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Psychological Survival and Interpersonal Bonds: An Object Relations Reading of Elif Shafak's *10 Minutes 38 seconds in This Strange World*

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how early relationships affect a person's personality and relationships in their adulthood. This influence of treatment from caregivers on the life of an individual is studied by Object Relations Theory reading of Elif Shafak's novel 10 minutes 38 seconds in This Strange World.

This study reveals how an individual's caregivers' bad treatment can be internalized and pose them as abusive or bad objects. Furthermore, how an individual's friends can act as good objects and reparative bonds that help her overcome her psychological wounds. The study uses qualitative methodology based on textual reading and analysis using Object Relations Theory lens. Concepts from the core founds of ORT have been applied to explore the influence of family abuse and reparative influence of interpersonal bonds on an individual's life. The results showed that the experiences of abuse, neglect, emotional invalidation and rejection by family caused Leila to internalize bad objects and feel her sense of self to be split, feel guilty, insecure and unable to function psychologically. This research applies ORT to a literary text (Shafak's novel) and draws implications for psychoanalytical literary criticism regarding the importance of human relationships in healing, identity reconstruction and psychological survival.

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Background of the Study

Elif Shafak is a well-known British Turkish writer who has won numerous awards for her exceptionally engaging novels. Shafak's *10 Minutes and 38 Seconds in This Strange World* (2019) is a quite relevant work for the application of Object Relations Theory. The novel is about the protagonist Tequila Leila, a prostitute, who has been murdered. After her death, Leila's brain stays active for ten minutes and thirty-eight seconds, during which she recalls all the memories of her life (Thomas-Corr, 2019), including family rejection, childhood trauma, and her chosen family of friends who had been through similar traumatic circumstances. Leila's mental stability and survival are possible due to the presence and support of her friends. There is a theory called Object Relations Theory (ORT) that is used to study mental stability of Leila. It offers a deep and thought provoking solution by exploring the influence that our early life relationships or childhood have on the way we can manage the multi-faceted (McLeod, 2023). Through these memories, she finds that inter-personal relationships have significantly influenced her inner world, identity and resilience. The novel delves into the interconnections between trauma and memory and human relationships.

Moreover, the Object Relations Theory came out in the middle of 20th century. This theory is different from Freud's drive theory in terms of its emphasis. It focuses on how human relationships influence a person's inner world and how they form relationships later in adulthood (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.) In turn, how interpersonally relationships function as reparative structures in a psychologically wounded individual. The key ORT founders (Fairbairn, Klein, and Winnicott) argue that our relationship with our parents determines how we will relate with people outside our family and our personality (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983).

The purpose of application of ORT to this novel is that Leila has lost her identity because of her abusive experiences with her family. Since the novel explores how we internalize our caregivers as good or bad objects and then form relationships in our life that help us overcome our tragic experiences, this theory is a suitable framework to examine the relevant themes such as a person's natural tendency to form relationships, need for emotional security and longing acceptance in society.

Statement of the Problem

This novel has been studied from many aspects such as trauma, marginalization, violence, and feminist. Researchers have explored these themes but haven't explored the psychological dynamics in the characters of this novel. The area which has been insufficiently explored the psychological importance of relationships and their influence on the inner world and how one forms relationships with others. Therefore, ORT is an approach that lets us examine this novel at a deeper and more sensitive level.

Research Objectives

i. To investigate how Leila's early experiences of familial rejection and childhood trauma shape her internalized object relations and subsequent psychological functioning.

ii. To analyze the role Leila's chosen family of marginalized individuals plays as 'good objects' in fostering her emotional resilience.

iii. To examine how interpersonal bonds operate as reparative emotional structures that contribute to Leila's psychological survival.

Research Questions

i. How did Leila's early experiences of familial rejection and childhood trauma shape her internal object relations and subsequent psychological development?

ii. What role does Leila's chosen family play as "good objects" in fostering her emotional resilience?

iii. How do interpersonal bonds act as reparative structures that contribute to Leila's psychological survival?

Significance of the Study

This study is of great importance. It lets one understand how early relationships play an

important role in shaping our personality. It helps understand how an abused person's identity is lost over time and how a person tries his best to survive in a world that has abandoned him. More importantly, the role of friends in repairing the broken and wounded parts of inner world show that an individual cannot overcome their painful experiences of past unless they form positive relationships that erase the memories of the abusive negative relationships.

Rationale of the Study

Elif Shafak's *10 Minutes and 38 Seconds in This Strange World* has rich themes of atrocities and trauma endured by marginalized people in Turkish society, memory, and death. A lot of researchers have studied this novel using different frameworks and perspectives. They used feminist theory, sociology, and trauma studies. Many researchers have also studied the sociopolitical aspects as well as the symbolic elements of mental trauma. However, there is a lack of research done on the ways through which a protagonist navigates the trauma and abuse they suffered in the past and then reconstructs their identity. No specific research has applied ORT to this novel to reveal how early relationships affect a person's sense of self, their adult personality, and future relationships.

This study provides a new dimension to the novel as it not only concentrates on common themes of society and culture but also explores the psychological side. It means it focuses on the importance of human relationships and their role in a person's psychological survival.

With this aim, this study deepens our understanding of Shafak's novel and connects literature and psychoanalysis at a broader level.

Literature Review

Related to Theory

ORT is the branch of psychoanalysis that came into opposition to Freud's concept of drive theory. This theory is based on the concept of how our adult life depends on the kind of relationships we internalized in our childhood. The experiences we internalize or how we perceive the relationships when we were young are known as "objects". These objects can be good or bad, depending on whether the experiences with those relationships were damaging or nurturing. These objects also affect the way we perceive our identity or make attachments with people during our lives (Klein, 1946; Fairbairn, 1952). Previously, ORT had been used mostly in psychiatric cases to understand the psychological state of patients, but now this theory is also used for understanding the inner world of fictional characters and why they behave in a certain way.

Fictional characters who have had an abusive childhood are emotionally unstable and do not form consistent relational patterns because they weren't provided a nurturing and understanding environment by their caregivers.

Greenberg and Mitchell, in their influential book Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory (1983), explain how fiction depicts internal struggles between precursory and idealized objects, splitting, and the desire for connection and healing.

Holland's (1989) The Dynamics of Literary Response gives surplus evidence that reading alone can activate object relational processes as readers identify with and reject dimensions of the text as internal objects ("good" and "bad"). ORT has been used to interpret or analyze a lot of literary texts; the range is wide enough from Shakespeare to modernist and postmodernist fiction. For instance, Madelon Sprengnether (1990) worked on object relations and autobiography, showing how fiction and memoir depict the psychological process of reconstructing the self after a traumatic loss.

When it comes to studies of women's writing, an important figure such as Nancy Chodorow (1994) explains how early attachment to a mother shapes not only the identity of a child but also the narrative structure of texts involving memory and trauma.

Related to the Novel

Elif Shafak's *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* has attracted considerable scholarly attention because of its treatment of trauma, marginalization, gender violence, and memory.

Most existing studies have approached the novel through feminist, sociological, cultural, and trauma-based perspectives.

Abraham and Torok (1994) have researched the formation of 'crypts', sealed compartments in the psyche that can be caused by unresolved trauma. This is where traumatic memories are stored, hidden, and do not enter into conscious awareness. Recurrent images, fragments of recollections, and gaps in narrative, as found in literature, are indications of these crypts.

As with ORT, trauma theory and attachment research may also examine the impact of early experiences on later life-long psychological patterns. Shafak's fiction was located in the wider Turkish literary context by Cathy Caruth (1996). The study is on the theme of censorship, state violence and collective silence. It states that cultural and psychological worlds in Shafak's writings are greatly shaped by historical and political pressures.

In the novel, Akpınar (2020) studied the portrayal of trauma and gendered violence. The study concludes that Shafak is trying to portray the oppression of women in the current society in Turkey through the experiences of Leila. It also proposes that the novel illuminates the social hierarchies that cause women to be marginalised and oppressed.

For Okulu (2020), the main interest was in the narration and cultural spaces presented in the novel. The study shows how Shafak creates alternative narratives via memory and narration. The researcher said that the narrative spaces can empower voices of the marginalized to challenge the dominant social narratives.

The novel has been examined from a trauma and social exclusion viewpoint by Jongerden (2022). The researcher suggests that the life of Leila is similar to that of people who are marginalized in the society due to strict social and cultural norms. The study focuses on the connection between trauma and marginalisation.

The novel has been analysed by Hussain, Solangi, Shaikh and Rehman (2023) in the light of Gayatri Spivak's concept of the subaltern in the study Women Subalternity: A Study of Elif Shafak's Novel *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World*. The researchers employ the qualitative content analysis to analyse the experiences of Leila, Jameelah, Zaynab and Humeyra. These women characters are shown to be caught up in patriarchal systems that either mute or marginalise them, though they try to protest. The researchers come to the conclusion that the novel shows the ongoing failure of subaltern women to voice their opinions in restrictive social systems.

Salami and Taheri (2022) studied the novel in the context of feminist theories of Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler in their study Silenced Voices: A Feministic Study of Elif Shafak's *10 Minutes and 38 Seconds in This Strange World*. They used deep textual analysis to examine issues of gender oppression, sexual violence and identity development in their lives with Leila and her friends. The study concludes that the patriarchal culture objectifies women and limits women's agency. The authors also propose that Shafak's rendition of sisterhood and storytelling is a significant mechanism of opposition to the domination of man.

Although these studies have significantly contributed to the understanding of Shafak's novel, they primarily focus on feminism, patriarchy, gender violence, social marginalization, memory, and trauma. Very little attention has been paid to the psychological mechanisms through which Leila survives the effects of abuse, rejection, and emotional neglect. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by applying Object Relations Theory to investigate the relationship between trauma, internal object relations, emotional resilience, and psychological survival in *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World.*

Research Methodology

The approach used in this study is qualitative. It has essentially assisted in analyzing Elif Shafak's *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* with the Object Relations Theory. Qualitative research is a type of research concerning the interpretation of data that are not numbers, that is, meaning, experience, and subjective interpretation. It is

different from the quantitative, which is analyzed based on numbers. Thus, qualitative research allows for analyzing the characters, themes, or psychological processes of a text in depth.

The methodology is the textual analysis, which has been applied to the selected scenes of the novel, *10 minutes 38 seconds in This Strange World*. It is used to analyze in terms of the main concepts in the Object Relations Theory: internal objects, bad and good objects, and reparation. This methodology enables a close observation of the psychological development of the main character and the effect of interpersonal relationships on her survival.

Data Source

The primary data source for this research is Elif Shafak's novel *10 Minutes and 38 Seconds in This Strange World*. It is analyzed in detail to explore themes of psychological survival and interpersonal bonds to understand how characters survive mentally and how their relationships with people hold them together. Secondary sources include academic articles, dissertations, books, and psychoanalytic critiques that discuss Object Relations Theory (ORT), Shafak's fiction, and trauma studies. These secondary texts provide the study with unique ideas and viewpoints to help interpret the novel.

Data Collection Tools

The primary data collection tool for this qualitative, text-based study is the systematic textual analysis of Elif Shafak's *10 Minutes and 38 Seconds in This Strange World*. The researcher has read the novel multiple times and annotated to pick out the narrative elements that follow the core concepts of ORT.

Theoretical Framework

Object Relations Theory provides a lens for analyzing the main character's psychological growth. This theory came in opposition to Freud's drive theory, which emphasized impulses and drives, while ORT focused on the importance of early relationships and the role they play in a person's life. It focused on how early interactions with caregivers (known as internalized "good" and "bad" objects) shape our identity (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983).

The very first concept of this theory is internalized object relations, which are the mental images a person forms of himself and the people around him during the initial phase of childhood. These internalized images persist in adulthood. According to Klein in *Envy and Gratitude & Other Works (1975)*, the internalized objects are dynamic structures that influence perception and behavior throughout a person's life.

In *Mourning and Its Relation to Manic-Depressive States (1940),* Klein said that a child reaches a stage where he recognizes that caregivers can have both bad and good qualities. It is a subsequent stage of paranoid-schizoid known as "depressive position", where he is aware of his unmet needs and loss, and feels depressed about it.

One of the central elements of a depressive position in Kleinian theory is "reparation". It is based on love and respect for the separated from others and is about accepting loss or damage and doing something energetically to restore and recover one's inner object.

10 Minutes and 38 Seconds in This Strange World is an example of this kind of reading. Applying ORT to this novel allows us to understand that Leila's scattered memories are scattered, but they are connected to her early relationships with her family, specifically her parents. ORT tells us that these memories are the result of her object relations, which means that they were the product of how she perceived these relationships (whether as good or bad).

Leila's fragile survival can be analyzed through Winnicott's concept of "the facilitating environment". Her chosen family of friends, who have been through traumatic circumstances like her, provides her with that environment. Due to this emotional safety from her friends, she regains her sense of self and is protected.

Leila's strength to stand strong in the face of hardships is not only because of her heroism but also because of internalized good objects in the form of her friends. These figures who provide her

care and safety, while society sees her as an outsider and treats her with injustice.

Leila's story takes a different direction when seen through the lens of ORT. We see that her ability to survive and gain strength is due to the relationships she forms during her difficult journey. These relationships include her friends who were outcasts like her, but together they supported each other and helped Leila gain an inner sense of stability. So, Shafak's novel explores how our relationships with other human beings help us survive and stay headstrong.

Delimitation

This study is limited to one novel by Elif Shafak, *10 Minutes and 38 Seconds in This Strange World*. It concentrates on the protagonist's experiences and her relationships with other people. It does not include Shafak's entire body of work. The analysis of the study is restricted to the incorporation of Object Relations Theory and does not include any other literary or psychoanalytic theories in detail.

Analysis

Childhood Trauma

In this section, the author presents the effects of early relationships on the person and internalization of bad or harmful objects in the formation of the psychological world of Leila. It is concerned with the fact that childhood trauma interrupts her sense of security, identity, and emotional stability. The discussion looks at the way these experiences at a young age build up to her subsequent psychic torments.

"At first, the circles were small...Uncle caressed her cheeks (Shafak, 2019, p. 64)

Fairbairn (1952) states that when a child is abused, he cannot accept that reality and tries to split off the abuse to maintain the relationship, internalizing it as a bad object. This scene sets the grooming phase of the abuse that Leila was about to face at the hands of her Uncle. He begins by crossing the physical boundary. Leila feels embarrassed by being touched improperly, but she doesn't resist, as this comes from a trusted figure. Leila trusts him despite the harm he causes her. The scene shows how Leila gets attached to an abusive object as she cannot separate safety from danger (Fairbairn, 1952). This lack of resistance is because, as a child, she is confused whether this inappropriate touch is legitimate or if she has to protest. Uncle tries to gain her trust by telling her how likable she is. This builds trust, as she lacked fulfillment of emotional needs from her parents. She doesn't resist because she has experienced with her father that she cannot protest or express what she feels about a situation. The bad touch from Uncle weakens her ego boundaries, which is a result of a lack of holding environment (Winnicott, 1965).

When Leila finally reveals the abuse, her father refuses to believe her and instead focuses on preserving the family's honor. Seeking support, she turns to her mother, but her mother remains silent and does not come to her defense (Shafak, 2019, p. 108).

These scenes show that Leila fails to get emotional validation and safety even when she finally discloses abuse to her family. Her father, instead of understanding and he receives justice, asks her to stay silent. He dismisses what she went through, failing as a caregiving object. His distrust and disbelief in her destroy her completely. It reinforces everything she has been internalizing since she was young. It strengthens her belief that her pain is not important and that she will not be protected (Winnicott, 1967).

Leila is given the suggestion to marry her uncle's son, who is younger than her, in order to protect the honor of the family. This reinforces the bad self-image Leila has developed as a young girl. It makes her consider herself as the problem and that she has to adjust to keep others satisfied (Fairbairn, 1952).

She searches for a good object by turning towards Auntie, her biological mother, expecting her to believe her. But she also fails as a good caregiver and stays silent. Leila's last hope of being heard by someone collapses. The fact that Leila had believed Auntie when she was young makes it even more painful for her (Klein, 1946).

Chosen family

The section looks at the notion that a supportive interpersonal relationship is a good object to improve emotional resilience. It highlights the significance of special bonds as a source of care, legitimacy and psychological well-being that counter the previous harm. The point of discussion is on how these relationships contribute to Leila's development of strength and how they sustain the sense of self.

"Unbeknownst to Baba, it was this boy who kept feeding Leila with books,..own house anymore. (Shafak, 2019, p. 89)

The scene is a significant moment in Leila's psychological development. It is challenged to ideological oppression by her father during the current abuse of her by her uncle. Leila is forced to live in a world where religion is controlling everything, including the use of music, media, and free thinking, and she is deprived of her curiosity and independence. These restrictions are understood as a process of development of the False Self as the individual is compelled to behave outwardly in a way that is acceptable to the outside world at the cost of his/her inner integrity. Here Leila runs a risk of becoming obedient, quiet, and unknowing what she wants and how she learns (Winnicott, 1965).

It is such a limiting model that the role of Sinan becomes a developmental good object like the propositions of Fairbairn. The actions of Sinan are quite active in supporting and sustaining the inner world of Leila, as compared to the earlier times, the main problem being one of alleviation. He arranges her encounters with concepts, visions and opinions by sneaking books, magazines and newspapers into her room.

According to Fairbairn (1952), this is the basic tenet that the human psyche is object-seeking as it is motivated by the necessity to have meaningful relationships and intimacy with others. The persistence of Sinan's assistance, therefore, strengthens Leila's ego through his assistance in making her feel better, as well as helping her to continue to develop her psychological and intellectual nature. This analysis is further enhanced by the symbolic meaning of the materials he gives. Books and magazines are not simply material objects, but they are a continuation of the good object relationship. They symbolize freedom of choice, knowledge, and a wider world beyond the walls of her home. In this way, Leila can keep a feeling of contact with possibility and self-expression. By this means, the good object does not exist only in interpersonal presence but is passed on in significant provisions that will enrich inner life.

Above all, the support of Sinan is critical to the conservation of the True Self of Leila, which is one of the key concepts of the theory formulated by Winnicott. Although her father exercises the authoritarian control that forces her to develop a False Self of obedience and repression, Sinan has created a secretive space where her true self can still be. His behaviors allow her to think, feel free, and be intellectually active, as well as have a feeling of individuality despite external pressures. Such conservation of the True Self is critical, since it enables Leila to have an internal continuity and unity that would otherwise be destroyed.

"One day you will leave this place in a wedding gown… 'you will give them hope.' (Shafak, 2019, p. 127)

This conversation between Leila and her friend Zaynab occurs at a point when Leila's trauma has gone beyond physical or emotional weaknesses. She is a psychologically exhausted person now. She is unable to hope or imagine a better future because she survived forced prostitution and numerous betrayals. This is evident in her line, "I don't need dreams."

This sentence is a premonition of inner emptiness, despair, and the end of imaginative life. The recurrent contact with the bad objects (family betrayal, abusive environment, systemic oppression) has compelled the psychic structures to a state of collapse, and now she stands the danger of losing resilience altogether in ORT terms.

Zaynab is an object of hope who does not want to give Leila a chance to make her inner world filled with despair. The fact that she insists that "we all need dreams" re-engineers the situation without

refuting reality. Instead of providing false solace or refusing to acknowledge the trauma, Zaynab builds a narrative of possibilities. She makes her believe in a future in which Leila gains empowerment and autonomy. This is a good object intervention as Zaynab demonstrates that there is a possibility of having positive relational experiences despite repeated bad experiences.

The analytical significance of this scene is that imagination and narrative are emphasized as a healing tool. Zaynab envisions a vivid future for Leila, in which she leaves the brothels and her future status as a woman who changed the world. This scene serves as an antithesis to her present victimhood, meaning that Leila feels competent, independent, and deserving.

In ORT, the good object is how this handles the psychological architecture that will allow Leila to internalize new possibilities to transition from passive, traumatized self to empowered, resilient self. The story is a psychic object that she can bring with her on the inside, and that is what makes her survive from an outside world that doesn't like her.

The first cracks in the despair of Leila are shown by her emotional reaction. She smiles a bit, very unconsciously.

Despite herself… a smile…

This gentle reaction is an indication that hope and emotional awareness is being mobilized. She refuses initially, but the good object (Zaynab) allows her to return to desire, imagination and emotionality, essential components of emotional strength. It is the beginning to reconnecting with her True Self that has been suppressed for decades due to trauma and survivalism (Klein, 1946).

Zaynab's gesture is also transitional and imaginative. When she talks about weddings, veils and the princess bride, she allows Leila to get away from the trauma for a bit. She is able to support her in bringing her back to the pre-traumatic parts of herself (school memories and dreams). It is not escapism; it is transitional space, a space in which resilience can be built up, and into which the True Self can enter, even flourish, in thought, but which is beyond the reach of the repressive world (Winnicott, 1965).

This scene is an illustration of a less obvious yet important role of good objects in developing resilience. Emotional Resilience in this context is not only about how much trauma one can take, but also the ability to think of a future beyond the trauma, have hope and plan. A ray of hope was there where there was none, thanks to the presence of Zaynab. It gives sense to a life that is full of despair.

Interpersonal Bonds

This part examines the way interpersonal relationships serve as a repair system that helps in psychological survival. It pays special attention to the importance of regular care, mutual experience, and emotional acknowledgment as building blocks of reconstructing the broken inner world of Leila. It is focused on the way relational processes turn trauma into a sustainable sense of oneself and life.

“So how many candles are we putting on it?' Humeyra asked...they could barely afford. (Shafak, 2019, p. 182)

According to Klein (1946), reparation is the process of the mind in which a person tries to make up for imagined or real harm to a loved object. It is manifested in the depressive position, as the individual comes to realize that the same object about which he loves could also have been the target of their destructive urges. This consciousness creates guilt and concern, which inspires the motivation to restore, protect, and preserve the object. Therefore, reparation is a constructive and positive process since it enables the person to overcome the state of despair. It rebuilds internal relationships and facilitates emotional growth.

It is a powerful scene that shows the way the chosen family of Leila transcends companionship and becomes a reparative structure that goes beyond that to actively rebuild what her biological family was unable to offer. The change in focus of friendship to more of a conscious re-creation of family life is announced in the line; If friendship meant rituals, 'they had them…” These

relationships do not happen by accident, but are constructed, sustained, and reproduced by using shared practices. In this respect, the group substitutes for the emotional and social roles of the family that previously disapproved and suppressed her. Instead of being in a condition of fragmentation due to the traumatic early life, Leila resorts to a new system of relations, a system that provides her with coherence, continuity, and mutual recognition. This is a very reparative change where human relationships are not only pacifying but also rearranging her experienced reality into something sustainable and stable.

The focus on rituals, birthdays, even the most frivolous event in the world, such as Cabbage Day, shows how these relationships actively heal the psychological trauma. Trauma tends to break the perception of time, continuity, and order, and the affected person feels disoriented. Rituals, on the other hand, bring about predictability and repetition, and put Leila in a rhythm of life that does not seem chaotic or meaningless. These festivals, no matter how large or financially viable they are, act as ritualistic rejections of anarchy. They establish a common time structure where the past, the present, and the future are relinked. With these repetitive actions, Leila ceases to reside under the survival mode; she is back into the world where time moves, things are important, and life can be characterized by moments of importance (Klein, 1946).

It is also important how these interactions restore Leila to her broken sense of belonging. With a history of rejection, being silenced, and displacement in her biological family, she has attachment wounds of exclusion and invisibility. In this chosen family, she is also actively involved and remembered especially by celebrating her birthday. The mere fact that she is recognized as aged, joking about her age, and even all the people gathered to celebrate her life confirms that she is important. It is not a shallow attempt because it literally contradicts the previous experiences where her voice and agony were not heard. In this case, she does not remain an outsider or burden; she belongs to a relational net. This sense of belonging is vital in mending her internal world as she is able to internalize the experience of being appreciated and being taken care of in a community.

The collective dynamics also serve as a collective holding environment. In contrast to the previous occasions when the establishment of emotional containment was done by a single person, the group here is the container. The united laughing, feasts, and joint involvement form a psychologically safe environment where Leila is able to live without the fear of being judged and abandoned. This group presence allocates emotional support to a variety of relationships, making it more stable and permanent. (Winnicott, 1965)

“Another night, he didn’t show up at all...they were a happy couple. (Shafak, 2019, p. 165)

In this eloquent scene, Leila is concerned about D/Ali not coming home, but she is confident that they were generally happy together. It shows the long-term influence of reparative interpersonal relationships on her mental survival. This scene contrasts with the supportive and kind acts of her chosen family, for example, gifts, physical care, or direct emotional support. But the relationship with D/Ali has helped her internalize security and trust over time. Her momentary panic is an indication that vulnerability is still on her psychic fabric. But this time, it's done with the trust and reliability that he has in himself, even without D/Ali. She can tolerate uncertainty and does not cave in to panic, which is a big change: it has become a part of her internal landscape, a tool for repair, and she is prepared to take emotional jolts without flinching.

D/Ali here is the good object which is an internalization, as such, its reparative effect does not require him to be physically present. The on-going relationship they have with one another in a manner of recognition, respect, companionship and commitment has helped Leila internalise that the relationship is reliable and stable. This internalisation is a stabilizing system in her mind, one that helps her to buffer herself from the inevitable times of uncertainty that arise in life in any relationship. Though he was gone, it would have been a concern, distrust and even regression,

Leila can rely on her inner image of D/Ali and this is proof that the healing process of the relationship is now becoming permanent.

Findings

The childhood trauma and rejection by relatives at a tender age significantly influenced Leila as an individual and shaped her psychology. The strict rules and refusal of her father to listen to her wishes made her learn that it was unsafe and unethical to show her emotions and feelings, which led to feelings of shame and not being worthy. This non-empathetic support did not allow her to establish a stable identity, and she was compelled to lock out her natural feelings and have a fake personality to adapt to the needs of relationships. The patterns were further strengthened by the abuse that she experienced with her uncle because she had become emotionally dependent on an abusive character and was trying to learn to obey and blame herself to keep the relationship alive. With time, she had acquired pervasive guilt, low self-esteem, and a weak identity where she characteristically responded to the threats by fear, obedience, or self-punishment. This was because she could not get access to protective or validating caregivers, and the resultant effect was that her internal world was filled with vulnerability, anxiety, and helplessness.

The family chosen by Leila is a good object that is effective in enhancing her emotional resilience, as it offers care, validation, and psychological support that her biological family never provided. From the first encounter, when the boy silently gives her a chocolate bar after she has been abused, Leila feels acts of kindness and compassion which almost go in complete opposition to the neglect and infidelity she has experienced. These minor forms of concern enable her to forget about her overwhelming fear and internal disorganization, at least temporarily, and provide her ego with a short-term respite. Throughout life, such encounters are absorbed and create an internalization of trustworthy and supportive personalities that compensate for the psychic damage of bad objects in her life.

Conclusion

In this study, the *10 Minutes and 38 Seconds in This Strange World* by Elif Shafak was examined from the perspective of Object Relations Theory (ORT) in an attempt to determine the psychological survival of the main character, Leila. The study was set to examine how the events of Leila's early interactions, meant to be accompanied by her experiences with both nurturing and abusive people, were internalized, thus determining the following aspects of the subject: her emotional reactions, interactions with others, and her resilience in the future. By studying the life of the protagonist, Leila, it is found that how as a child we internalize the treatment of our caregivers and how it affects our psychological mind. Which further influence how we perceive ourselves and those around us. The methodology used in this study is qualitative which is to say that the novel was read multiple times to gather textual passages based on different relevant themes. Furthermore, relevant ORT concepts from Melanie Klein, Donald Winnicott, and W.R.D Fairbairn were applied to explore how Leila's personality was influenced by her early relational experiences and how the chosen family of her friends helped her recover from her traumatic past and rebuild her identity. Lastly, the theoretical framework was based on different works by founders of ORT. These works included concepts applied to my study such as depressive position, facilitating environment, true/false self, transitional space, good/bad objects etc.

Implications

The implications of this study are significant for Object Relations Theory since they support its key argument that the self is essentially formed and maintained through relationships. The analysis shows that psychological survival is not gained through isolation but through relationships. That is based on the presence, consistency, and internalization of good objects. Reparation, internalization, and the holding environment are not just theoretical constructions but are depicted as dynamic within lived experience. The study builds upon these concepts by showing that the

reparative processes do not stop after the initial phases of development but persist throughout life, especially in trauma conditions. It emphasizes the ability of chosen relations to recompense initial relational failures and indicates that the Object Relations Theory needs to be interpreted as a dynamic, adaptive paradigm and not a developmental model.

As literary research, this study is valuable as it shows how psychoanalytic theory can be successfully utilized in modern fiction writing to reveal more psychological layers of characters and story. Besides being a trauma narrative, the novel is a multi-layered experimentation of relational healing, with interpersonal bonds playing the role of structural forces that constitute identity and survival. This approach focuses on the fact that literature may be used as a space where abstract psychological processes may be represented in concrete terms. So that character development could be observed more closely.

Future Research Scope

This study has explored the psychological dynamics of characters of a single novel through ORT. However, future researchers can do research targeting other multiple aspects of the novel. They may explore how relationships work as repairing forces under other themes that lie in the novel, such as gender-based violence, marginalization, and family abuse. Students may also compare different works through ORT lenses to discover different aspects and understand how trauma, marginalization, childhood trauma, and abuse carry different meanings in other cultures. It may also help in finding out how the attachment to interpersonal bonds aids a person's reparation and survival.

This study explored the influence of family abuse on one's inner psychological world and how friends help as healing agents. But it can be expanded to exploring how ambivalent relationships influence one's life and how multi layered human psyche is.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to research.

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