

Ignorance of Moses in John Cheever's *The Wapshot Chronicle*

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Abstract

The research article aims at identifying the ignorance of Moses, the main character, in John Cheever's The Wapshot Chronicle. Also, it points out that his ignorance leads to bad actions. The qualitative method is used, and the results are presented in a form of a descriptive analysis. The study finds that Moses is portrayed with ignorance. The ignorance is found through the lack of moral awareness of behaving in a rational way, the focus of personal benefits, and the misunderstanding about what is right or wrong. Thereupon, Moses' ignorance turns out to be bad actions which are sexual misconduct and the false view about a marriage decision. Finally, these bad actions bring about separation, loss, and unhappiness in Moses' family life.

Keywords : *ignorance, The Wapshot Chronicle, Moses*

บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อชี้ให้เห็นความเขลาของโมเสสซึ่งเป็นตัวละครเอกในวรรณกรรมเรื่อง เดอะ ว็อบชอท ครอนิกเกิล ของ จอห์น ซีเวออร์ บทความวิจัยนี้ยังชี้ให้เห็นถึงความเขลาของเขานำไปสู่การประพฤติไม่ดีด้วย งานวิจัยใช้วิธีการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพและแสดงผลการวิจัยแบบพรรณนาวิเคราะห์ งานวิจัยพบว่าโมเสสถูกนำเสนอด้วยความเขลา ความเขลาดังกล่าวพบได้จากการขาดสำนึกเชิงคุณธรรมในการประพฤติตนด้วยความมีเหตุผล การสนใจแต่ประโยชน์ส่วนตน และความเข้าใจผิดว่าสิ่งใดถูกหรือผิด จากนั้น ความเขลาของโมเสสแสดงออกมาในรูปของการประพฤติไม่ดี ได้แก่ การมีความสัมพันธ์ทางเพศแบบลับและความคิดที่ผิดในการเลือกคู่ครอง ท้ายที่สุด การประพฤติไม่ดีเหล่านั้นส่งผลให้เกิดความจากพราก การสูญเสีย และความทุกข์ในชีวิตครอบครัวของโมเสส

คำสำคัญ ความเขลา เดอะ ว็อบชอท ครอนิกเกิล โมเสส

Introduction

To understand and grasp the word *ignorance* requires a certain intellectual level. In general, ignorance means the lack of knowledge or information about something involving someone's action at a particular time. Based on the verb *ignore*, ignorance is an act of paying no attention to someone or something or behaving as if someone or something had not been heard or seen. Plato (428-347 B.C.), a Greek philosopher, discussed this word with Theaetetus, whose

name was found in Plato's written conversations. According to the conversations, the meaning of ignorance is described by Socrates, another Greek philosopher, who is the teacher of Plato, that the word *ignorance* refers to *failure to recognize*, "He takes up Socrates's word for 'ignorance' or 'failure to recognise'" (Plato. 2003: 138). In *An Essay Concerning Buddhist Ethics* (2008), *Somporn Promta*, a Thai lecturer and philosopher, categorizes ignorance into two actions: 1) doing without questioning whether something should be done and 2) struggling to preserve one's own existence as "Ignorance means doing without questioning whether or not it is reasonable to do such a thing. The struggle to preserve its own existence in any living organism could also be viewed as ignorance" (34). In terms of cause and effect, *Thich Nhat Hanh*, a Vietnamese Buddhist philosopher, views ignorance as the cause of a certain behavior that brings about bad actions (2010: 418). Under these definitions, this study defines the word *ignorance* as *being* unaware of behaving in a rational way and the focus of personal benefits. This, later on, leads to bad actions.

Notwithstanding the definitions given by various thinkers, there are studies identifying the meaning of ignorance. The research entitled *Analytical Study of Avijja in Theravada Buddhism* (2003) that *Chaluy Singgam*, a Thai graduate student, conducts illustrates the word *ignorance* well. In that research, *Singgam* studies *Avijja* which refers to *ignorance* and identifies that *Avijja* or *ignorance* has the closest meaning with the words *illusion* and *misunderstanding*. The research also reports that *Avijja* or *ignorance* is caused by the mental factor of illusion which has the nature of continually arising, being, and ceasing in each moment of the mind. When the mental factor of illusion is present, the mind is unwholesome and consequentially generates misunderstanding. Although one might be faced with a condition of the mind, one is unable to understand the reality of that condition. This is because such illusion prevents the understanding of the truth of nature.

In addition to *Singgam's* research, *Phramaha Suraphet Vajiranano's A Comparative Study of the Concept of Ignorance in Socrates' Philosophy and in Theravada Buddhism* (2004) also compares the concept of ignorance that appears in Socrates's lofty philosophy and in Theravada Buddhism. The study reports that, according to Socrates, ignorance is not knowing, a state of not knowing, and not understanding. Similarly, in terms of Buddhism, ignorance means not knowing and not seeing. In addition, *Phramaha Vajiranano* depicts the influence of ignorance of these two views. Socrates believes that ignorance causes misbehavior, obstructs people from knowing the truth of things, and brings about darkness to life. Likewise, Buddhism thinks that it causes a man to commit sin and blinds him or her to deep knowing and to the truth, and brings about delusion.

Apart from the studies about it, the power of ignorance on human beings' mind and behavior is part of the reason it is demonstrated in literary works, particularly in John Cheever's *The Wapshot Chronicle*. In *The Wapshot Chronicle*, ignorance is portrayed visibly through Leander, Moses, and Coverly—all three main characters. Living in St. Botolphs, a small fishing village, Leander is characterized as a father who has a wife named Sarah while Moses and Coverly are portrayed as Leander's two sons. Of the three characters, Moses is displayed as one of the most ignorant characters throughout the story. Moses' ignorance is seen through his lack of moral awareness when he has several secret sexual relationships. For example, he has sexual intercourse with Rosalie, the family's guest in the Wapshot's home. Even worse, Honora, an aunt, is eavesdropping outside the door when Moses is doing this. This causes him to be forced to go out into the new world, a modern city, far away from home, with the hope of Honora and his parents to see him learn some responsibility. Then, Moses shows this ignorance again with a woman in a big and modern city in which he works. Later on, when deciding to have a marriage, Moses has premarital sex with Mellissa, his bride-to-be, before the marriage. It is obvious that Moses' ignorance is a long one, starting when he was a very young man and continuing until he becomes a fully-grown man.

John Cheever's *The Wapshot Chronicle* displays not only Moses' ignorance but also the situations which are realistic. The novel presents real people in a real economic issue in 1950s when industrialism and capitalism intrude into every single life of the American people. In case of personal traits, not only ignorance of the main characters but also other traits such as being ill-prepared and being irresponsible are depicted. Moses and Coverly, a two young Wapshots leave their homeland, friends, relatives, and parents in order to struggle alone for survival in a big city which is gradually formed under a capitalist ideal. Without understanding what life is, they make their own decisions and face different difficult problems.

Published in 1957, *The Wapshot Chronicle* has been found popular. In 1958, the first prize of *National Book Award for Fiction in the United States* was awarded to the novel. Forty years later, it was categorized into a list of the 100 best English-language novels of the 20th century by the Modern Library. The publication of the first Perennial edition (1989) and first Perennial Classics edition (2003) of *The Wapshot Chronicle* was published by HarperPerennial. In December 23, 2010, a digital form of *The Wapshot Chronicle*, which is used as a reference in this study, was marketed in the Amazon kindle by Vintage Digital. Last but not least, in 2011, the latest edition was published by HarperPerennial.

A value that has continued for a long time of *The Wapshot Chronicle* draws researchers' attention to it. James O'Hara's *Cheever's The Wapshot Chronicle: A Narrative of Exploration*

(1980) analyzes Moses Wapshot. O'Hara views Moses' leaving home to live in a vibrant, cosmopolitan city as the attempt to run away from the financial mean that Honora, his aunt, uses to control him and other members of the Wapshot family, "More importantly, it broaches the major themes of the novel: the fundamental irreconcilability of male and female temperaments and the consequent need of men (at least the Wapshot men) to embark on journeys of exploration as an escape from the confines of female sensibility" (20). O'Hara also reveals Moses's strong desire to avoid being controlled by not only his aunt but also his parents. This leads this study to identify Moses' ignorance which is believed that it is one of the root causes of the problems in the story.

Kerstin Dell conducts research entitled *The Family Novel in North America from Post – War to Post – Millennium: A Study in Genre* (2005). In the "The Post – War Family Novel" section, Dell compares Leander and his two sons in *TWC* which refers to *The Wapshot Chronicle*. She points out that life in the small fishing village is better than life in the modern world, "This may be true, but *TWC* suggests that those who are trapped in the golden past are at least better off than those who are trapped in the gloomy world of the present. The fate of Leander's sons is a case in point" (88). Also, Dell views life in this old world as good life, "The general tone of *TWC* is a tone of mourning for that which has been lost in modern day America. Nature loses to culture, the city wins over the country, the future subdues the past – and the female seems to dominate the male" (97). Dell's work involves the peaceful land which has been displayed before it is replaced by the atmosphere of the capitalist world. The 'golden past' in Dell's report brings about the idea of a golden period with great happiness. This leads this study to reveal the real cause—the ignorance—that affects Moses who used to live in the harmonious fishing village before trying to survive in the modern day and fail in his attempts.

Apart from these Western researchers, Khomduen Phothisuwan and Sutassi Smuthkochorn's *Knowledge: A Sufficiency Economy Condition in John Cheever's The Wapshot Chronicle* (2016) reports that knowledge according to Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) does not help Moses to live happily in a big and modern city as "On the contrary, he displays professional knowledge that is very different from what Leander teaches him. Moses's certificate and its benefit that helps Moses to gain a job can be interpreted that he has knowledge in terms of SEP. In addition, Moses's knowledge results in money which is one of necessities useful for survival and settling down in the modern city" (29).

Despite the reports, no research identifies the ignorance of Moses, the main character, in John Cheever's *The Wapshot Chronicle*. Although members of the Wapshot family influence Moses to live his own life in the cities like New York and Washington, there is still a question

about his own characteristics. This leads this study to hypothesize that Moses displays ignorance. Also, such ignorance brings about problems and bad actions.

Initially, this study focuses on only Moses, one of the three main characters, but eventually, the benefits of the findings and the study itself will be brought into full play. First, the findings help readers to become well aware that they may have ignorance and it could be controlled or even erased. Thereupon, the findings point out a state of knowing and the understanding of life in this capitalized and globalized world. In addition, the study helps readers to appreciate the value of literature and promotes reading both literature and literary research articles. It also proves that analyzing literary works is an intellectual activity that should be practiced and published.

Objectives of the Study

- 1) To identify the ignorance of Moses, the main character, in John Cheever's *The Wapshot Chronicle*.
- 2) To point out that Moses' ignorance leads to bad actions.

Scope of the Study

This study uses the data in John Cheever's *The Wapshot Chronicle* focusing on Moses, one of the three main characters. All the data is collected from the dialogues of Moses and other characters. Also, the narratives about Moses, other members of the Wapshot family, and other characters are gathered. Then, the data is analyzed to identify ignorance portrayed by Moses and to find that how such ignorance is related to his bad deeds.

Research Methodology

The qualitative method is conducted to analyze the ignorance of Moses, the main character, in John Cheever's *The Wapshot Chronicle* through the steps as follows. Step 1, all the data is collected not only from the conversations of Moses and other characters but from the narratives about Moses and other characters as well. Step 2, the data is analyzed by identifying ignorance portrayed by Moses. Also, the study finds out how such ignorance is related to Moses' bad deeds. In this step, the extracts containing what the study is searching for are quoted and explained while some opinions are suggested in the form of descriptive analysis. Step 3, the discussion, in which the findings of some related studies are pointed out, and the conclusion of the analysis are drawn. Step 4, the study finally provides useful recommendations for further studies.

Results: Ignorance of Moses, the main character, and its influence on his bad actions.

According to this study, ignorance is defined as the lack of moral awareness of behaving in a rational way, the focus of personal benefits, and the misunderstanding about what is right or wrong. Also, such ignorance leads to bad behavior or an action that is disgusting and likely leads to problems. The study finds Moses, one of the three main characters, in John Cheever's *The Wapshot Chronicle* has repeatedly displayed ignorance both in the same and a different way.

Moses' ignorance can be captured in his secret sexual intercourse. According to this study, the secret sexual intercourse refers to the secret act of having sex, which is also described, later on, with other words such as *wrong sex*, *misconduct*, *casual sex*, *premarital sex*, and so on. The study finds that Moses has conducted the intercourse with three women and it is his ignorance that gives rise to it.

First and foremost, Moses conducts wrong sex in St. Botolphs, his homeland. Before leaving St. Botolphs for working in big cities (New York and Washington), Moses has sex with a young girl named Rosalie who is a guest of the Wapshots. Because of a car accident, Rosalie stays with the Wapshot family for a short time. However, the time is long enough for Moses to perform this misconduct with her. Even worse, he does it in the family home, "Moses and Rosalie coming up the stairs, Moses saying, "What harm can there be in something that would make us both feel so good?" (Cheever. 2003: 74). This behavior can be classified as wrong sex because, in general, only a sexual relationship between a husband and a wife or a marriage couple is accepted. Also, because it is not accepted, the misconduct causes those who conduct casual sex are viewed as the beings that are morally wrong. Additionally, they are seen as selfish persons who ignore others' feelings and do whatever they want. In other words, when the sexual misconduct is practiced, it is characterized as a bad deed because common people feel that it is disgusting and likely leads to problems. In addition to that, many people believe that sexual misconduct is committed without love, and it often continues only in a short time. This can be inferred that the wrong sex is done with irresponsibility, without love, and without time to care about any negative results. In the story, Moses and Rosalie are not married, so they conduct sex that is wrong. Even, Moses not only conducts this sex to serve his own wants but shows the misunderstanding that such sex is good for emotions, "Moses saying, "What harm can there be in something that would make us both feel so good?" (Cheever. 2003: 74). This extract makes it clear that Moses does not become well aware that sexual intercourse with one who is not his wife is morally wrong, terrible, and careless.

In addition to the views of common people, the family members of the people who conduct secret sexual intercourse cannot accept this wrong behavior, too. If ones conduct wrong sex, their relatives even feel ashamed of those and suffer from it. In case of Moses, Honora, his aunt, is eavesdropping outside the door when he is doing this, “She was in the closet when she heard Moses and Rosalie coming up the stairs” (Cheever. 2003: 74). What Honora is doing implies that not only is this sexual relationship wrong but also it is something she strongly feels ashamed of. Thereupon, the study finds Honora’s suffering reflecting from her background wealth and privilege, “What else Honora heard—and she heard plenty—does not concern us here. This is not a clinical account. We will only consider the dilemma of an old lady—born in Polynesia, educated at Miss Wilbur’s, a philanthropist and samaritan—led by no more than her search for the truth into narrow closet on a rainy afternoon” (Cheever. 2003: 74).

Despite being kept secret, the sexual misconduct is connected to irresponsibility. Moses is a very young man who does not have a real job when he has the intercourse with Rosalie. This implies that he is not mature enough to make any decisions about whatever he chooses or wants. This brings about the idea of leaving St. Botolphs which is put forth first by Honora. To do so, she affirms that living in St. Botolphs causes Moses not to do anything but just indulge himself although she does not tell Leander and Sarah about his sexual intercourse. Also, Honora suggests that living in the outside world can encourage him to do better, “Moses has to go out in the world and prove himself. Oh, it’s hard for me to say this, Leander, but I think it’s right. He hasn’t raised a finger all summer except to indulge himself, and all the men of our family went out into the world when they were young; all the Wapshots” (Cheever. 2003: 86). At first glance, it is visible that this wrong sex causes Moses to be forced by Honora, his aunt, to go out into the new world, a modern city, far away from home, with a hope to see him learn some responsibility. With a closer look, this can be interpreted that, from that moment onwards, this casual sex brings about the separation from the family and from the peaceful native land until the end of the story. Even worse, leaving St. Botolphs gives Moses a chance of doing the wrong sex again and again in big cities in which no one knows him and cares about his actions.

Learning to have some responsibility is not easy for Moses, however. While Honora views conducting sexual intercourse as the lack of responsibility, Moses is found keeping on doing it while he is living in the immense world outside St. Botolphs. In Washington, he has sex with a woman, named Beatrice. Like doing it with Rosalie, Moses conducts the sex with Beatrice without any signs to marry her while it is also kept secret, “Moses dressed, kissed her good night and got out of the building without being seen” (Cheever. 2003: 136). The sign of some irresponsibility

such as no interest in it and weak relationship is also seen until this sex ends, "It was the kind of relationship that was useful and peaceable enough until Moses began to lose interest and then Beatrice got ardent and demanding. She couldn't reach him at his office but she called his apartment, sometimes nightly" (Cheever. 2003: 168). In addition, Kerstin Dell reports that Moses loses his job because of this sexual relationship, "Moses gets a government job because of his rich cousin Honora's connections, but he soon loses it because of an affair with a morally questionable woman" (2005: 90).

However, Beatrice is not the last person Moses has such misconduct with. His deep thirst for wrong sex is seen again even when he is going to marry. This time, Moses does it with Melissa, his fiancée. The study finds that the iron heels of Justina Scaddon—Melissa's stepmother—who tries to make them not meet each other easily cannot stop Moses from doing this. To do it, Moses climbs on the roof in order to sneak into Melissa's bedroom on the other side of the house. At that moment, through the window, Melissa appears in a nightdress, and it arouses Moses' passion for her, "Everything was quiet and he made the rest of his climb more slowly, swinging down at last onto the balcony of Melissa's room where he stood outside her window, watching her brush her hair. She sat at a table by a mirror and her nightgown was transparent so that even in the dim light of the room he could see the fullness of her breasts" (Cheever. 2003: 220). The description can be inferred that after Moses has sneaked in through the window, he has sex with Melissa. For more interpretation, in many cultures, sex is viewed as beautiful if it happens after marriage. It is because marriage is accepted as a formal occasion organized by couples and their relatives to notice that the couples are willing to live together as a union or a family. Also, people agree that marriage is usually based on love and by law. As a result, formal marriage is not only a formal relation but also an accepted condition. In the story, although Melissa is Moses' bride-to-be, the premarital sex between Moses and her can be classified as the wrong one. It is because it has happened before he marries her. It is against moral principles of the community, so it has to be kept secret. That is to say, this sexual intercourse is just a secret relationship no one approves of, and if whoever knows, he or she will feel ashamed of it.

In case of Moses, his secret sexual intercourse with Rosalie, Beatrice, and Melissa is morally wrong and can be classified as a bad deed based on ignorance. It is obvious that, as the intercourse progresses, Moses lets his personal gain grow and immediately grasp it while he ignores and even hurts others' feelings. In other words, Moses' sexual misconduct is caused by not only his moral decadence but also his selfish reasons. In terms of ignorance, *Moses has displayed the lack of moral awareness of behaving in a rational way and no consideration for*

others through that wrong sex. While conducting it, Moses is performing a bad act according to the meaning of ignorance, too. It is classified as a bad act because the sexual misconduct brings about the state of being disgusting, especially in Honora—the only person who knows this secret—and leads to problems such as embarrassment, separation, and so on. In addition, as Moses has repeatedly displayed this ignorance just when he was a very young man until he becomes a fully-grown man, the wrong sex appears as a big feature of Moses' ignorance.

Although his sexual misconduct is found being a long one in the story, ignorance is also seen through Moses' false view about marriage. The study finds that there are two distinctive factors—beauty and wealth—that lead Moses to make a decision to marry. In the story, Melissa is Moses' spouse. She appears not only beautiful but sexually attractive. Such beauty leads Moses to fall in love with Melissa, and it is love at first sight, "She was beautiful and it was that degree of beauty that fills even the grocery boy and the garage mechanic with solemn thoughts. The strong, dark-golden color of her hair, her shoulder bones and *gorge* and the eyes that appeared black at the distance had over Moses such a power that, as he watched her, desire seemed to darken and gild her figure" (Cheever. 2003: 217). The description about Melissa's body and look as well as her personal charisma implies that beauty is the first and important reason Moses uses to find a spouse. Even the time to learn more about each other is also not necessary. In addition to her beauty, Melissa is in the well-off class. She is an only adopted child of Justina Scaddon, an elderly cousin of Leander Wapshot, a widow of a millionaire, and the owner of Clear Haven—a very big house in which the Scaddons live. This wealth can be captured when the story depicts Justina and Clear Haven, "This was a place called Clear Haven, the demesne of Justina Wapshot Molesworth Scaddon, an ancient cousin from St. Botolphs who had married a five-and-ten-cent-store millionaire" (Cheever. 2003: 211).

With the beautiful look and the property, Moses has fallen in love with Melissa just in the first time he meets her. Moreover, he proposes to her just in the first scene Melissa appears in the story, "Melissa seemed to Moses, the instant he saw her, to be, by his lights, a most desirable and beautiful woman. He courted her when they became lovers he asked her to marry him. So far as he knew, this sudden decision had nothing to do with the conditions of Honora's will" (Cheever. 2003: 211). This extract confirms that Melissa' good look is the vital characteristic for Moses' marriage decision. Additionally, after Moses has met Melissa and has asked her to marry him, he writes a letter to Leander, his father. Some words admiring Justina's wealth in Leander's letter written back to Moses can be inferred that even Leander approves of Moses' decision, "J.P. Scaddon then competing with Woolworth and Kresge. Millionaire but not above visiting backwoods stores. Beheld Justina tickling the ivories. Love at first sight!" (Cheever. 2003: 222). Not only

does Moses but also Leander believe that living in Clear Haven can lead a comfortable life. To show his belief about the absolutely perfect life, Leander also mentions Clear Haven to point out that all dreams come true, there, "Clear Haven. All dreams come true" (Cheever. 2003: 222).

Justina is the first and the only person who warns Moses about this marriage decision although he has already proposed to Melissa. Justina tells him that he still does not know Melissa well when he states that he and Melissa need her approval, "You know very little about her" (Cheever. 2003: 222). However, Moses immediately responds that the only thing he knows is he wants to marry Melissa, "I only know that I want to marry her" (Cheever. 2003: 222). Moses obviously accepts that he does not know Melissa well, but he still wants to marry. This makes it clear that this marriage decision is not reasonable. It is because marriage refers to the life of the couples that is related, by law, to join, to live, to settle in, and to have children together. In addition, a spouse means someone who has right characteristics, including age and educational background. As a result, the couples need time to learn to know each other well in order to live together as husband and wife. In case of Moses, he does not know Melissa well. He sees only her attractive look and some signs showing that she is only the sole heir of Justina. Within a very short time, Moses uses Melissa's wealth and appearance to indicate that all his dreams come true in Clear Haven.

In terms of ignorance, Moses is portrayed with *it*. *His ignorance is found through the lack of moral awareness of behaving in a rational way when he uses beauty and wealth as the key indicators of choosing a marriage partner. At the time, Moses focuses on his benefits instead of other interests because he makes a decision only to serve his own needs. Also, he shows the misunderstanding about what good life is when he values property and beautiful look as clear-sighted choices of opportunity for surviving in the big new world. When the ignorance turns out to be a marriage decision, thereupon, it is something disgusting which brings about many problems.*

In spite of becoming the son in law of the millionaire, living in the big house, and having such a beautiful wife, Moses faces many difficulties after the marriage. The problems are manifested both in Melissa's and in Justina's portrayals. While beauty is a decisive factor of this marriage, the study finds that, through Melissa, there is an upsurge in ugliness just after she has had married with Moses. In fact, it is Melissa who tries many attempts to change her attractive look to be such ugliness, "She had successfully discredited her beauty. She must have found the dress she was wearing in a broom closet and her golden-skinned arms were red with hot water. Her hair was stringy and her mouth was set in an expression of extreme distaste. He loved her passionately and when he saw all of this his face fell" (Cheever. 2003: 272). Ugliness—the binary

opposition of beauty—in Melissa is presented by herself. It is because, after they have lived together, Melissa realizes that Moses does not love her because of certain character traits such as intelligence, cleanliness, or reasonableness. On the other hand, she understands that Moses loves her due to her beauty and wealth, including the needs to serve his own wants. This is implied in the description about Melissa's thought of Moses, "He had not fallen in love with her because of her gift with arithmetic, because of her cleanliness, her reasonable mind or any other human excellence. It was because he perceived in her some extraordinary inner comeliness or grace that satisfied his needs" (Cheever. 2003: 272).

Like the ugliness she makes up, Melissa also performs an insulting behavior towards Moses. Her offensive remarks are seen clearly when she criticizes Moses' sex drive and work which are found being closely intertwined, "and of course you put much too much emphasis on sex, oh much too much. The trouble is that you don't have enough to think about. I mean you're really not interests in business. Most men are intensely interested in their business" (Cheever. 2003: 269). Although Melissa and Moses keep this offensiveness secret from others, the condition reflects some marriage problems. First, it reveals that not only does Moses but Melissa decide to marry too quickly. In other words, both of them still have not known each other well before they are married. Second, in terms of capitalization, in which businesses run with money, work is something truly significant because it brings money and wealth as well as living in comfort to its owners. That is, if man is not interested in work, his family will lack money. This means that the family, without enough money, will face difficulties in the modern world. Third, traditionally, the man is expected to be the one who earns money to support the family. Instead of becoming a breadwinner, Moses appears to be just a sex maniac both after and before the marriage. Last but not least, all dreams Moses hopes for in Clear Haven turn out to be nightmares when the marriage progresses.

Apart from Melissa's views on him, Moses is looked down upon by others, too. Justina especially shows this sense many times. Before the marriage is held, Justina has insulted Moses by pointing out that she does not leave Melissa any money and property in her will, "Melissa has no money and no expectations," the old woman said. "She owns nothing of value but her beads. The resale value of pearls is very disappointing and they're almost impossible to insure" (Cheever. 2003: 223). Many people believe that marriage is the most special occasion of human beings. In marriage, people can commit to spending a lifetime with the one. As a result, the conversation between Justina and Moses should be about certain things such as joy, happiness, eternal union, love, and luck. However, the condition that Moses has just met Melissa, and asks her to marry leads Justina to think that Melissa's wealth, or in fact, Justina's is the significant

reason for him to choose Melissa to be his spouse. This causes Justina to confirm that Melissa does not have the legal right to receive her property. While she is doing this, her pessimistic view on both Moses and his marriage decision is displayed. In other words, Justina distrusts Moses. Even, while insulting Moses, she means to tell him that he never gains what he really wants. Throughout the story, the study finds that Justina keeps on looking down upon Moses, and including Melissa, "There is no one I can trust to keep my things together," she said. "I can't trust any of you" (Cheever. 2003: 279).

The Count D' Alba, one of Justina's guests, also looks down on Moses. The count uses the word *terribly* to modify his feeling when seeing Moses in Justina's house, "I'm terribly, terribly tired of your sense of humor and so is Justina. It's a terrible comedown for her to have people like you in the house after having spent her life in the highest society including royalty, and she told me herself..." (Cheever. 2003: 286). The count even claims it is Justina who feels that Moses' presence is disgusting. The Count D' Alba not only insults Moses but also makes him feel very inferior among them. His remarks on the highest society and royalty deeply offend Moses. At the time, the remarks fix Moses into a low class. This means that the count intends to differentiate Moses from everyone who lives and comes in Clear Haven. For Moses, as a member of Clear Haven, no one accepts him. There are not any signs for comfortable life in Clear Haven, but just strange and offensive behavior. With these real rude words, Moses shows his anger, "The voice got fainter as Moses continued along the ledge to above Melissa's balcony, his feelings blasted with anger" (Cheever. 2003: 286).

Discussion

Ignorance portrayed by Moses, the main character, in John Cheever's *The Wapshot Chronicle*. In terms of the definition, the characteristics of ignorance are consistent with what is defined in Plato (2003) and Promta (2008). Also, the meaning is consistent with the findings reported by Singgam (2003) and Vajiranano (2004). Additionally, the bad actions: the wrong sex and the false view about a marriage decision, which arising from ignorance and leading to separation, loss, and unhappiness are found relevant to the definition of ignorance characterized by Thich Nhat Hanh (2010).

Apart from the meaning of the ignorance, Kerstin Dell's (2005) views Moses' and Coverly's wives as the significant factors for problems in modern day life, "Both brothers suffer from marital trouble related mostly to the spleens of their wives" (90). However, this study suggests something different. It is Moses' ignorance that is the root cause of all problems. If he had not had the casual sex with Rosalie, he would not be forced, with ill-prepared, to live in the big cities.

This means that he can stay in his homeland until he becomes a grown-up before leaving St. Botolphs. In 1950s, a few in the United States can avoid living in modern-day society. It is because capitalism intrudes every single life in the US. Even, St. Botolphs has to be changed to become a capitalist society. Fredric Jameson (1991) explains capitalism in *Postmodern, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* that it explodes with materialistic views and replaces culture with materials no one can keep away, “it is clear that culture itself is one of those things whose fundamental materiality is now for us not merely evident but quite inescapable. This has, however, also been a historical lesson: it is because culture has become material that we are now in a position to understand that it always was material, or materialistic, in its structures and functions” (66). Therefore, the ignorance, the elements of it, and the bad deeds caused by it influence Moses to be trapped in the big and chaotic cities where the capitalist ideal keeps him there until the end of the story and until his father is found dead. Notwithstanding this different view, the study agrees with Dell that *The Wapshot Chronicle* depicts life in the past that is happier than life in modern-day capitalism, “This may be true, but TWC suggests that those who are trapped in the golden past are at least better off than those who are trapped in the gloomy world of the present. The fate of Leander’s sons is a case in point.”(2005: 88). However, the study does not agree that modern-day environment is a key ingredient influencing life to be that hard. The study suggests that ignorance of oneself is the important factor causing many problems. As a result, human beings who are struggling in this capitalist world and its chaotic circumstances have to become well aware that the ignorance is something they should cope with.

Conclusion

Moses, the main character in John Cheever’s *The Wapshot Chronicle*, displays ignorance through his unreasonableness, selfishness, and misunderstanding about life. The ignorance turns out to be bad deeds like secret sexual misconduct and the false idea about choosing a spouse. The secret intercourse has conducted many times with three women. The sexual intercourse with the first girl leads Moses to be forced to leave homeland. In a big city, the intercourse with the second woman causes him to lose his government job. The third woman is Melissa—Moses’ bride-to-be. It is the premarital sex that leads unhappiness in his marriage life. Melissa changes her beautiful and attractive look to be an ugly one because she realizes that it is the reason affecting Moses to propose to her. Also, she insults Moses as the one who does not care about work, but sex instead. Justina (Melissa’s step mother) also looks down on Moses because she understands that her wealth is another reason of Moses’ marriage decision. The definition of ignorance in this study is relevant to the definition defined by philosophers. The study suggests

that overcoming ignorance is the sound path of human beings to live well under the capitalist ideal.

Recommendation

Unlike this study, the researcher recommends those who are interested to study John Cheever's *The Wapshot Chronicle* that there should be further studies on the chances and happiness provided in the capitalist world. Also, there should be a research reporting a comparison of the characters who are portrayed under the materialistic ideal in other stories. In addition, there should be a study finding out the factors that help the middle-class suburbia to dominate difficulties of living in suburbs.

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