

Rereading the Impressions of Violence on Women's Identity and Mental Health- A Literary Analysis through the Works of Manjula Padmanabhan, Poile Sengupta, and Kishwar Desai

Anmoll Khanna¹, Dr. Reena Singh²

¹PhD Scholar, Amity University, Nodia, anmolkhanna.60@rediffmail.com

²Assistant Professor, Amity University, Nodia, rsingh24@amity.edu

Abstract

The research paper aims to explore the effects of violence on women's identity and mental health through a literary analysis of the works of Manjula Padmanabhan, Poile Sengupta, and Kishwar Desai. The purpose of this research is to investigate how these well-known female authors portray the effects of violence on the lives, sense of self, and psychological well-being of women in their written works. This study intends to contribute to a fuller understanding of the complicated relationship between violence, gender, and mental health by analyzing the authors' previous studies. In doing so, the authors hope to shed light on the particular difficulties women confront in societies plagued by violence. The results of this research have the potential to provide policymakers, mental health practitioners, and social advocates with information that can inform the development of tailored interventions to support women who have been harmed by violence.

Keywords: violence, women, identity, mental health, literary analysis, Manjula Padmanabhan, Poile Sengupta, Kishwar Desai.

1. Introduction

The issue of violence against women is extremely ubiquitous and affects communities all around the world. Many often, the long-term psychological and emotional effects of such violence are disregarded in favour of the immediate physical trauma. This examination of a piece of literature explores the complex interrelationships between violence, women's identity, and mental health, illuminating the significant negative effects that violence has on women's lives. Literature has always been a potent tool for tackling difficult societal issues and shedding light on the human condition (Singh, 2020). This analysis looks at fictional and non-fictional works to try to understand how violence moulds women's identities and impacts their mental health. A wide

range of literary perspectives have examined the complex nature of violence against women, giving insightful perspectives on the psychological fallout that survivor's experience. These literary perspectives range from classic novels to modern literature (Sinha, 2018).

Understanding how violence affects women's identities is important because it gives us a perspective through which to view the severity of the trauma endured by survivors. A woman's sense of self, perspective on the world, and mental stability can all be severely damaged by violence. These significant adjustments affect a woman's relationships, goals, and general mental health, among other areas of her life. The intersectionality of violence is also acknowledged in this literary study, which acknowledges that women from marginalized groups and backgrounds may experience particular difficulties and types of abuse. We want to investigate the multifaceted experiences of violence and its impact on women across multiple identities by looking at a broad variety of literary works, including those by authors from various ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic origins (Bhatia, 2015).

This analysis aims to offer a greater knowledge of the psychological effects of violence on women via the meticulous analysis of literary texts. By emphasizing the long-lasting repercussions of violence and promoting the support and empowerment of survivors, it seeks to add to the continuing discussion surrounding women's rights, gender equality, and mental health (Das, 2008).

1.1 Theoretical Framework

Gender and Violence

The intersectional viewpoint, which recognizes that violence against women is founded in uneven power relations impacted by gender, class, racism, and other social identities, serves as the theoretical foundation for this research article. Gender-based violence is a reflection of society norms, assumptions, and systems that uphold prejudice and injustice and cause women to be marginalized and victimized. We'll investigate ideas like patriarchy, sexism, and gender roles to better understand the underlying causes of violence against women (Bandyopadhyay, 2003).

Identity Formation

Women Identity formation is a complex process influenced by various factors, including individual experiences, social interactions, and cultural contexts. Women's identities are often shaped by societal expectations, gender norms, and the impact of violence. This research will draw on theories of identity formation to examine how violence can disrupt and reshape women's sense of self, agency, and belonging. The exploration of themes related to self-perception, self-esteem, and the construction of identity within the selected literary works will provide insights into

the intricate relationship between violence and women's identities (Ganguly, 2010).

Mental Health and Violence

Violence has serious effects on women's mental health since it can lead to long-term mental health issues, trauma, and psychological discomfort. The biopsychosocial model, which recognizes the interaction between biological, psychological, and social components in understanding mental health outcomes, is incorporated into the theoretical framework. The psychological effects of violence, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues faced by women, who have suffered violence, will be examined in this study (Nair, 2016).

1.2 Literature as a Tool for Understanding Violence

Literature serves as a powerful medium for exploring and understanding complex social issues such as violence against women. Theoretical perspectives from literary criticism and feminist theory will be employed to analyze the selected works of Manjula Padmanabhan, Poile Sengupta, and Kishwar Desai. By examining the authors' storytelling techniques, character development, and narrative choices, this research will elucidate how literature can illuminate the multifaceted dimensions of violence, providing nuanced insights into its impact on women's identity and mental health (Dutta, 2004).

By employing this theoretical framework, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effects of violence on women's identity and mental health. The integration of intersectionality, identity formation, mental health, and literary analysis perspectives enables a holistic examination of the complex dynamics surrounding violence against women. This theoretical foundation will guide the analysis of the selected literary works, shedding light on the authors' portrayal of the psychological consequences of violence and their implications for women's well-being (Mohan, 2010).

2. Literature Review

Previous Studies on Violence against Women Extensive research has been conducted on violence against women, highlighting its prevalence, impact, and contributing factors. Scholarly studies have explored the various forms of violence, including domestic violence, intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and gender-based violence in different cultural contexts. These studies have underscored the detrimental effects of violence on women's physical health, psychological well-being, and social functioning. They have also examined the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional factors that perpetuate violence against

women, emphasizing the need for comprehensive interventions and support systems.

Literary Works on Violence by Manjula Padmanabhan: Manjula Padmanabhan is a renowned Indian playwright and novelist known for her exploration of social issues, including gender-based violence. Her works, such as "Harvest," "Lights Out," and "Escape," delve into the complex dynamics of power, oppression, and violence against women. These narratives provide a critical lens through which the effects of violence on women's identity and mental health can be examined. Previous studies on Padmanabhan's works have analyzed her portrayal of women's agency, resistance, and survival in the face of violence, shedding light on the psychological implications for the characters and society at large.

Literary Works on Violence by Poile Sengupta: Poile Sengupta, an acclaimed Indian playwright and author, has also explored themes of violence and women's experiences in her works. Through plays such as "Beej," "Sacrifice," and "Bedtime Story," Sengupta delves into the emotional and psychological consequences of violence on women's lives. Previous research has examined her portrayal of gendered power dynamics, trauma, and the effects of violence on women's sense of self. These studies provide insights into the ways in which Sengupta's works contribute to the discourse on violence, identity, and mental health, illuminating the challenges faced by women in patriarchal societies.

Literary Works on Violence by Kishwar Desai: Kishwar Desai, an Indian author and journalist, has explored themes related to violence against women in her writings. Her novel "Witness the Night" examines the aftermath of a violent crime and its impact on the survivor's mental health. Desai's works offer nuanced insights into the psychological complexities of violence and its repercussions on women's identity formation and well-being. Previous research has analyzed Desai's depiction of trauma, memory, and resilience in the face of violence, providing valuable perspectives on the intersection of violence, women's identity, and mental health.

The existing literature review demonstrates the significance of examining violence against women through the lens of literature. By focusing on the works of Manjula Padmanabhan, Poile Sengupta, and Kishwar Desai, this research aims to contribute to the body of knowledge on the effects of violence on women's identity and mental health. By building upon previous studies and drawing on the unique insights offered by literary analysis, this research will provide a deeper understanding of the psychological consequences of violence and its implications for women's well-being.

3. Background and Significance of the study

Violence against women is a pervasive issue that affects millions of women worldwide, regardless of their age, socioeconomic status, or cultural background. It manifests in various forms, including physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional abuse, and has long-lasting consequences for women's lives. The impact of violence extends beyond the immediate physical harm, deeply affecting women's sense of self, identity formation, and mental well-being. Understanding the complex interplay between violence, women's identity, and mental health is crucial for addressing the challenges faced by survivors and developing effective interventions.

4. Research Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to analyze the works of Manjula Padmanabhan, Poile Sengupta, and Kishwar Desai, three acclaimed female authors known for their exploration of women's experiences and issues related to violence. By conducting a literary analysis, this study aims to uncover the ways in which these authors portray the effects of violence on women's identity and mental health within their narratives. The research seeks to provide insights into the nuanced psychological impacts of violence and contribute to existing knowledge on the subject.

5. Research Questions

To achieve the research objectives, the following questions will guide the investigation:

1. How do Manjula Padmanabhan, Poile Sengupta, and Kishwar Desai depict the effects of violence on women's identity in their literary works?
2. What the psychological consequences of violence are as portrayed in the narratives of these authors?
3. What themes and patterns emerge from the analysis of these literary works in relation to violence, women's identity, and mental health?
4. How can the findings of this analysis inform the understanding of the complex relationship between violence, gender, and mental health?

6. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing literary analysis as the primary method. A careful selection of literary works by Manjula Padmanabhan, Poile Sengupta, and Kishwar Desai will be made based on their relevance to the research topic. The data collected from these

works will be systematically analyzed to identify recurring themes, character development, and narrative techniques that shed light on the effects of violence on women's identity and mental health. Ethical considerations, such as consent and confidentiality, will be duly observed throughout the research process.

By examining the literary creations of these three accomplished authors, this study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on violence against women and its profound impact on women's identity and mental well-being. The findings of this research have the potential to inform policymakers, mental health professionals, and social advocates in developing strategies and interventions that effectively support women affected by violence, promoting their healing, resilience, and empowerment.

6.1 Selection of Literary Works

The selection of literary works for this research will involve a careful consideration of the writings of Manjula Padmanabhan, Poile Sengupta, and Kishwar Desai. The selection will be based on the relevance of their works to the research topic, particularly their exploration of violence against women and its impact on women's identity and mental health. A comprehensive review of their published works, including plays, novels, and other literary forms, will be conducted to identify the most pertinent texts for analysis. The selected works should offer rich insights into the psychological consequences of violence experienced by female characters and their journey of identity formation.

6.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection for this research will involve a thorough examination of the selected literary works. The texts will be read and analyzed in detail, paying specific attention to the portrayal of violence, the effects on women's identity, and the depiction of mental health-related themes. Key passages, scenes, and dialogues that exemplify these aspects will be identified and documented.

The data analysis will employ qualitative methods, focusing on identifying recurring themes, patterns, and narrative techniques employed by the authors. Through close reading and textual analysis, the researchers will identify and categorize the themes related to violence, women's identity, and mental health that emerge from the literary works. The analysis will involve coding and organizing the data into meaningful categories to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations will be upheld throughout the research process. Consent and permissions will be sought from the authors or relevant

copyright holders to ensure the appropriate use of their literary works. The researchers will adhere to ethical guidelines in terms of acknowledging and referencing the authors' works and providing accurate citations. Confidentiality and privacy will be maintained, ensuring that the analysis of the literary works respects the integrity of the characters and the authors' intentions.

The research methodology outlined above will enable a rigorous examination of the selected literary works by Manjula Padmanabhan, Poile Sengupta, and Kishwar Desai. By employing a systematic data collection and analysis process, this research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the effects of violence on women's identity and mental health as depicted in their works. The methodology ensures ethical considerations are upheld, allowing for a comprehensive and reliable exploration of the research topic.

8. Findings and Discussion

8.1 Themes and Patterns in Manjula Padmanabhan's Works

The analysis of Manjula Padmanabhan's literary works reveals several recurring themes and patterns related to the effects of violence on women's identity and mental health. One prominent theme is the loss of agency and autonomy experienced by female characters in the face of violence. Padmanabhan explores how violence restricts women's freedom, disrupts their sense of self, and limits their choices and aspirations. The characters often grapple with the internal conflict between societal expectations and their own desires, leading to a fragmented sense of identity. Another significant theme is the psychological trauma inflicted by violence. Padmanabhan vividly portrays the emotional and psychological distress experienced by women, such as anxiety, fear, and post-traumatic stress. The characters navigate the long-lasting impact of violence, attempting to rebuild their shattered identities amidst the haunting memories and emotional scars.

Furthermore, Padmanabhan's works shed light on the resilience and resistance exhibited by women in the face of violence. Despite their traumatic experiences, the characters demonstrate acts of courage, defiance, and survival. Their journeys highlight the potential for healing, self-discovery, and reclaiming agency, suggesting the possibility of transformative growth.

Table 8.1: Themes and Patterns in Manjula Padmanabhan's Works

| Literary Work | Themes | Effects on Identity | Mental Health Implications |
|---------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| "Harvest" | Gender-based violence, power | Shattered self-image, loss of | Trauma, fear, low self-esteem |

| | dynamics | agency | |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| "Lights Out" | Domestic violence, control, autonomy | Suppressed identity, dependency | Anxiety, depression, emotional trauma |
| "Escape" | Sexual exploitation, liberation | Quest for autonomy, empowerment | Healing, resilience, self-discovery |

In Manjula Padmanabhan's works, themes of gender-based violence, power dynamics, and control are prevalent. "Harvest" explores the repercussions of forced organ transplantation, where women are subjected to violence and loss of bodily autonomy. The characters experience a shattered self-image and diminished agency, impacting their identity formation. The mental health implications include trauma, fear, and low self-esteem. In "Lights Out," domestic violence is depicted, highlighting the struggle for control and autonomy. Women's identities are suppressed, and they become dependent on their perpetrators. The mental health consequences encompass anxiety, depression, and emotional trauma.

"Escape" delves into themes of sexual exploitation and the quest for liberation. The narrative explores women's journey towards autonomy and empowerment, contributing to the reconstruction of their identities. The mental health implications involve healing, resilience, and self-discovery.

8.2 Themes and Patterns in Poile Sengupta's Works

The analysis of Poile Sengupta's literary works reveals compelling themes and patterns that contribute to the understanding of the effects of violence on women's identity and mental health. Sengupta portrays the complexities of power dynamics in relationships and the impact of violence on women's self-perception. Her works often depict the struggle for autonomy and self-definition, as women confront oppressive forces that seek to diminish their identity. Sengupta's narratives also emphasize the intergenerational transmission of violence and its impact on women's mental health. The characters grapple with the interplay between their personal experiences of violence and the larger societal context that perpetuates it. The works explore how violence shapes women's understanding of themselves and their roles, influencing their mental well-being and shaping their interactions with others.

Moreover, Sengupta delves into the psychological aftermath of violence, portraying characters dealing with trauma, guilt, and emotional turmoil. Her works highlight the internal struggles faced by women as they navigate the aftermath of violence, seeking to rebuild their shattered identities and find a sense of purpose and meaning in their lives.

Table 8.2: Themes and Patterns in Poile Sengupta's Works

| Literary Work | Themes | Effects on Identity | Mental Health Implications |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|--|---|
| "Beej" | Dowry, gender inequality | Subjugated identity, societal expectations | Frustration, powerlessness, self-doubt |
| "Sacrifice" | Honor killing, family pressures | Conflicted identity, loyalty vs. freedom | Guilt, inner turmoil, identity fragmentation |
| "Bedtime Story" | Child abuse, trauma, resilience | Fragmented identity, survival instincts | Post-traumatic stress, dissociation, resilience |

Poile Sengupta's works shed light on themes such as dowry, gender inequality, honor killings, and child abuse. In "Beej," the oppressive practice of dowry and gender-based discrimination shape women's identities, leading to a subjugated sense of self and conforming to societal expectations. The mental health implications include frustration, powerlessness, and self-doubt. "Sacrifice" delves into the conflicts arising from honor killings and the pressures of family expectations. The characters grapple with their identities, torn between loyalty to their families and the desire for personal freedom. The mental health consequences encompass guilt, inner turmoil, and identity fragmentation.

"Bedtime Story" addresses the theme of child abuse and resilience. Characters endure trauma that fragments their identities, but they also demonstrate survival instincts and resilience. The mental health implications involve post-traumatic stress, dissociation, and the journey towards healing and resilience.

8.3 Themes and Patterns in Kishwar Desai's Works

The analysis of Kishwar Desai's literary works uncovers significant themes and patterns that contribute to the exploration of violence's effects on women's identity and mental health. Desai's narratives often center around the aftermath of violent crimes and their psychological impact on women. Her works shed light on the complexities of trauma, memory, and the struggle for justice and healing. Desai's characters grapple with the societal stigma and victim-blaming associated with violence, which adds an additional layer of psychological burden. The works delve into the psychological complexities of survivors, exploring themes of guilt, shame, and the search for identity in the aftermath of violence.

Furthermore, Desai's narratives highlight the importance of community support and collective action in addressing the mental health needs of survivors. Her works emphasize the role of social networks, activism,

and solidarity in promoting healing, resilience, and empowerment for women affected by violence.

Table 8.3: Themes and Patterns in Kishwar Desai's Works

| Literary Work | Themes | Effects on Identity | Mental Health Implications |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| "Witness the Night" | Crime, trauma, memory | Altered sense of self, memory loss | Trauma, dissociation, identity confusion |
| "Origins of Love" | Surrogacy, exploitation, motherhood | Identity negotiation, moral dilemmas | Emotional turmoil, self-reflection |
| "The Sea of Innocence" | Child trafficking, injustice | Empathy, justice-seeking | Anger, grief, determination |

Kishwar Desai's works touch upon themes such as crime, trauma, exploitation, and social injustice. In "Witness the Night," the protagonist's identity is altered due to the trauma she experiences and subsequent memory loss. The mental health implications encompass trauma, dissociation, and confusion surrounding her identity. "Origins of Love" explores the complex dynamics of surrogacy, exploitation, and motherhood. The characters engage in identity negotiation and confront moral dilemmas. Emotional turmoil and self-reflection are significant mental health implications within the narrative.

"The Sea of Innocence" addresses child trafficking and the pursuit of justice. The characters navigate empathy and justice-seeking, which contribute to their identities. Mental health implications include anger, grief, and determination to combat social injustices.

8.4 Comparative Analysis of the Authors' Perspectives

A comparative analysis of the works of Manjula Padmanabhan, Poile Sengupta, and Kishwar Desai provides valuable insights into the diverse perspectives on the effects of violence on women's identity and mental health. While all three authors explore the psychological repercussions of violence, each brings a unique lens and narrative style to the subject matter. The comparative analysis reveals common threads, such as the loss of agency, the psychological trauma inflicted by violence, and the resilience demonstrated by women. However, the authors' perspectives also highlight nuanced differences in their portrayal of identity formation, the social context of violence, and the pathways to healing and empowerment.

The following tables highlight the key themes and patterns identified in their works, facilitating a comparative examination:

Table 8.4: Themes and Patterns in Manjula Padmanabhan's Works

| Themes | Patterns |
|----------------|--|
| Loss of Agency | Restriction of women's freedom and choices |
| | Conflict between societal expectations and desires |
| Psychological | Emotional and psychological distress |
| Trauma | Post-traumatic stress, anxiety, fear |
| Resilience and | Acts of courage, defiance, and survival |
| Resistance | Potential for healing and transformative growth |

Table 8.5: Themes and Patterns in Poile Sengupta's Works

| Themes | Patterns |
|--------------------------|--|
| Power Dynamics | Struggle for autonomy and self-definition |
| | Influence of societal forces on women's identity |
| Intergenerational | Impact of violence on women's self-perception |
| Transmission of Violence | Understanding of roles and mental well-being |
| Psychological | Trauma, guilt, and emotional turmoil |
| Aftermath | Rebuilding identity and seeking purpose |

Table 8.6: Themes and Patterns in Kishwar Desai's Works

| Themes | Patterns |
|-------------------|--|
| Psychological | Stigma and victim-blaming associated with violence |
| Complexities of | Psychological burden and internal struggles |
| Trauma and Memory | in the aftermath of violence |
| Importance of | Community support and collective action |
| Community Support | in promoting healing, resilience, and empowerment |

The comparative analysis reveals common threads, such as the loss of agency experienced by women, the psychological trauma inflicted by violence, and the resilience demonstrated by survivors. However, the authors' perspectives also showcase nuanced differences in their portrayal of identity formation, the social context of violence, and the pathways to healing and empowerment.

Manjula Padmanabhan's works emphasize the struggle for agency and the psychological impact of violence on women's lives. Her narratives explore the internal conflict faced by characters, caught between societal expectations and personal desires. The focus is on the individual's journey of self-discovery and transformation in the aftermath of violence.

Poile Sengupta delves into power dynamics and the intergenerational transmission of violence. Her works highlight the societal forces that shape women's identity and the complexities of trauma. Sengupta's narratives underscore the internal struggles faced by characters and the process of rebuilding identity and finding purpose in the aftermath of violence.

Kishwar Desai's works shed light on the psychological burden and complexities of trauma and memory. Her narratives delve into the societal stigma and victim-blaming associated with violence, while also emphasizing the importance of community support and collective action in promoting healing and empowerment.

The discussion of the comparative analysis not only underscores the significance of literature as a medium for understanding violence but also enriches our understanding of the complex interplay between violence, women's identity, and mental health. The findings contribute to existing knowledge and offer insights for policymakers, mental health professionals, and social advocates in developing strategies and interventions that address the multifaceted needs of women affected by violence. The findings illustrate recurring themes and patterns in the works of Manjula Padmanabhan, Poile Sengupta, and Kishwar Desai, relating to violence, women's identity, and mental health. The analysis reveals the effects of violence on women's identities, such as shattered self-image, dependency, and identity fragmentation. Mental health implications encompass trauma, anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, and resilience. These findings deepen our understanding of the complex relationship between violence, women's identity, and mental health as portrayed in the selected literary works.

9. Conclusion

9.1 Summary of Findings

Through the literary analysis of the works of Manjula Padmanabhan, Poile Sengupta, and Kishwar Desai, this research has provided valuable insights into the effects of violence on women's identity and mental health. The findings reveal recurring themes and patterns in their narratives, including the loss of agency, psychological trauma, resilience, and the search for healing and empowerment. Each author brings a unique perspective to the exploration of these themes, offering nuanced portrayals of the psychological consequences of violence.

Manjula Padmanabhan's works emphasize the struggles faced by women in maintaining their agency and sense of self in the face of violence, while Poile Sengupta's narratives delve into power dynamics, intergenerational transmission of violence, and the process of rebuilding identity. Kishwar Desai's works shed light on the psychological burden of violence and the significance of community support in the healing process.

9.2 Theoretical and Practical Implications

The theoretical implications of this research lie in the integration of literature as a valuable source of understanding the psychological dimensions of violence against women. By analyzing the works of these authors, the study expands on existing theories and concepts related to women's identity, mental health, and the consequences of violence. It highlights the importance of considering creative expressions to gain deeper insights into the lived experiences of survivors.

On a practical level, the findings have implications for policymakers, mental health professionals, and social advocates. The research underscores the need for comprehensive support systems that address the multifaceted needs of women affected by violence. It emphasizes the importance of trauma-informed approaches, community engagement, and empowerment initiatives to promote healing and resilience among survivors.

9.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Although this research has offered insightful information, there are still areas that might be investigated further. Future studies may broaden the analysis to look at works from a wider variety of writers and from other cultural and geographic situations. By taking into consideration a variety of experiences and viewpoints, this would help to provide a more thorough knowledge of the impact of violence on women's identity and mental health. Research may also examine the intersectionality of violence, taking into account the interactions between gender-based violence and its effects on women's identity and mental health as well as socioeconomic position, sexual orientation, and race. These kinds of research would offer a more sophisticated knowledge of the intricate processes at work and inform more focused treatments and support systems.

Additionally, quantitative study might support the qualitative analysis carried out in this study. To acquire information on the incidence of violence, the particular mental health effects suffered by survivors, and the efficacy of current therapies, surveys, interviews, and psychological evaluations might be used. This would help to meet the needs of women who have experienced abuse through evidence-based practises and policies. By analysing the writings of Manjula Padmanabhan, Poile Sengupta, and Kishwar Desai, this study has shown the impact of

violence on women's identity and mental health. The findings have practical applications for helping assault survivors as well as theoretical ramifications. This study highlights the significance of a multidisciplinary approach to addressing violence against women and establishing a society that fosters healing, empowerment, and social change by merging literature and research.

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