

Kindred Souls: A Screenplay on the Effects of Domestic Abuse on Teenagers

Christiane, Miriam.

English Department, Faculty of Letters, Petra Christian University, Siwalankerto 121-131, Surabaya 60236, East Java, INDONESIA
Email: miriamchristiane@yahoo.co.id

ABSTRACT

The topic of my work is about domestic abuse on teenagers and the theme is the effects of abuse on the teenagers. This is a screenplay contains the two stories of two high school students who got the same experience which is being abuse by their family in their daily life. The purpose of making this project is that I want people to question themselves and to be aware of what they are doing to their own children or family member. Unintentional or well-intentional the action, abusive behavior should be stopped. To shape the conflicts and characterization of my characters I use three theories; parental control, frustration-aggression, and effects of abuse. As for the genre, I choose tragedy for it will help me create the ending. In the end, both students want to seek freedom by running away. However, what will happen later is not as planned.

Key words: Tragedy, Domestic Abuse, Victims of Abuse, Effects of Abuse.

The reason why I choose screenplay as my project is because with screenplay I can explore different places from many angle, use different point of view, and use direct-dialog as Moreno and Tuxford, the creator of Maker Studio's LA Series, stated that, "As a screenwriter, you must show what's happening in a story, rather than tell. The very nature of screenwriting is based on how to show a story on a screen." (Moreno & Tuxford, n.d.). Also according to Andrew Muir, a scriptwriter and storyteller at Basewo Media in Vancouver, "Screenplay writers use the storytelling power of images to its fullest potential, and keep the text as brief as possible. A picture, after all, is worth a thousand words." (Muir, 2014). Sometimes when people read novels, they cannot really visualize or feel the emotion that the author has written and misinterpret the meanings. Screenplay is meant to be films. Therefore, I want to use screenplay as a medium to visualize strong meanings that can give a bigger impact. For me, screenplay is a better choice.

I choose the genre of tragedy because it is suitable to use to talk about realistic problems that usually happen in daily life since it has more serious tone. The statement from C.S. Lewis that says, "Tragedy is more important than love. Out of all human events, it is tragedy alone that brings people out of their own petty desires and into awareness of other humans' suffering. Tragedy occurs in human lives so that we will learn to reach out and comfort others" (as cited in Wheeler, 2014) clarifies that the genre of tragedy can put essential sympathy into the minds or hearts of the audience; people are less likely to do harm when they can learn how the one that would experience that harm would feel. This kind of genre is suitable for young adult or age above because they can understand the struggle and can relate their life with the story. The tragedy can happen to anyone including their age so they can relate their life with the story.

According to Irene Putrie, a public prosecutor of Indonesia, child abuse case is under-reported case in Indonesia for these four reasons; that child abuse within the family is considered a private family affair and not a subject for outside intervention, most of the abuse cases among lower class people are generally outside of the social work services, most caregivers failed to identify the children as being abused, and many physicians also have barriers in the assessment of assault violence (Putrie, p.114). Therefore, I would like to sound my opinion that the public should acknowledge that the issue of

domestic violence is not just a private, family matter, but also a serious crime, which needs to be prevented by the community.

The statements of the problems in this project are the reasons why the abuse between the parents (or guardian) and children could happen and how the abuses affect the children.

The purpose of my work is to make people aware that domestic abuse could happen to anyone and that the victims need help, therefore, I want to show the reason why mental abuse can happen and some destructive effects of the abuse.

To shape the conflict in my screenplay I use parental control, frustration-aggression, and effects of abuse as the theory. The reason why I choose parental control is because the parents (or guardians) who take the role as abusers in my story use their power and control as motivation to obtain what they desire from the less powerful family members which are the teenage children. As for the frustration-aggression theory I use it to be the main reason why the abusers tend to use violence; their frustration leads to aggression then leads to violence. Moreover, I use the effects of abuse to show how destructive domestic abuse can be for the children.

Control theory is based on the concept that many family conflicts result from an individual's need to obtain and maintain power and control within a relationship (Nolan & Juliao, p.9). It explains my opinion about the motivation that underlying the abuser's behavior which is the power and control that she or he is able to exert over other members of the family. The more powerful members of families (e.g., parents) often use threat or use of force or violence to obtain compliance from less powerful family members (e.g., children). It cannot be denied that, as adults, parents have power over children. The power is obvious; greater physical strength and abilities.

It is indeed true that parents are given the legal right to exercise power over children but the responsibility as parents is to teach not oppress. It is necessary for parents to use their power with strategies and awareness of solidarity between adults and children. Adults need to respect children's thoughts and feelings as fully human, regardless of where children are in their emotional and psychological development. Children's thoughts and feelings should be respected in the same way that adults' thoughts and feelings are respected.

Baron and Richardson the author of a book titled *Human Aggression* defined aggression as any behavior intended to harm another person who does not want to be harmed (as cited in Bushman, 2013). There are many areas where aggression manifests in the society today and one of them is domestic abuse. Brad J Bushman who is a professor of communication and psychology at the Ohio State University and a professor of communication science at the VU University writes that the definition of aggression includes three important features; aggression is a behavior-you can see it, aggression is intentional rather than accidental, and the victim wants to avoid the harm. Crick and Grotpeter explained that males tend to be more physically aggressive than females while females are much more likely than males to engage in relational aggression, defined as intentionally harming another person's social relationships, feelings of acceptance, or inclusion within a group (as cited in Bushman, 2013). Regarding that statement, in my work I make the character that does the physical abuse to be male.

Some parents lash out when they are angry and use physical or verbal abuse to assert their power over their children, usually the angrier the parent, the more intense the abuse. They may think that their abuse is their way in disciplining their children or protecting them, for example, the old parenting method with the belief of the needs to beat their kids as an act of discipline. Mostly, using this type of method will only create fear, not respect. What the child really learn is how to avoid being hit, not how to behave or grow as individuals.

The aim of parents is to make the child to obey. However, some parents achieve obedience by sacrificing all other aims and their children grow up obedient but weak, for example, they obtain obedience by physically or mentally abuse the children which later create negative effects on the children's growth. Not only are the children become weak physically, but also mentally. The stress of chronic abuse may result in anxiety and may make victims more vulnerable to problems, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, conduct disorder, and learning, attention, and memory difficulties ("Child abuse", n.d.). Crosson-Towner explained that abused children have been found to exhibit low self-

confidence and little self-worth, and throughout development these children tend to socialize with others who have similar feelings of low personal value (as cited in Friedman, 2010).

To conclude, physically or mentally, both type of abuse are just as destructive. The effects can take either short-term or long-term. A psychologist named Kimberly Friedman says, “The majority of research regarding childhood physical abuse and neglect has been on short-term effects, but it is obviously that if childhood consequences are left untreated, the behavioral, social, and emotional issues present in childhood will most often remain and, in many cases, induce additional maladaptive behavior into adulthood” (Friedman, 2010). Therefore, it is important to recognize all of these severe consequences of child abuse to prevent harm to the children’s future.

2.2 Outline of the Creative Work

2.2.1. Theme

The topic of my screenplay is domestic abuse and the theme is about the effects of domestic abuse on the teenagers. My work shows the point of view of the victims and how they cope with their problems. Through the struggles of the victims I want to provide strong messages about domestic abuse especially about the effects. I want to show that domestic abuse is a serious problem and that the victims need help. Physically or mentally, both form of domestic abuse are just as destructive.

2.2.2. Characterization

Main characters :

1. Name : Yoel Eka Candra
Age : 18 years old

Yoel is the first child of Candra family who receives mental abuse from his dad. He and his sister, Naomi, live in a family that is rich and high educated. He is neatly dressed and never seen without his glasses. He has always been an obedient child. So, if he shares his feelings or thoughts that are different or contradict; then the parents will be surprised and will refuse to accept those thoughts. As the eldest son he is strictly controlled by his dad while Naomi can do whatever she wants. Yoel has always been the one who is being flaunted as status symbol by the parents which actually makes Yoel feel jealous of his sister. In his opinion, it is not fair for him. In front of Naomi he acts as a caring brother, however, deep inside he secretly dislike Naomi. Although he looks calm and composed, once he enters his own bedroom he will reveal his true character that he is mostly driven by emotion and can easily get angry when he is stressed or under pressured. Since he keeps a distance from his friends, he does not have anyone to comfort him. With strict schedules of tutoring, no friends, no freedom, Yoel becomes depressed. Luckily, he meets Mikha at the right time and gradually becomes fond of him.

2. Name : Mikha
Age : 16 years old

Despite being abused by his uncle, Mikha tend to be energetic, playful, and adaptable. He loves doing sport and spends lots of time outside of the house. He tries to gain some money by himself so he does not depend much on his uncle. Because of many activities that he got, he finds it difficult to focus in studying and procrastinates a lot in doing assignments. Mikha befriends Yoel because Mikha thinks that he finally finds someone who is as miserable as he is. They become closer as Yoel starts tutoring him. Mikha always smiles and looks carefree but actually he is not that happy. He is good at hiding his real emotion to cover the abuse. Sometimes he can be really stubborn. He has trust issues that make him hard to open up towards the others especially since he lives in a world without parents. He always wonders why his parents left him. He used to live with his grandma but after grandma died he starts to live with his uncle, Evan. He thinks that he needs to have a perfect family to be happy but what he really needs is affection and recognition. Without realizing it, Mikha holds grudges towards his uncle.

Supporting characters :

3. Name : Naomi Dwi Candra
Age : 15 years old

Naomi is the second child of Candra. She is a cheerful girl and talkative. She is allowed to do whatever she wants since her dad is too busy controlling Yoel. Since she was a child, Naomi sees Yoel as her brother, friends, and guardian. She likes to be attached to Yoel. She always had a blast whenever

she is with Yoel. She does not even realize that Yoel seldom talk about himself. Yoel is the closest person she can vent to, yet she knows nothing about his struggles. All this time Naomi has always had the tendency to be the subject or the center of attention in their conversation. Unconsciously, she is being self-centered. Because of that she does not have a lot of friends, but she does not care as long as Yoel is there for her. Naomi does not like it when Yoel becomes distance and ignores her since he is close to Mikha. She accuses Mikha to be a bad influence for Yoel. Later, as she takes Yoel's place by her parents' demand, she finally knows how her brother feels and how hard it is for him. She wishes that she could talk to her brother one more time and apologizes to him for being a selfish sister.

4. Name : Nathan Candra.

Age : 50 years old.

He is the father of Yoel and Naomi. He is known as a workaholic man who is very proud of himself. He is strict, snobbish, and bossy. He has a very strict set of principles regarding family. Respect means one must never share their opinions if it disagrees with his own and his advice shall be taken as commands. He will do anything to get what he wants and will throw temper tantrums when things do not go his way. All he ever thinks about is his family honor. He is very competitive and he does not like to lose from his relatives. He often forces Yoel to study harder without break, hoping that Yoel can be smarter than Naomi. As the head of the family, he is the reason why Yoel feel oppressed. He treats Yoel unfairly because he thinks by doing that Yoel will become more responsible. He wants Yoel to remember when Naomi got into an accident and use that as a motivation to live harder. That is why whenever and whatever Nathan argues about, he always ends with that. Nathan mostly enjoys the status of being a parent for the power over his children not the function.

5. Name: Hana Candra

Age : 47 years old.

Hana is Nathan's wife. She is like an assistant of her bossy husband. Her husband believes that a good wife must be restricted to nodding her head and agreeing. Since her husband is the head of the family, she feels like she does not have any choice except to follow her husband. She is actually worried about her children; however, she cannot leave her work because it is her husband's demand to help him with the business. Back then she must hired babysitters in order to help her with the routine demands of child care. She stopped hiring babysitters when the children went to middle school. Since she feels intimidated by her husband she is just observing without doing anything when her husband disciplines Yoel.

6. Name : Evan.

Age : 34 years old.

Evan is Mikha's uncle. He is a pessimistic person who loses faith easily and doubts everything. Evan's parents have passed away and his siblings (one of them is Mikha's mom) are gone without trace, leaving him alone at the age of 21. He has been taking care of Mikha since Mikha was a toddler due to the fact that he is the only relative that Mikha has. Because he was still quite at the young age when Mikha was given to him, he was confused and overwhelmed by the tasks of child care. With a very little social support and hectic work schedule (fails even if he works hard), he turns to be an alcoholic and often uses violence when he is drunk. He cannot control himself when he is drunk and very impulsive. He tends to beat Mikha without conscious and later will apologize and promise to never do it again. But he always fails to keep his promises. His empty promises are the major reasons why Mikha has trust issues. Evan has never been married. He never has a steady relationship and always has problems with women because of his addiction with alcohol and abusive act.

7. Name : Kirana Surya

Age : 31 years old.

She is Evan's coworker. She once helped Evan to go home when he was drunk and that was the first time she saw Evan was beating Mikha abruptly. She wants to help Mikha and changes Evan's behavior. Kirana comes from a broken family. Her father left her mother for someone richer. Her mother was depressed and took it all out on Kirana and her brother because Kirana's personality and her brother's look resemble her father. Her mother was afraid that one day Kirana and her brother would leave too,

that was why her mother became possessive over them. Her mother even installing security camera on their room to keep an eye on them. Kirana's brother always makes sure to keep her safe. She wants to be a hero figure just like her big brother back then and decides to care for Mikha when she knows Mikha's struggle. She is an independent lady with a very big heart.

2.2.3. Setting

Surabaya, Indonesia.

It is the second largest city in Indonesia but the situation in Surabaya is not as crowded as in Jakarta. Javanese people are the majority in Surabaya, with Chinese Indonesian and Madurese being significant minorities in the city. Most citizens speak a dialect of Indonesian or Javanese called Suroboyoan. Surabaya is known as the City of Heroes because of its history.

Candra family's house – ignorant neighborhood.

Located at the west side of the city. Candra's house is big with a giant-like roof that sits on top of Candra's two-story house with a balcony on each floor, and double doors, and in front of their house is their large garden, surrounding their swimming pool, guarded by their golden retriever and their private security, and protecting all this is their giant gate. The security guy always in his post near the giant gate, the house helpers and the driver come at six a.m. and go home at four p.m. Nobody knows whatever happens inside the house. The neighbors are rarely interacting with one another. They are busy with their own problem.

Uncle Evan's house – friendly neighborhood.

Located at the east side of the city. To go to Evan's house, people have to go through a series of lefts, and rights, to finally get there. Evan has a two-story house and inside there are two rooms, one kitchen, one bathroom. He has a small garden outside, neatly tended. From the house, from early morning, people will hear Evan yells at Mikha and argues over unnecessary things. Mikha is often offered help from the neighbors but he always refuses.

Serumbai highschool (made up).

It has a good reputation that apply a strict Christian value.

2.2.4. Pitch

Yoel's story :

- a. Under the pressure from his control freak and snobbish dad, Yoel wants to seek freedom and recognition.
- b. Cannot handle the pressure anymore, Yoel suffers from depression and decides to commit suicide at school which makes him to meet Mikha.
- c. After getting closer to Mikha, Yoel wants to run away with him, however, Yoel ends up running away by himself as Mikha's wish.

Mikha's story :

- a. Wanting to run away from home, Mikha spends lots of time outside of the house and tries to gain some money by himself.
- b. Abandoned by his parents and abused by his uncle, Mikha has a trust issue and refuses to receive help from anybody until he meets Yoel.
- c. On the day when Mikha wants to run away, he is caught by his uncle and ends up killing his uncle by accident.

CONCLUSION

4.1 Concluding thoughts.

Writing this screenplay regarding the topic of domestic abuse, I have done a lot of research and found out how dangerous the effects to the victim are. What the abuser does can cause great and irreparable harm toward the victim's entire life. The effect can be either short-term or long-term. Short-term means that the victim later can heal from the wound that they have been through. While long-term means that the abuse have left a deep scar on the victim until they are not capable to heal. In order to make the reader or the audience know how bad the effect is, I make my screenplay to focus more on the victim point of view. And to make a screenplay based on the victim's point of view is not that easy. I

have to position myself as the victim and think what I would do or feel if I were in that position. In the interest of understanding the victim I read true life stories about teenagers who have experienced the abuse and what they have been through is beyond what I imagine. My intention in making this screenplay is to make people aware that domestic abuse is a serious problem and it needs to be stopped. It is not simply just a private family matter but it is a serious crime. Physically or mentally, both forms of abuse are just as destructive.

4.2. Lesson learned.

For me, the difficult thing in making my screenplay is creating the characters. It is not simply just making up a name, age, and occupation. I have to make sure that my characters are believable and representing reality. Mikha and Yoel are representing the victim of abuse. The two of them suffer from the long-term effects; Mikha becomes trauma until he has trust issue and Yoel has become meek as a person until he suffers from depression. Meanwhile, Nathan and Evan are representing the abusers. They have reasons why they do the abuse; Nathan thinks what he does is a normal act to discipline or to give lesson to his first child and Evan has lack of knowledge about parenting since he is too young and has very little social support. I also try to connect them with the theory that I use. I have to be careful when making all of them interact with one another. They have to stay in track with their character's trait and differentiate from the other characters. Even though it is hard; however, it has helped me to become better in making the story. Overall, I enjoyed my experience of completing this project and have increased my interest in the topic of effects of domestic abuse on teenagers.

4.3. Future plans.

I will revise my screenplay and make it even better in the future. I will carefully check everything from the start, especially the grammar. Maybe I will create the Indonesian version of the screenplay. Who knows, probably I could turn my work into a film one day. I am also interested to turn my work into another form of work, a novel or a stage play then I will publish it. I want to continue to create a creative work. I will put serious issues in my work so from my work, I want people not only receive an enjoyment but also a moral message from it.

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