 1931 and 1932 writings. He was in contradiction with Freud and other conventional psychoanalysts on the active role of psychoanalysts in therapeutic abstinence. He believed in the free association of patients with their therapists. He wanted to encourage patients to do what they fear to do. Ferenczi is considered the father of trauma theories. In this theory, he has discussed traumatic events, factors causing trauma or setting the stage for trauma, and how trauma is registered. Ferenczi’s trauma theory has some critical points that are considered as effects of trauma are as under Identification with the aggressor, masochism, splitting, dissociation, and fragmentation. According to Ferenczi’s trauma theory, the degree of splitting depends upon the degree of trauma received by a person or child. Splitting of personality occurs in three splits of personality, i.e., soul, orpha, and soulless body or cinders of earlier

psychic sufferings.

The first part of the personality is called “soul”. This split of the children knows nothing; it suffers, never gets satisfied, and is an unconscious mass of the traumatized person. This split of the children is unaware, far away from reality, and craves for their rescue. This part of the personality always desires and struggles to return to when they used to be happy before registering life-long trauma. This part of the personality wants to make everything the same as it was and desires their rescue.

The second and most crucial split of personality is orpha, which helps in Identification with the aggressor. This split of personality matures early and suddenly sexually, psychologically (intellectual level), and emotionally due to fear of punishment and death. This part of personality during splitting works a lot for survival. It develops some abilities such as sensitiveness, the ability to unusual perceptions through the sixth sense, and intelligence so that it can appraise the environment and find ways to survive. Orpha's split of personality also solaces and etherizes that part of the personality which is suffering, the soul. Ferenczi says that for survival and extreme need, a child can also decrease or relieve his sufferings through imagination/hallucinations.

The third and last part of the split personality is the “soulless body.” When the soul is suffering, orpha tries to help a child survive. The body then detaches from the soul, and the child perceives it as happening to someone else. Ferenczi calls it “ashes of earlier mental sufferings” (1932).

According to the theorist, the soul is also the suffering split of personality. This means that when the personality of a traumatic person splits in the account of adapting self to the trauma and avoiding suffering, it splits into three parts, as discussed above: soul, orpha, and soulless body. Now, the soulless body considers that trauma and suffering are happening to some other person, while the orpha part identifies itself with the aggressor to avoid body suffering and survive, but the soul remains unknowledgeable and unsatisfied.

The chosen qualitative, descriptive research methodology is well-suited for exploring the profound impact of childhood trauma in Pelzer's *A Child Called 'It'* through Ferenczi's trauma theory. Given the subjective and deeply personal nature of trauma, the study does not rely on statistical or mathematical data. Instead, it focuses on detailed descriptions and interpretations of the protagonist's experiences. This approach aligns with Ferenczi's emphasis on understanding the inner world of traumatized individuals, particularly his theory that trauma fragments the personality into distinct parts.

By employing a qualitative method, the research can delve into the nuances of the protagonist's psychological state, which includes the splitting of the self into the "soul," "orpha," and "soulless body." Ferenczi's theory, articulated in his 1931 and 1932 writings, provides a rich framework for analyzing how the protagonist's trauma manifests and affects his behaviour and identity. The absence of quantitative data allows for a more in-depth exploration of these theoretical concepts, offering a comprehensive understanding of the long-term effects of severe abuse. This methodology is justified as it facilitates a deeper engagement with the text and the theoretical framework, making it possible to uncover the complex layers of trauma experienced by the protagonist.

Data Analysis

Textual references have been identified in the novel *A Child Called 'It'* (1995). These references have been identified by the researchers who will carry out the research analysis. This analysis is done to offer valuable insights in the field of literature and psycho-analysis. This analysis helps to comprehend how Ferenczi's reading causes its impacts on an individual's emotional, physical, and psychological personality and its impacts on people around that individual. This analysis deciphers the protagonist's traumatic childhood experiences and the effects of trauma on the individual and his kinship. This study is carried out under Ferenczi's concepts of identification with the aggressor, interpersonal influence, dissociation and its

degrees, autoplasmic adaptation, fragmentation, splitting and its different parts, and masochism. Dave, the protagonist of the novel, was living a happy life with his family—his mother, father, and siblings. At one time, they were delighted, and their mother loved them, but suddenly, something unexpected happened, and their mother turned into an aggressive and abusive mother towards Dave.

According to Ferenczi's later writings (1929), "a more powerful person has traumatic influence over a person with less power". He divided this interpersonal traumatic influence into two parts: maternal influence and her is paternal influence. Maternal influence exists between two persons when the relation between two is of love and carefulness. Paternal influence exists when it is an influential person's power, force, or control over a person of less energy. "From above, I felt someone hug my shoulders. I thought it was my father. I turned and became flushed with pride to find Mom holding me tightly. I could feel her heartbeat" (Pelzer, 1995, p.11).

These lines show the influence of a mother's tenderness and love upon her child. At the start of the novel, the mother is caring and loving. That love and care of the mother influenced her children, especially Dave. It was because of this tenderness Dave was traumatized when his mother, about whom he once said "love and honor thy mother, for she is the fruit that gives thou life" (Pelzer, 1995, p.8), turned into an abusive mother. The influence which is evident in the novel is the paternal influence of Dave's mother upon him. This influence has caused him trauma and because of this type of influence, he suffered those traumatic experiences. Dave says, "I was put in a corner of our bedroom. By this time, I had become afraid of mom. Very afraid. I never asked her to let me come out" (Pelzer, 1995, p.12).

These lines show how an aggressive mother started influencing her child. Dave was so influenced that he was not able to come out of his room without his mother's permission. Dave says, "I would sit and wait for one of my brothers to come into our bedroom, and have him ask if David could come out now and play" (Pelzer, 1995, p.12).

This kind of influence, called paternal influence, traumatized David a lot in his life. This was the influence that caused David's dissociation of personality. Through her power and authority, she used to torture David while using different techniques and treatments. David used to call them "corner treatment" and "mirror treatment". David says,

Mother would simply grab me and smash my face against the mirror, smearing my tear-streaked face on the slick, reflective glass. Then she would order me to say over and over again, 'I'm a bad boy! I'm a bad boy' (Pelzer, 1995, p.12)!

These were treatments David used to receive from his mother daily. He was influenced by such an extent by his mother's authority and power that he even could not tell about all this to his father. This shows that paternal influence acts badly upon children in their early stages of life. The paternal influence of Dave's mother became severe day by day. He was restricted from watching television, He had to do the chores before going to sleep and for sleep, and he needed to wait for his mother's permission, "I was sent to the garage to stand until mother called me to go to bed" (Pelzer, 1995, p.15). Interpersonal, authoritative influence can be seen when Dave was not allowed even to speak. Once he wanted to speak about his love for his mother and he was punished (Pelzer, 1995, p.15). This was the interpersonal influence of Dave's mother over him which caused trauma to him. This paternal influence was the cause of Dave's trauma.

Ferenczi's trauma theory explains how after interpersonal influence trauma is registered in Dave's personality during his childhood. Dave's trauma caused him to adapt to trauma. According to Ferenczi after the registration of trauma, the traumatized person then wants to adapt to trauma for survival. Adaptation during trauma has different stages. It starts from unconsciousness or paralysis of the body, as a traumatized person loses consciousness and cognitive power which results in shock or coma. After that when that person feels emotionally abandoned, they start abandoning themselves. They start punishing themselves to remove their

frustrations. According to Ferenczi when a traumatized person realizes weakness and friendliness and realizes that there is no one to help him from outside, they avoid relief of trauma, and this is where dissociation of personality takes place. Ferenczi called the dissociation from trauma a type of psychic death. In this condition, the mind detaches itself from reality and the body adapts to attack spontaneously. In less extreme dissociation, the fractional negation of reality is when reality is replaced by dreams.

I would drift off to sleep, fantasizing about food. I mainly dreamt of colossal hamburgers with all the fixings. In my dreams, I seized my prize and brought it to my lips. I visualized every inch of the hamburger (Pelzer, 1995, p.19).

Dave often used the daydreaming technique to satisfy his hunger as he says, "My hunger for food was replaced with daydreaming. I fantasized whenever performing my chores at the house" (Pelzer, 1995, p.24). Dave did not use the technique of dissociation (daydreaming) only for satisfying his need for food but also dreamt about receiving love and care from his mother and his desire to play outside like other children as he says, "For a moment I closed my eyes and imagined I was one of them. I felt warm inside. I smiled" (Pelzer, 1995, p.29). Dave also daydreams about his comfort as he says, "sometimes at night I would wake up and try to imagine I was a real person, sleeping under a warm electric blanket, knowing I was safe and that somebody joined me" (Pelzer, 1995, p.28).

According to Ferenczi, when a child is suffering and being traumatized frequently, that child wants to die before receiving any more torture. The actual death is felt as a relief instead of receiving punishment to death every day, as Dave says, "I wished I could dissolve and be gone forever. I wished I would never have to face another human being" (Pelzer, 1995, p.22). This happened with Dave at some other places as he said, "That day at school I prayed for the world to end" (Pelzer, 1995, p.29).

Ferenczi says that traumatized people do not feel any fear of death in this case and they feel like they have withdrawn from the whole painful situation and feel manic. It feels like this because the person has dissociated from reality and has lost self. Dave says, "I stood against the wall and began to whimper until I realized that I had beaten her" (Pelzer, 1995, p.18).

Ferenczi explained identification with the aggressor as the most important element or effect of adapting self to trauma. When humans dissociate from themselves, they identify with the aggressor and show no opposition to the attacker. After that, that person shows no feelings and thinks it is someone else who is receiving this torture. The child even stops hating the attacker; as Dave says, "And for some strange reason, I wanted to be with mother" (Pelzer, 1995, p.15). A child surrenders his will to the attacker and thinks nothing about feelings. The child ignores feelings. Dave says, "I tried to tell mother that I had missed her, but mother refused to let me speak" (Pelzer, 1995, p.15).

During identification with the aggressor, children became aware of every next move of the attacker. Dave identifies with his aggressive mother so he knows that mother will not beat him in front of his little brother, Ron, or any other person in the house. Dave says, "I knew mother never acted this bizarre when anyone else was in the house" (Pelzer, 1995, p.17). One day he was tortured by his mother Ron, his brother, came and she stopped beating him. Dave considered it as his victory against her as Dave says, "it was Ron. My heart surged with relief. The blood from mother's face drained. She knew she had lost. I used my head to survive. For the first time, I had won!" (Pelzer, 1995, p.17, 18).

Another technique children use for their survival during traumatic situations while identifying with the aggressor is autoplasmic adaptation. During autoplasmic adaptation, the children know the aggressor and their moves so they change themselves according to the external environment.

"The more mother slugged me, the more I began to realize I won! Anything was better than burning on the stove" (Pelzer, 1995, p.17). This shows that through identification with the

aggressor, children save themselves from extreme torture and increase their survival chances. During this survival, children do not think that the aggressor is doing something wrong to them as Dave says, “by then, mother would ‘forget’ to feed me any dinner” (Pelzer, 1995, p.19). When children are identified with the aggressor, they try to defend the aggressor. Dave frequently tells lies to save himself from his mother. At one place when Dave is asked about his attentiveness, he lies saying, “I lied, saying I had stayed up late watching television” (Pelzer, 1995, p.21). Dave wants his mother not to make him guilty in front of people. That is why he once lied to Den’s mother accusing himself as guilty for coming late instead of telling her about mother tortures. He said, “I whined to her that I had been a bad boy and could not attend the meeting” (Pelzer, 1995, p.16). Ferenczi meant autoplasmic adaptation as denying one’s own emotions and comprehension in account of shock produced by fear as Dave says, “Usually I’m a very good student, but for the past few months I gave up on everything in my life, including escaping my misery through my schoolwork” (Pelzer, 1995, p.03). Children who identify themselves with the aggressor sometimes rebel against the aggressor. They show their ego at some points as Dave says, “one of my resistance techniques was to lie on the floor acting as though I didn’t have the strength to stand” (Pelzer, 1995, p.21). Ferenczi says that attackers cannot do any harm to a person who is dead, who feel nothing and due to this, traumatic children act rebelliously against attacker because they feel nothing of abuser’s punishment as Dave says, “my courage took over and I stole bits of frozen food from the garage freezer. I was fully aware that I could pay for my crime at any time” (Pelzer, 1995, p.33). Dave showed rebellious nature against his abusive mother when he said, “I wanted to show The Bitch that she could beat me only if I died” (Pelzer, 1995, P.37). After punishments and even being stabbed by his mother, he has shown no reaction toward his sufferings because he is dead from inside.

According to Ferenczi’s readings, parental denial is more traumatic than actual traumatic experiences. Ferenczi called it double shock or double trauma which leads children to traumatic aloneness. Dave has experienced this in his life as he says in the novel. At one place when Dave was stabbed by his mother, he went to his father so that he may control his mother and take him to hospital. Dave says,

I stuttered, “Father... Mo... Mo... mother stabbed me.” He didn’t even raise an eyebrow. He cleared his throat before saying, “Well... you ah... you better go back in there and do the dishes.” I stood before father in total shock (Pelzer, 1995, p.37).

Ferenczi talked about the double shock and also told that emotional abandonment is way more traumatic than rape. Dave felt a sense of negation and abandonment from his father he said, “I turned away. All my respect for father was gone” (Pelzer, 1995, p.37). According to Ferenczi when one of the parents is abusive so the other’s emotional support and care help child to survive. Children think of another parent as their protector as Dave says, “I still felt father was my protector” (Pelzer, 1995, p.42).

According to Ferenczi when suffering, dilemmas or punishments are beyond the limit of tolerance; it causes the breakdown of the psyche of a traumatic person. This breakdown results in splitting, fragmentation, and sometimes atomization of personality. Fragmentation occurs to save children from the pain when two opposite thoughts are connected.

In the novel, *A Child Called ‘It’* (1995) Dave’s mother is caring and looks carefully after her children and family as he says, “mom was truly a gifted cook. Of all the things she did for her family, I think creating new and exotic meals was my favorite” (Pelzer, 1995, p. 07).

She turned into an abusive mother and used to punish Dave severely. She did not even use to feed Dave as he says, “mother knew why I stole food and so did Dad, but she still refused to feed me” (Pelzer, 1995, p.25). Another important effect of trauma is splitting. According to Ferenczi’s trauma theory, the degree of splitting depends upon the degree of trauma received

by a person or child. Splitting of personality occurs in three splits of personality i.e. soul, orpha, and soulless body or cinders of earlier psychic sufferings. The first part of the personality is called "soul". This split of the children knows nothing; it suffers, never gets satisfied, and is an unconscious mass of the traumatized person. This split of the children is unaware, far away from reality, and craves for their rescue. This part of the personality always desires and struggles to go back into the time when they used to be happy before registering life-long trauma. This part of personality wants to make everything the same as it was and desires their rescue as Dave says,

I prayed that it was the real thing, not the false labor. I wanted mother out of the house so badly. I knew that with her gone, Father would feed me. I was also happy to be free from the beatings (Pelzer, 1995, p.57).

At one other place, Dave reverts to the condition before the trauma. He wanted himself free so desperately that even he wanted his mother to die. This shows soul, a split of personality that desires his rescue. Dave says, "I hated mother most and wished that she were dead" (Pelzer, 1995, p.56). One other place he said, "I thought about mother's age and tried to calculate when she might die. I longed for the day when her Soul would be taken into the depths of hell; only then would I be free of her" (Pelzer, 1995, p.56).

The soul is also the suffering split of personality. It means when the personality of a traumatic person splits in account of adapting self to the trauma and avoiding suffering, it splits into three parts as discussed above; soul, orpha, and soulless body. Now soulless body considers that trauma and suffering are happening to some other person while the orpha part identifies itself with the aggressor to avoid body suffering and survive but the Soul remains unknowledgeable and unsatisfied. Some references can be taken to prove that Dave's character was a content less and unsatisfied body at some parts of the novel as Dave says, "I felt so degraded; I cried like a baby. I had no self-respect of any kind" (Pelzer, 1995, p.32). Dave's part of personality which want his past happy life back, before trauma is evident in lines: "I let my head fall forward, half dreaming that I was one them – a member of "the family" (Pelzer, 1995, p.34).

The second and most important split of personality is orpha which helps in identification with the aggressor. This split of personality matures early and suddenly sexually, psychologically (intellectual level), and emotionally due to fear of punishment and death. This part of personality during splitting works a lot for survival. It develops some abilities such as sensitiveness, the ability to unusual perceptions through the sixth sense, and intelligence so that it can appraise the environment and find ways to survive. In the novel *A Child Called 'It'*, Dave uses his sixth sense perception and super-intelligence on many occasions to save himself. Dave said, "expecting mother to bash me, I tensed my body, waiting for her to strike" (Pelzer, 1995, p.29). It is orpha, the split of personality enabling Dave to intuit something coming from the aggressor (mother). On one other occasion when Dave was starving, he ate food without mother's permission and when mother got to know about this, she came and wanted Dave to vomit. Dave also used the technique of identification with the aggressor through orpha to save himself he said, "I knew what was going to happen next. I tensed myself for the volley of blows that I knew was coming. I knew the episode wasn't over. Moments later she returned" (Pelzer, 1995, p.26, 27).

One day Dave fell asleep before washing dishes. After some time he needed to go to the bathroom but without his mother's permission, he could not go upstairs. Dave who has identified himself with the aggressor thinks that mother is not allowing him to go the bathroom because she wanted him to drink my pee. Dave says, "maybe that is what she has planned for me I told myself. Maybe she wants me to drink my own pee" (Pelzer, 1995, p.30). As Dave has identified himself with his mother through his split personality and mother knows that Dave is well aware of my every move so now she started following him and does nothing according to expectations of Dave. As Dave says, "she wanted to maintain a constant pressure on me, by

leaving me unsure of when or where she would strike. Before I could think of a way to defeat her” (Pelzer, 1995, p.30).

Orpha split of personality also solaces and etherizes that part of the personality which is suffering, the soul. Ferenczi says that for survival and extreme need child can also decrease or relieve his sufferings through imagination/hallucinations. For example, in Novel *A Child Called It* (1995) when Dave is in extreme need of food he hallucinates food. When he is fed up with his sufferings he hallucinates about a utopia as Dave once said, “in the darkness of the garage, I closed my eyes, dreaming I was a king dressed in the finest robes, eating the best food mankind had to offer” (Pelzer, 1995, p.33).

This split helps and struggles for other splits to survive as Dave says, “I was desperate to meet her time limits. I wanted so much to have something to eat” (Pelzer, 1995, p.35). This line shows that orpha identifies with the aggressor and meet his/her requirements so that other parts get some rest and food for survival. That is why Ferenczi has called it a “guardian angel”.

The third and last part of the split personality is the “soulless body”. When the soul is suffering, Orpha tries to help in the survival of a child: the body then detaches from the soul and the child perceives it as happening to someone else. It is called “ashes of earlier mental sufferings” (1932) by Ferenczi. In the novel, Dave's soulless part can be seen through these lines, “I think Father and I both knew the code of ‘the family’ _ if we don’t acknowledge a problem, it simply does not exist” (Pelzer, 1995, p.37). Another place the same soulless body acted as, “whenever mother struck me, it was as if she were taking her aggressions out on a rag doll. I was a robot” (Pelzer, 1995, p.55).

Ferenczi explained Masochism as an adaptation technique through trauma. When identification with an aggressor takes the form of long term it turns into masochism. There are two forms of Masochism. Submissive and provocative: submissive is when a child acts as a robot and cares nothing about his/her feelings to avoid pain. Dave says, “I had totally disconnected myself from all physical pain. I was a robot, rarely revealing my emotions; only I thought it would please the bitch and work to my advantage” (Pelzer, 1995, p.55).

Dave has submitted all his will and feelings to mother. He has become an obedient robot and did what he was told to do and said whatever was ordered to him. “Mother had brainwashed me by having me shout aloud, “I hate myself! I hate myself!” Her efforts paid off” (Pelzer, 1995, p.57). Dave has submitted his will totally to his mother sometimes as we can see in these lines, “without hesitation I opened my mouth, and mother rammed the cold spoon deep into my throat” (Pelzer, 1995, p.31).

Provocative masochism is a type of masochism in which a child provokes the aggressor. Children do this for two purposes; one is to show the real and cruel face of the aggressor to everyone while provoking the aggressor. They purposely make mistakes so that they are blamed for not being good children. It is because children have been identified with the aggressor that is why they do not want the blame to come on the aggressor and to justify and satisfy the aggression of the adult. This statement can be proved through these lines, “to keep mother off balance, I began to rain whining questions. This infuriated her even more, and mother began to rain blows around my head and chest” (Pelzer, 1995, p. 17).

Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal an enduring impact of childhood trauma on the protagonist, Dave, in Pelzer’s *A Child Called ‘It’* (1995). The analysis of the novel’s language; its words, phrases, paragraphs, and dialogues alongside Dave’s actions and character development, clearly indicates that he endured severe trauma, primarily inflicted by his mother. This trauma was not only physical but also emotional and psychological, leading to significant long-term consequences for Dave.

Dave’s traumatic experiences began with his mother’s rising abuse and neglect, which were

compounded by the lack of support from his father and siblings. As the abuse continued, Dave increasingly felt isolated and powerless, leading him to adopt coping mechanisms essential for his survival. Ferenczi's trauma theory provides a critical lens for understanding these mechanisms, particularly the concept of "identification with the aggressor." Dave unconsciously mirrored the behaviors of his abusive mother as a way to mitigate his fear and helplessness, aligning with Ferenczi's assertion that trauma can lead to such identification as a defense strategy.

Moreover, Dave's experiences of splitting, fragmentation, and dissociation are consistent with Ferenczi's observations about how trauma can fragment a person's identity. These psychological defenses allowed Dave to endure the daily horrors without fully experiencing their emotional impact, effectively numbing himself to his reality. These findings underscore the devastating effects of childhood trauma and the complex coping strategies that emerge in response to severe and prolonged abuse.

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