

OVERROTECTIVE MOTHER IN JODDI PICOULT'S NOVEL *MY SISTER'S KEEPER*

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Abstract

The objectives of this study are to reveal the causes and negative impacts of overprotective mother's attitude towards her child in the best-selling novel entitled *My Sister's Keeper* by Jodi Picoult, and to see how overprotective Sara Fitzgerald as a mother who has an overprotective attitude towards her second child. This research uses descriptive qualitative method with library study to find out the overprotective mother and how the overprotective developed by applying internal and external overprotective theory and mother's theory. The primary data used is the novel itself. Secondary data are books and articles relating to conflict theory. The results showed that there was a major problem that caused by Sara Fitzgerald as an overprotective mother and the impact of her overprotective attitude towards her daughter. There are two causes that Sara becomes an overprotective mother to her second daughter: her illness and her recovery and the impact towards her third daughter is lacking affection and suffering.

Keywords : Overprotective, Mother, Illness, Recovery, Lacking Affection, Suffering.

1. Introduction

My Sister's Keeper is a novel by Jodi Picoult. It was published by Simon & Schuster in 2004. The novel is about an overprotective mother whose name is Sara Fitzgerald. Sara Fitzgerald is the overprotective and domineering "helicopter mom" of Kate, Anna, and Jesse. She tries her hardest to keep her oldest, daughter alive and refuses to accept the idea that she is dying before the novel's end, Sara finally listens to Anna about Kate and comes to terms with her choice to die. At that time, Sara and Brian persuades Jesse to transfer his schools to a place further from his parents and Jesse is taken care of by others so that Sara could focus on caring for Kate. Beside this, Sara leaves her job as a lawyer and turns healthy from her illness so that since then their little family has become boisterous and unhappy like before. Anna as Sara's last child who is born planned by her parents is very angry at the treatment of her mother who willingly gave her up to always donate parts of her body to Kate. At that time, Sara is also angry because she knows that Anna does not want to donate her kidney to Kate, who really needs it. Sara also knows that Anna has reported her mother because Anna does not get her right as a child who is loved by her parents.

Jodi Picoult was born on May 19, 1966, in Long Island, New York, where she lived for 13 years in a development called 'The Storybook.' When Picoult was 13, her family moved to New Hampshire. She still lives today, and many of her stories are set. She graduated in 1987 and had several jobs, including technical writing, copy writing, editing textbooks, and teaching eighth-grade English, before deciding to pursue a master's degree in education at Harvard University. Upon graduating from Harvard, Picoult wrote five issues of *Wonder Woman* for DC Comics.

The story in the novel is a realistic novel because it is based on a true story of family life. This is what makes the writer interested to analyze it. In America, there are parents who manage to make testicular babies whose presence are only to donate bone marrow to her siblings suffering from rare leukemia. Cord blood cells are given by her sister who is still in remission. The second reason is because this novel tells about the struggle of a 13 year old girl to get medical emancipation from her parents. Anna Fitzgerald is willing to sacrifice her life to save her sister, Kate, from rare pains. Third, the overprotective character of the mother is very rare happening in society. It is because her character in the novel is not fair among her daughters. She is very overprotective to her second daughter by sacrificing her third daughter. In this research, the writer would like to uncover the causes of the overprotective mother to her second daughter and the impacts of the overprotective mother towards her third daughter?

2. Literature Review

According to Kartono (1987), overprotective comes from the word overprotection which means: over protection; protection, defense, over-guard, giving excessive attention to a child. Mothers who carry out things like this tend to hinder their children to stand alone. The overprotective attitude referred by the writer is the attitude of parents who give love too much towards their child, so it tends to spoil it. A mother who loves her children very much will be overprotective to them. In fact, the children who have a protective mother or parent will not be dependent. Mazhairi (1999) states that overprotective attitudes of parents are basically a form of parent's love, but love and affection that they give too much. Educating with love is not blamed, but parents must set limits until at where they can pay attention and protect their children. Educating children with love is important because they should grow with love, but if the parent gives love too much for their children it can affect their activities. Protective character towards children may negative impacts. Gunarsa (1989: 184) explains that overprotective is the treatment of parents who overprotect their children's activities, parents tend to prevent their children from doing work that is not necessarily dangerous. Overprotective is thought to deprive the child of education in self-reliance and problem-solving behaviors which may result in a sense of helplessness and hopelessness when stressors are encountered in later adult life (Perris, 1988). It implies that overprotective attitude is a trait that many parents have, especially a mother. Overprotective attitude tends to limit the expression or the life picture of a child or other people concerned. This attitude makes others feel they are always wrong because they are always set by the person concerned.

The reasons of overprotective attitude occur between mother and children according to experts is Individuals diagnosed with panic disorder, agoraphobia, social anxiety disorder, and specific phobia were all more likely to report maternal overprotective attitude than controls (Silove, et.al,1991). There is also strong support for a link between what has been termed over solicitous parenting and children's development of shyness in early childhood. Over solicitous mothers are warm and

intrusively involved in their toddler's activities, while being (paradoxically) insensitive and unresponsive to the cues and needs their child. Over solicitous mothers' inappropriate use of positive parenting practices, therefore, teaches children that unfamiliar situations are threatening.

3. Research Method

The research applied qualitative research with library study. Qualitative research method is a method used to describe fact qualitatively. Ismawati (2012: 7) defines that qualitative research is the research procedure that resulting descriptive data of a problem in a study of research. Zaenab (2019) states in the journal of language and literacy that qualitative research is analyze the subject using textual content by deducing text objectively. Descriptive research is a research method that describes all data or circumstances of the subject or object of research and then analyzed and compared based on reality ongoing at this time and then try to provide solutions to the problem and can provide the latest information so that it is useful for the development of science and more can be applied to various problems.

The data of this research is collected through some steps, namely reading the novel repeatedly, understanding the content of the novel, collecting the data related to the research problem, and making notes the data collected. Then, they are classified based on the category of the problem of the research. Furthermore, the data is interpreted and described in accordance with the theory adopted in this research. Finally, conclusion is drawn after fulfilling the analysis.

4. Discussion

4.1 The Causes of Overprotective Mother to Her Second Daughter

Mother as a part of the parents usually wants to keep her daughter from anything. It is common if parents have overprotective attitude towards her daughter. Overprotective parenting can cause the lack of the development of self-esteem in a child. This is because the daughter is not allowed to face challenges without parental intervention. Part of the development of self-esteem in daughter comes from surmounting challenges on their own, which can be denied to them by overprotective parenting.

4.1.1 Her Illness

One of the causes of overprotective mother in the novel is her daughter illness. Her daughter *Kate* has leukemia, she is the second daughter from *Brian* and *Sara*. Leukemia develops when the DNA of developing blood cells, mainly white cells, incurs damage. This causes the blood cells to grow and divide uncontrollably. Healthy blood cells die, and new cells replace them. These develop in the bone marrow. The abnormal blood cells do not die at a natural point in their life cycle. Instead, they build up and occupy more space. As the bone marrow produces more cancer cells, they begin to overcrowd the blood, preventing the healthy white blood cells from growing and functioning normally. Eventually, the cancerous cells outnumber healthy cells in the blood. Kate needs a donor to save her life, and her mother will do everything to get it. In the novel *My Sister's Keeper* Anna the third daughter being a donor for Kate, her organs donated to Kate her sister. The following quotation proves that overprotection happens because her daughter's illness:

My mother stands over me."You went to a lawyer and made him think this is all about you and it's about us. *All of us*_" My father's hands curl

around her shoulders and squeeze. As he crouches down in front of me, I smell smoke. He's come from someone else's fire right into the middle of this one, and for this and nothing else, I'm embarrassed. "Anna, honey, we know you think you were doing something you needed to do_" "I don't think that," my mother interrupts. My father closes his eyes. "Sara. Dammit, shut up." Then he looks at me again. "Can we talk, just us three, without a lawyer having to do it for us?" What he says makes my eyes fill up, but I knew this was coming. So I lift my chin and let the tears go at the same time. "Daddy, I can't." "For God's sake, Anna," my mother says, "Do you even realize what the consequences would be?" (Jodi Picoult, 2004: 54)

Kate's illness makes her mother overprotective because it cannot be healed so that Sara cares so much about Kate's illness. She gets angry when she finds out that Anna submits a claim to family court. She cannot accept that Anna refuses to donate her organs for Kate. Without Anna, Kate cannot survive. Her cancer always comes to her, and it is not getting better. It makes Anna need to dedicate her life to her sister.

"Kate," I ask, "What's that?" Twisting around, she looks at the spot where I point. "I guess I banged it." For five years, Kate has been in remission. At first, when the cord blood transplant seemed to be working, I kept waiting for someone to tell me this was all a mistake, when Kate complained that her feet hurt, I rushed her to Dr. Chance, certain this was the bony pain of recurrence, only to find out that she'd outgrown her sneakers. When she fell down, instead of kissing her scrapes, I'd ask her if her platelets were good. (Picoult, 2004: 163 - 164)

Sara always looks forward to knowing Kate's condition because her illness can relapse every time. That is one of the reasons why Sara is always taking care of her. She does not want to lose her; she will do everything to keep her safe, and make her feel comfort. She does not realize that the other children feel that Sara does not love them.

4.1.2 Her Recovery

Another reason why Sara becomes overprotective is her daughter's recovery. She really wants *Kate* to get recovered. Kate's health is her priority so that she becomes over everything that relates to Kate. In the novel, in order to make Kate better, she always keeps her in hospital; she prohibits her to go outside. The following quotation proves that overprotective happens because of her daughter's recovery:

They sat me down and told me all the usual stuff of course_ but they also explained that they chose little embryonic me, specifically, because I could save my sister, Kate. "We loved you even more," my mother made sure to say, "because we knew what exactly we were getting." (Picoult, 2004: 8)

Sara can do anything to cure Kate and will sacrifice anything for Kate, even if she has to sacrifice an innocent child who does not know anything. If Kate is not sick, then Anna might not be around in this world. Anna loves Kate so much, but she feels that her

parent is not fair. She also wants to have a healthy life, if all of her life is taken for Kate she cannot have a normal life.

Although I am nine months pregnant, although I have had plenty of time to dream, I have not really considered the specifics of this child. I have thought of this daughter only in terms of what she will be able to do for the daughter I already have... Then again, my dreams for her are no less exalted; I plan for her to save her sister's life." (Picoult, 2004: 70)

It is clear that Sara hopes for the Kate's recovery by having another child. Sara knows that having another child represents Kate's best hope of survival. She has not considered the child, however, as an individual, and cannot see the child except with regard to how she will give benefit to Kate. Therefore, she measures Anna's value in terms of how she will help Kate. She does not care about how this daughter will be if she keeps donating her cells to Kate. Even though Anna is her own daughter, all she wants from her is only her organs.

4.2 The Impacts of the Overprotective Mother towards Her Third Daughter

This session explains about the impacts of overprotective mother towards her third daughter. The extreme of parental lack of control and can lead to a variety of anti-social behaviors that could result in intervention by the law. In the novel, the impacts of overprotective happen to the third daughter, Anna. Anna does not accept love from her parents and it makes her suffered in her life.

4.2.1 Lacking Affection from Her Mother

Lacking of affection is one of the impacts of overprotective mother to her third daughter, Anna. Anna does not find the maximum affection from her mother. Her mother was too focuses on Kate, the leukemia sufferer. While, Anna is a donor who sacrifices everything for Kate at the wish of her mother who expects her recovery without thinking about her other daughter. That lack of affection is a very negative thing for a daughter. It makes them feel unnecessary and unexpected by her parents again. The following quotation proves that lacking affection from her mother happens:

My father calls at eleven o'clock to ask if I want him to come get me. "Mom's going to stay at the hospital," he explains. "But if you don't want to be alone in the house, you can sleep at the station." "No, it's okay," I tell him. "I can always get Jesse if I need something." "Right," my father says. "Jesse." We both pretend that this is a reliable backup plan. (Jodi Picoult, 2004: 7-8)

It is clear that her mother does not care about Anna. She always stays at the hospital to take care of Kate. She never be there when Anna needs her. Her father Brian also does not care about her. The only one who cares about Anna is Jesse, her oldest brother. His father is busy with his own business, even he does not care if Anna stays alone at home. It is dangerous for daughter to stay alone at home, but her parents often leave her in their home without surveillance. The other evidence that shows lack of affection is when her parents fight in front of her.

In the car, my parents fight. *Maybe we should hire a real lawyer*, my father says, and my mother replies, *I am one*. But Sara, my father says, if this is not going to go away, all I am saying is --- What are you saying,

Brian? She challenges. What are you really saying? That some man in a suit home you've never met would be able to explain Anna better than her own mother? And then my father drives the rest of the way in silence. (Jodi Picoult, 2004: 182)

Anna's parents really do not pay attention to her at all. It can be seen from how her parent can fight in front of her and does not care about the effects to Anna. All they care is about winning the case in the court; therefore, they still can take Anna's organs for Kate's recovery. Even though deep down in their hearts they really love Anna, but their priority now is just Kate's healthy. They are fighting about what will they do if Anna does not want to donor her cells anymore, if she wins the case, and if she does not want to help Kate anymore. Anna feels so sad; she just wants a justice but her parents prohibits it. All she has to do in her life is only helping Kate, her sister.

4.2.2 Suffering

The other impact in this study is suffering experienced by the third daughter, Anna. Anna becomes a daughter who lacks affection and loses her health like other normal children. She suffers to get her parents' attention. She feels that her parents does not love her. Since she is a daughter, everything that she has to do is only donates the organs of her body to her sister. Even, she was born just because her parents want to recover Kate' illness:

On the other hand, I was born for a very specific purpose. I wasn't the result on a cheap bottle of wine or a full moon or the heat of the moment. I was born because a scientist managed to book up my mother's eggs and my father's sperm to create a specific combination of precious genetic material. In fact, when Jesse told me how babies get made and I the great disbeliever, decided to ask my parents the truth, I got more than I bargained for. (Jodi Picoult, 2004: 7-8)

It is seen how desperate Anna is, because she knows that she is only a daughter that was born for a specific purpose. Her life is only for her sister, Kate; thus, she suffers to get justice by hiring a lawyer to make her win in the court. She is doing that because she does not want to donate some parts of her organs again to Kate. It makes her lose her life, her healthy and other parts of her life. She feels that her life is not only for her sister, but she also has to make decision whether she wants to donate or not, although she is just a sister. Another evidence that shows how Anna suffers is when her mother does not care about her word.

"Did you hear that?" Sara said. "Hear what?". "Kate". "I didn't hear anything" Anna replied. But she doesn't take my word for it, because when it comes to Kate she doesn't take anybody's word for it. She marches upstairs and opens up our bedroom door to find my sister hysterical on her bed, and just like that the world collapses again. (Jodi Picoult, 2004: 11)

Sara is too overprotective when it is about Kate. Even, when they stay at home and Kate is all right, all of her attention is only for Kate. Moments like these are the same kind of vacuum; no matter what you cling to, you wind up being sucked in. She feels her mother does not love her. That is why she wants justice and does not want to donate her

organs anymore. She wants her mother to make time for her and love her as much as she loves Kate. Anna always suffers with this feeling; she feels like she is not one of the members of her family.

5. Conclusion

The analysis found that the implementation of overprotective behavior in the novel is caused by two reasons. They are illness and the process of recovery. It also has two impacts. They are lacking affection and suffering from her mother.

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