



Trauma Analysis of the Main Characters in the Novel *a Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007)

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, the issue regarding trauma and its impacts have been raised seriously in society. This issue is important to understand because trauma can have a negative influence on one's life. Trauma could be understood from various media and sources among us, such as literary works that represent trauma. This study aims to analyze trauma in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) by Khaled Hosseini. This study unveils the traumatic events experienced by the main characters, the trauma responses illustrated by the main characters, and the sources of trauma. In analyzing the data from the novel, this study used a qualitative design and textual analysis method. The data collection process was carried out by close reading the novel, and then the data were highlighted and annotated. Subsequently, the data were identified and classified based on each character's traumatic experiences, trauma responses, and its sources. By using Caruth's concept of trauma (1995) and Vickroy's trauma theory (2014), it was found that the main characters of the novel, Mariam and Laila, undergo similar traumatic experiences, and they illustrate different trauma responses. In addition, the sources of their traumas are the socio-cultural environment and political situation, which results in betrayal trauma and insidious trauma. It can be concluded that the socio-cultural environment can be a source of trauma if it fails to provide a safe and reliable environment, and it impacts one's experience and understanding of trauma.

Keywords: *A Thousand Splendid Suns*; trauma analysis; traumatic experiences trauma responses; trauma source

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INTRODUCTION

Living life as a human being is not always smooth because unpleasant events can happen at any time and happen to anyone. In some cases, overwhelmingly unpleasant experiences or events that happen to someone can cause psychological wounds or what is often referred to as trauma. Trauma is commonly defined as a response to unpleasant events or experiences that cause emotional damage. Vickroy (2014) defines trauma as a reaction to experiences that are overwhelmingly intense that they interrupt normal emotional or cognitive response and cause long-lasting psychological damage. The word trauma originally comes from the

Greek trauma (τραύμα) which refers to a physical wound. The word trauma later is used particularly in the medical and psychiatric literature to refer to an injury inflicted upon the mind, not upon the body (Caruth, 1996).

The study of trauma was then reviewed and discussed not only in the field of psychology but also in literary studies. With the publication of Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* (1995), literary criticism paid attention to the field of trauma studies which led them to develop literary trauma theory (Balaev, 2014). Hartman introduces trauma theory as a field that emphasizes the relationship between language and trauma,

and utilizes literature to help us 'read the wound' which brings a new awareness about trauma in ethical and clinical (Toremans, 2018). From its definition, trauma and literature have a significant correlation. Like psychoanalysis, literature is concerned with the complicated relationships between knowing and not knowing, and the language of literature and psychoanalytic theories of traumatic experience meet precisely when knowing and not knowing cross at a specific point (Caruth, 1996). When they intersect, literature and psychoanalytic can make sense of traumatic experiences presented by language.

The classic trauma theory combines neurobiological theories of mind and memory processes with semiotic theories, while the contemporary trauma theory combines the linguistics structure such as semiotic, as well as the social circumstances and cultural context to understand trauma in literature. Balaev (2014) argues that contemporary literary trauma theory is more likely to recognize both the neurobiological and social circumstances of "the experience, response, and narratives, as well as the possibilities that language can convey the variable meanings of trauma" (p. 7). The social relations and cultural values of surroundings can be important to understanding trauma's effects because they "can be a source of trauma or a force that silences victims out of denial or guilt" (Vickroy, 2014, p. 131). Vickroy also argues that the social environment does not only influence the causes of trauma, but it may also provide or reject the necessary support for healing. Thus, in analyzing trauma in literature, we need to consider the mind and memory aspects as well as the social and cultural environments of the characters.

Literary works that raise the issue of trauma usually depict traumatic events experienced by the characters through narrative or dialogue. As explained by Vickroy (2014), fiction shows the various ways that the survivor's story may be used to communicate the voices of trauma. She also argues that trauma in fiction represents unspeakable wounds and it can offer readers the possibility to read wounds and understand trauma from various points of view. Many literary works such as novels portray traumatic experiences with different types, such as childhood trauma, sexual

abuse trauma, war trauma, or gender trauma. One of the contemporary novels that represents traumatic experiences is *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) by Khaled Hosseini.

Khaled Hosseini is an Afghanistan-American writer who writes about the social and political situations of Afghanistan through his novels. His second novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, focused on the journey of two Afghan women who experienced oppression and discrimination. The novel is intriguing to analyze because it addresses some issues, such as trauma, violence, patriarchal culture, gender discrimination, and political injustice. Moreover, this novel represents the cultural and political condition of Afghanistan from the early 1960s to the early 2000s. The trauma issue is worth investigating because the traumatic experiences caused by the social environment in the novel affect the two main characters' psychologies and influence how they live their lives.

The study on the analysis of trauma in novels has been conducted previously by some researchers. A study by Cai (2023) showed that the childhood trauma experienced by the character was shown by repetition narrative and some ways to heal the traumatic pasts are through self-reflection and writing. Likewise, a study by Sarungu (2023) also showed that self-reflection and expressive writing are the coping mechanisms to heal from trauma. Meanwhile, in Sartika (2020), it was found that characters who experienced the same trauma respond to it differently. Some trauma responses shown by the characters are intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, avoidance, and having negative feelings and moods. The findings were in line with Oktaviani's study (2021) that found the forms of traumatic experiences in the novel are flashbacks, arousal traumatic, and avoidance traumatic. On the other hand, the study of trauma in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* has also been conducted by several researchers, such as a study by Anu (2019) that discussed trauma of love and its betrayal experienced by one of the main characters. However, the study only focused on one main character's trauma without giving detailed elaboration about the traumatic experiences. Another study by Wen (2021) focused on the trauma manifestations

of Mariam and Laila, the root of Mariam's trauma and the trauma recoveries of Mariam and Laila. Nevertheless, the study did not give a detailed explanation of the traumatic events experienced by the two characters and did not give an explanation about the root of Laila's trauma.

Therefore, to contribute to research on trauma analysis in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, this paper will analyze and explain more about the trauma experienced by the two characters, the trauma responses illustrated by the characters, and the sources of the trauma. This paper will employ Cathy Caruth's concept of trauma (1996) and Laurie Vickroy's trauma theory (2014) to analyze the trauma experienced by the two characters.

METHOD

This research used a qualitative design in order to explore the trauma issue and to present the data descriptively. According to Sutton & Austin (2015), qualitative research is used to gain insights about issues related to humans' feelings and thoughts. Qualitative research has the ability to present complex textual descriptions and to tell the "human" side of an issue (Mack, N. et al., 2005). Since this research focused on analyzing a novel, the method of analysis used was textual analysis. It is a methodology that entails comprehending the language, symbols, and/or images presented in texts in order to know how individuals make sense of and convey life and life experiences (Allen, 2017). In the textual analysis method, the researcher tries to understand texts in depth which focuses on understanding the messages, themes, and implications within texts.

The object of the research was the trauma issue in a novel and the data were taken from the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) by Khaled Hosseini. The data collection process was carried out by close reading the novel several times to understand the story and the traumatic events experienced by the two main characters, Mariam and Laila. The data considered relevant to the topic were highlighted and annotated. Subsequently, the data were identified and classified based on each character's traumatic experiences, trauma responses, and its sources.

The method of analysis took the form of a process of analysing, describing, explaining,

and interpreting the data. The analysis of this research was conducted in four steps. First, the traumatic events experienced by each character in the novel were described. Second, the trauma responses shown by each character were explained. Later, the sources of trauma were unveiled. Finally, the trauma experienced by each character was compared and interpreted.

Data analysis and interpretation were carried out by drawing on Caruth's (1995) and Vickroy's (2014) trauma theory. To unveil the traumatic experiences and trauma responses, Caruth's trauma concept was employed. She states that trauma is a response, which sometimes happens immediately or delayed, to overwhelmingly event or events that take the form of "repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts, or behaviour" as well as a feeling of numbness during or after the event occurs and "possibly increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event" (Caruth, 1995, p. 4). As for revealing the sources of trauma experienced by the characters, Vickroy's theory was employed as she states that "the environment of social relations and cultural values can be a source of trauma or force that silences victims out of denial or guilt", and the social relations and cultural values may also provide or reject the necessary support for healing (Vickroy, 2014, p. 131). These two theories were used because they complement each other. Caruth's concept of trauma focuses on neurobiology or characters' memories, while Vickroy's theory considers the social and cultural environments which are also important elements in understanding trauma.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings and discussion of the study. The findings will be divided into two categories: the traumatic experiences and trauma responses of Mariam and Laila and the sources of the trauma. Further explanation of each finding will be discussed in the following sub-section.

Traumatic experiences and trauma responses

After analysing the data based on trauma theory, the two main characters, Mariam and Laila, undergo almost similar traumas. Mariam's traumatic experiences are explained

in the first part, while Laila's traumatic experiences are explained in the second part of the findings.

It was found that Mariam undergoes four traumatic experiences. The first traumatic experience is when she sees her mother commit suicide, the second is when she experiences betrayal from her father, the third is when she experiences a miscarriage, and the fourth is when she experiences domestic violence from her husband. Mariam responds to each experience differently. These findings are elaborated below.

As an illegitimate child, Mariam has experienced traumas since she was a child. The first trauma occurs when she sees her mother commit suicide. It happens when Mariam visits his biological father even though her mother prohibits her from doing that. Her mother has been warning her before that she will die if Mariam goes to visit her father, Jalil. When Mariam fails to meet Jalil and returns home, she sees with her own eyes that her mother has hanged herself from a tree. At first, Mariam cannot process what is happening when she realizes her mother has committed suicide. She cannot express her emotions when her mother's funeral takes place. When she is taken to Jalil's house, she can only cry about her mother and keep remembering her mother's words.

But Mariam could not hear comfort in God's words. Not that day. Not then. All she could hear was Nana saying, *I'll die if you go. I'll just die.* All she could do was cry and cry... (Hosseini, 2007, p. 38).

Her mother's words about going to die and the suicide event traumatize Mariam as the words keep coming back to her mind. According to Caruth (1996), traumatic events cannot initially be recognized while they are happening, but rather the events continue to haunt the survivor later on. Caruth also emphasizes that to be traumatized is to be haunted. In response to this traumatic event, Mariam stays in her room for a long time and does not have the mood to do anything, even eat.

Except when she had to use the bathroom down the hall, Mariam stayed in the room. The girl with the tattoo, the one who had opened the gates to her,

brought her meals on a tray: lamb kebab, *sabzhi*, *aush* soup. Most of it went uneaten. (Hosseini, 2007, p. 40).

It shows that someone who has recently experienced trauma usually isolates themselves because they feel numb and still cannot process or accept what has happened. As stated by Caruth (1995), one of the trauma responses is feeling numb which may have begun during or after the traumatic experience. Additionally, it is shown that Mariam isolates herself after experiencing the traumatic event. Social withdrawal can be a response to trauma because it is one of the strategies to reduce psychological stress or as a coping mechanism (Nonaka & Sakai, 2021).

After her mother leaves Mariam, she gets another emotional wound from Jalil who forces her to marry a 40-year-old man. Meanwhile, Mariam is only 15 years old. The forced marriage happens because Jalil does not want Mariam to live in his house for a long time. As a result, Mariam loses her trust in Jalil when she knows that Jalil is ashamed of her. It can be seen from Mariam's statement below that is said to Jalil.

"I thought about you all the time. I used to pray that you'd live to be a hundred years old. I didn't know. I didn't know that you were ashamed of me." (Hosseini, 2007, p. 54).

Mariam used to believe in Jalil and used to pray for Jalil because she loved him as his father. The lost trust and respect lead Mariam to experience betrayal trauma. Freyd (1996) explains that betrayal trauma occurs when a meaningful human relationship based on trust is lost.

The betrayal trauma she experienced makes Mariam remember the words of her mother. She once said that Mariam had nothing in the world apart from her mother because she is a *harami*. The word *harami* becomes one of Mariam's traumas because it leaves a deep and long-lasting impact on Mariam's mind and psychology. The impact can be seen when she moves to Kabul and lives in her husband's house. When she goes out of the house, she is afraid that the neighbour will find out about her illegitimate status.

In the tandoor line, Mariam caught sideways glances shot at her, heard whispers. Her hands began to sweat. She imagined they all knew that she'd been born a *harami*, a source of shame to her father and his family. They all knew that she'd betrayed her mother and disgraced herself. (Hosseini, 2007, p. 65).

The illegitimate status results in Mariam becoming paranoid whenever she meets strangers. Moreover, she always feels unworthy of living in the world and looks down on herself whenever she remembers her status as a *harami*. Traumatic responses may include feelings of shame, self-doubt, or guilt or can ruin one's safety or perception of oneself as worthy, powerful, and independent (Bulman, 1992). Downey & Crummy (2021) also says that traumatic experiences that come from interpersonal relationships affect a child's general self-knowledge. By looking at Mariam's case, the bad word or nickname given to a child can affect their self-knowledge and lead them to question their self-worth.

Another traumatic event experienced by Mariam is when she experiences a miscarriage. Since she is too young, and her body is too weak to conceive, it results in a miscarriage that happens when she is in a public bathroom. The miscarriage incident cannot be processed by Mariam when it is happening to her. She is too shocked when she sees the blood at her feet and has no idea about it. She even asks people who come for her if it is normal to shed blood when pregnant.

Then there was blood and she was screaming. The sound of feet now, slapping against the wet cobble-stones. Faces peering at her through the steam. Tongues clucking... Later that night, in bed, Fariba, told her husband that when she'd heard the cry and rushed over she'd found Rasheed's wife shriveled into a corner, hugging her knees, a pool of blood at her feet. (Hosseini, 2007, pp. 88-89).

This event is a traumatic experience for Mariam because, according to Vickroy (2014), trauma is an individual's reaction to

circumstances that are so extreme that they damage emotional or cognitive functioning and may cause long-term psychological damage. The miscarriage incident shocks Mariam because it is her first time getting pregnant, and she does not have any knowledge about it. It damages her emotions as she keeps remembering the event. In responding to this traumatic event, she becomes frustrated and furious and blames her husband and herself after the event.

Mariam's traumatic event also comes from the domestic violence committed by her husband, Rasheed. Since Mariam's miscarriage happens many times, the presence of children never comes in Mariam and Rasheed marriage. As a result, Rasheed becomes more sensitive towards Mariam. The changes in Rasheed's behaviour become increasingly obvious when he begins to get angry over small things and even dares to commit violence against Mariam.

Mariam was afraid. She lived in fear of his shifting moods, his volatile temperament, his insistence on steering even mundane exchanges down on confrontational paths that, on occasion, he would resolve with punches, slaps, kicks, and sometimes try to make amends with polluted apologies and sometimes not... Now Mariam dreaded the sound of him coming home in the evening. The key rattling, the creak of the door--these were sounds that set her heart racing. (Hosseini, 2007, pp. 97-98).

The violence committed by Rasheed makes Mariam live in fear, even traumatizing her when Rasheed comes home from work. The trauma from the violence makes her anxiety rise. It also makes her want to avoid Rasheed because his presence reminds her of the violence and makes her think about what kind of violence she will experience later. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2014), individuals who have experienced trauma are at an elevated risk of having mental health problems, such as anxiety.

The domestic violence in Mariam's marriage happens for years. Even though Mariam has been experiencing violence from Rasheed for years, she is still traumatized and

even shivers with fright whenever Rasheed shows a sign that he will commit violence.

All these years and still she shivered with fright when he was like this, sneering, tightening the belt around his fist, the creaking of the leather, the glint in his bloodshot eyes... When she heard their door close, Mariam climbed back into bed, buried her head beneath the pillow, and waited for the shaking to stop. (Hosseini, 2007, pp. 234-235).

Vickroy (2014) argues that trauma can impair someone's emotional or cognitive functioning and may disturb one's psychology for a long time. It means that trauma has a long-term effect on the memory and psychology of the victim. Even though victims of trauma have experienced the same trauma for years, they will still react to it whenever something triggers them. In response to the traumatic event, Mariam is shivering whenever she realizes that Rasheed wants to commit violence. As stated by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2014), shivering is one of the immediate physical reactions to trauma.

Another finding regarding Mariam's trauma shows that she also acts unsympathetic when an event triggers her trauma. It happens when Rasheed marries another girl, Laila, whose life is rescued by him. It triggers Mariam because she thinks Laila has stolen her husband and replaced her position. Moreover, Mariam also feels betrayed by Laila because Mariam has previously taken care of Laila after she was rescued. Thus, she becomes angry at Laila and shows an unsympathetic reaction to Laila. It can be seen from Mariam's statement to Laila below.

"And if you think you can use your looks to get rid of me, you're wrong. I was here first. I won't be thrown out. I won't have you cast me out..." "I wouldn't have fed you and washed you and nursed you if I'd known you were going to turn around and steal my husband." (Hosseini, 2007, p. 219).

According to Root (1992), the victim of trauma may show unsympathetic situations in responding to trauma, such as egocentrism

and being short-tempered. In Mariam's case, she doesn't want her position to be taken because she is traumatized by being thrown away again and does not belong anywhere like she felt when she was 15 years old. Therefore, she shows anger and does not sympathize with Laila when she finds out that Laila and Rasheed are married.

Laila is the other main character in the novel who has experienced trauma since childhood. Laila undergoes three traumatic experiences. The first traumatic event she experiences is when her parents are killed because of a bombing, the second is when her childhood lover is reported to have died, and the third is when she experiences domestic violence from her husband. In responding to the traumatic experiences, Laila often has nightmares and shows physical reactions. These findings are elaborated below.

Laila is the daughter of a couple who live near Mariam's house. She is 19 years younger than Mariam. When Laila turned fourteen, Afghanistan entered a civil war that resulted in many rocket attacks and bombs falling in Kabul. The war in Kabul is one of Laila's traumatic experiences because her house becomes one of the targets of the bombing, which kills both her parents. Later, Laila was saved by Rasheed and taken to his house. Mariam helped take care of Laila, who was still traumatized by the bombing that killed her parents.

She murmured in her sleep. Sometimes she spoke gibberish, cried out, called names Mariam didn't recognize. She wept in her sleep, grew agitated, kicked the blankets off. (Hosseini, 2007, p. 193).

One of the traumatic responses shown by Laila is having so bad nightmares that she is delirious and crying in her sleep. When she wakes up from her sleep and remembers what happened to her parents, she often collapses, has other nightmares, or has a sudden attack of grief. The trauma responses shown by Laila are in line with Caruth's trauma theory (1995), which says some trauma responses take the form of intrusive dreams, thoughts, or behaviour coming from the event.

Laila also experiences trauma when she receives the news that her childhood lover, Tariq, has died. The news of Tariq's death leaves a deep wound inside Laila and becomes one of her traumas. When she remembers Tariq's death, the grief controls her so much that she feels short of breath and weak.

...But thinking of Tariq was treacherous because, before she could stop, she saw him lying on a bed, far from home, tubes piercing his burned body. Like the bile that kept burning her throat these days, a deep, paralyzing grief would come rising up Laila's chest. Her legs would turn to water. She would have to hold on to something. (Hosseini, 2007, p. 225).

It shows that the feeling of loss and sadness from the death of a loved one can dominate someone's mind, causing psychological and physical impacts. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2014) states that trauma can refer to experiences that create physical and psychological stress reactions. The bodily reactions shown are also the impact of the trauma experienced by a person.

Another traumatic event experienced by Laila is caused by the domestic violence from her husband, Rasheed. Laila becomes Rasheed's second wife because she does not have relatives and a place to stay. However, she experiences domestic violence from Rasheed, which traumatizes her. When Laila leaves Rasheed's house in Kabul with her children, she often dreams about the house in Kabul where she experiences trauma from domestic violence.

Laila has her own dreams. In them, she's always back at the house in Kabul, walking the hall, climbing the stairs... The dreams leave Laila shaken. She wakes from them coated in sweat, her eyes prickling with tears. (Hosseini, 2007, p. 370).

Laila takes time to recognize that those events that happened during her life with Rasheed are traumatic for her. In response to this trauma, Laila keeps having nightmares, and the dreams make her break out in a cold sweat when she wakes up. Caruth (1995)

explains that trauma is a delayed response to an event which takes the form of interfering hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviour coming from the event. In Laila's case, she keeps having nightmares about the root of her trauma.

Even though Laila is no longer in Kabul, she still remembers the traumatic events she experienced in Kabul and tries not to remember them. When Tariq, who is still alive and eventually becomes Laila's husband, suggests returning to Kabul, Laila refuses this idea. It is because she is still traumatized by the war that happened in Kabul. However, Tariq tries to persuade her by saying that the war in Kabul is not so bad now. Tariq's words make Laila very angry because his words sound like he is not validating her trauma. She tries not to talk about it any more because it will trigger her.

"... I lost my parents to war. My *parents*, Tariq. And now to hear you say that war is not so bad?" ... "I don't want to talk about this anymore" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 374).

It shows that a victim of trauma tends to avoid things that can trigger memories of the traumatic events they experienced. According to Caruth (1995), one form of trauma response is avoidance of stimuli remembering the incident. The avoidance can be a defence mechanism to control and reduce the risk of re-experiencing the intense emotions from the traumatic event.

Trauma source

To understand the personal trauma experienced by Mariam and Laila further, an understanding of the social-cultural environment within the context of trauma is also required. The social-cultural environment influences individuals' experiences and responses to traumatic events. After analysing the data, Mariam and Laila have different social backgrounds, which affect how they respond to their trauma. Moreover, the sources of their traumas come from the social-cultural environment and political situation. These findings are explained below.

Mariam has a social environment that has not been supportive since childhood. Mariam's mother calls her a *harami* or bastard, which impacts her self-judgement

and self-knowledge. Her mother also forbade Mariam from going to school because she thinks that school is not important, and people would only look down on Mariam. In addition, her mother also keeps reminding Mariam that she is a *harami*; thus, she will not be accepted by society. The negative social environment makes Mariam not have social and emotional support when she experiences her trauma. As a result, all the traumas she experienced made her see herself as inferior. Mariam lets others determine her fate, such as when Jalil forces her to marry Rasheed. It also influences Mariam's weak self-defence, in which she cannot defend herself when she receives physical abuse from Rasheed. The decrease in an individual's sense of trust, control, and self-esteem is the consequence of a trauma that involves betrayal or abuse of power (Vickroy, 2014).

Unlike Mariam, Laila has a social environment that supports her. The full support that Laila gets comes from her father, who encourages Laila to go to school because education is significant. Laila also has a friend and boyfriend, Tariq, who always tries to protect her and loves her. Thus, Laila experiences trauma when she finds out that her parents died. When Laila has to marry Rasheed and finds out that Rasheed is an abusive person, Laila experiences shock when she first receives harsh treatment because there has never been violence in her family. However, Laila has a brave personality because her father used to teach her to be brave, so Laila cannot just accept Rasheed's behaviour. Several times, Laila fights Rasheed back even though she knows she will receive more severe violence in response. After Laila leaves Rasheed's house, she realizes that all the violence she received traumatized her.

In the cultural context, Mariam and Laila have to face the norms and culture of Afghan society, which adheres to a patriarchal culture. Afghan women are held hostage to a deeply rooted form of patriarchy and a tribal-based social structure where only men have rights, equality and unrestricted access to public spaces (Moghadam, 2002). This patriarchal culture in Afghanistan society is reflected in the novel through the main characters who suffer and are threatened sexually, psychologically, and mentally at the hands of male domination (Naaz & Khadija, 2022). Mariam and Laila have to marry a man

who is much older than them because, at that time, society considers that the solution for girls who lost their families is to marry them off even though they are still young. However, the marriage solution does not benefit Mariam and Laila because their marriage to Rasheed is one of their traumas. The domestic violence they experience is a traumatic event they keep experiencing. Unfortunately, they cannot report their traumatic experiences because the cultural and social values in Afghanistan do not protect women. It demonstrates how a social environment can prevent victims of trauma from speaking out. As stated by Vickroy (2014), the social and cultural environment can be a source of trauma or a force that silences victims of trauma because of denial or guilt.

Not only is the social and cultural environment the source of the trauma but the political situation is also portrayed as the source of trauma in this novel. When Mariam and Laila live in the same house as Rasheed's wives, Kabul is controlled by the Taliban, and there is still frequent civil war. The Taliban's rule resulted in changes in rules that are detrimental to women, such as the prohibition on leaving the house unless accompanied by a male relative, the prohibition on wearing jewellery, the prohibition on laughing in public, the prohibition on not speaking unless represented, and the prohibition on attending school. If women violate these rules, they will be beaten by officers on patrol. The power of the Taliban with its rules makes Laila's life increasingly fearful. Laila once had a dream of burying her daughter, Aziza, alive. This dream happens because previously, Laila, Mariam, and Aziza had to bury the television they had since the Taliban banned televisions.

In Laila's dream, she and Mariam are out behind the toolshed digging again. But, this time, it's Aziza they're lowering into the ground. (Hosseini, 2007, p. 295).

The political situation makes Laila depressed to the point that it disturbs her psychology. As a result, she experiences nightmares, which show her biggest fear, namely losing her daughter. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2014), political terror and

war are likely to have long-lasting impacts on victims or survivors of trauma because they threaten individuals' existence, beliefs, well-being, and livelihood. That is why political terror and war can be considered traumatic.

Discussion

From the findings, the concept of trauma by Caruth (1995) is portrayed in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) through the main characters. Both Mariam and Laila experience delayed responses to their traumatic events, in which the events affect and haunt them later after the events happened. The trauma responses illustrated by Mariam are having intrusive thoughts, feeling numb after the experience, and avoidance of repeating the event. Likewise, the trauma responses portrayed by Laila are having intrusive dreams and avoidance of recalling the event. Besides the trauma responses proposed by Caruth (1995), there are also other forms of trauma responses illustrated by Mariam and Laila, such as social withdrawal, collapsing, and shivering. It shows that traumatic events not only have a psychological impact. Trauma has a long-term negative impact on the physical, social, emotional or spiritual function and well-being of an individual (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014). When a traumatic event occurs, the body will show an immediate physical reaction after the event occurs, such as shivering and collapsing. Meanwhile, psychological responses, such as nightmares and flashbacks, usually appear later on as the traumatic events haunt the victim of trauma. In addition, the impacts of trauma on social and emotional function may lead to social withdrawal.

Based on the findings of the source of trauma, some trauma caused by the social-cultural environment and political situation in the novel can be divided into two different categories, which are betrayal trauma and insidious trauma. In many ways, the social environment impacts the causes and outcomes of traumatic experiences (Vickroy, 2014). In Mariam's case, her unsupportive social environment and social relationship caused betrayal trauma for her. Trauma betrayal results from a betrayal of the trust that holds human relationships together (Freyd, 1996). The betrayal trauma Mariam

experiences takes the form of emotional wounds and loss of trust in her father. As a result, she has a dependency issue on Rasheed, who provides a house for her to stay. This dependency issue can be seen when Mariam gets angry at Laila because she still wants to maintain her position as Rasheed's wife even though Rasheed no longer treats her well. According to Kane & Borsntein (2017), the raised levels of anxiety and self-esteem from trauma may result in an ongoing issue with dependency as victims rely on other figures of authority to get external validation and emotional support. Thus, the dependency may blind the victim if the support provider makes a mistake. This finding is similar to a study by Anu (2019) which reveals Mariam's betrayal trauma is caused by the loss of trust and love from meaningful relationships.

Another trauma resulting from the social-cultural environment is insidious. According to Root (1992), insidious trauma is usually associated with a person's social status being lowered because their identity has intrinsic characteristics that differ from those valued by people in positions of power. Insidious trauma concerns the traumatic impact of relentless institutional oppression on subjectivity (Keini & Klonover, 2021). In the novel, the violence experienced by Mariam and Laila is caused by Rasheed, who feels powerful and looks down on women. In addition, the patriarchal culture in Afghanistan is also the reason domestic violence occurs. From an insidious trauma perspective, systemic oppression happens in the husband-wife relationship because of the unbalanced distribution of power between the two partners in a patriarchal social order (Janani & Karmakar, 2023). This finding shed a light on studies about this novel (Anu, 2019; Lu, 2019; Wen, 2021), which reveals another type of trauma. The previous studies have discussed the patriarchal culture issue in the novel, but they have not revealed insidious trauma as the type of trauma experienced by the main characters in the novel.

When comparing Mariam and Laila's traumas, it can be seen how the social environment influences individuals' ways of thinking to understand their trauma. Social and cultural circumstances and individual characteristics, as well as culturally

appropriate teaching and resources accessible to individuals, can all influence the impact of psychological trauma (Ford et al., 2015). An individual who comes from an unsupportive social environment tends to cope with their trauma more difficulty than an individual who comes from a supportive social environment. Mariam tends to accept people's decisions and behaviour resignedly, thus affecting her self-judgement. Meanwhile, Laila dares to stand up for herself and defend herself. As a result, Mariam and Laila have different responses when they experience the same traumatic events. According to Caruth (1995), people who experience the same traumatic event may or may not be traumatised equally. Some individuals may be deeply affected by a traumatic event, while others may not experience the same because people have different backgrounds and experiences to process the traumatic event. This finding is similar to a study by Sartika (2020), which reveals that different characters might respond to the same trauma differently. In addition, the finding also contributes a new perspective on studies about this novel (Anu, 2019; Lu, 2019; Wen, 2021), which unveils that the differences in social environments influence the characters' traumas.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be seen that Mariam and Laila undergo traumatic experiences that come from their socio-cultural environment, and they illustrate different trauma responses. The trauma responses illustrated by Mariam are having intrusive thoughts, feeling numb, isolating herself, avoidance of repeating the event, shivering, and showing unsympathetic action. Meanwhile, the trauma responses illustrated by Laila are having intrusive dreams, avoiding recalling the event, and showing physical reactions, such as collapsing. The socio-cultural environment becomes the source of Mariam and Laila's traumas and influences how they respond to their trauma differently. It can be concluded that a social and cultural environment can be a source of trauma if it fails to provide a safe and reliable environment. It also plays a pivotal role in shaping an individual's experiences and responses to the trauma they encounter.

This study has unveiled several types of trauma response illustrated by the two main characters and has found two types of trauma in the novel, namely betrayal trauma and insidious trauma. However, this study did not explore the types of trauma in the novel further. Thus, for future studies, it is suggested to investigate the insidious trauma in the novel further.

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