

## Reasons behind Spousal Aggression in *A Thousand Splendid*

*Suns* by Khaled Hosseini

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### ABSTRACT

*The theme of the study was in-depth study of reasons behind spousal (in this study husband-to-wife) aggression from the novel A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini. In this study, reasons behind Rasheed's aggression were taken as the central attention, and illustrated different theories related to aggression. The study applied psychological approach to assess reasons behind husband-to-wife aggression in the novel. The researcher applied the ethological theory, social learning theory and drive theory to assess reasons behind the kinds of aggression that Rasheed commits on his wives. The findings of the study indicate that Rasheed is a man with a big body and possesses a gun, which provides more chances for him to commit aggression over his wives. The drive theory addressed in this matter provides an understanding that aggression is produced by frustration. In other words, frustration-aggression hypothesis is the reason proposed by drive theory. Herein Rasheed's aggression analysis, this theory helps to yield two findings that Rasheed's sources of frustration are first, his encounter with his old-painful experience of losing a son, and the second is his sad condition over losing all his jobs and lacking foods to eat. The last but not least is the social learning theory, which proposes a help to see the surrounding of aggression as also the consideration for its initiation. The conclusion of this view is male domination-especially in the marriage system – in Afghanistan provide more spaces for man to aggress against woman as a wife. The story implies that it has been common in Afghanistan to find polygamous husband living under one roof. The second conclusion is that Taliban's ruling is a possible role model for the male Afghans to commit harassment towards woman, as Taliban tends to force women into corner by enacting many banning and restriction upon them. Without termination on that, this group sets a deadly punishment to a find-guilty woman by stoning them to death on a football field surrounded by large of people (men) who favour to Taliban.*

### KEYWORDS

Aggression, Drive theory, Ethological theory, Social learning theory

### INTRODUCTION

Bandura (1973, p. 4) states that aggression is an intended behaviour that marks in personal hurts and obliteration of property of the victim. The hurts may be psychological or physical. It means in the form of devaluation or degradation of someone's emotional condition, or marked by deformed body parts of the victim of aggression. Further, he posits that variations in defining aggression pervade because some authors describe aggression solely

in terms of attributes of the behaviour. This harm can take many forms such as "physical injury, hurt feelings, or damaged social relationships (to name just a few)"(Allen & Anderson, 2015, p. 3). Although "definitions vary slightly, many prominent aggression researchers have utilized highly similar definitions"(Neupane, 2017, p. 231). For example, in order to better distinguish between certain subtypes of aggression, Anderson and Bushman (2002, p. 28) more specifically defined human aggression as "any behaviour directed toward another individual that is carried out with the proximate (immediate) intent to cause harm. In addition, the perpetrator must believe that the behaviour will harm the target and that the target is motivated to avoid the behaviour"(Allen & Anderson, 2015, p. 3). However, others include assumptions about the instigator, emotional concomitants, or the intent of potentially hurt actions. Freedman and his colleagues (1974, p. 103) have similar judgement about aggression that aggression is such behaviour that is intended to injure others psychologically or physically. Likewise, Berkowitz (1980, p. 337) also puts similar opinion about aggression that it is intentional injury of other. Similarly, Bjorkqvist(2011, p. 180) stated that there are two kinds of aggression to explain about behaviour of aggression: instrumental aggression and hostile aggression. Instrumental aggression is a way to get a target, which is done by individual. While dealing on types of aggression there many kinds. "Aggression can be categorized into direct (physical, verbal) and indirect (or relational/social) forms, with direct aggression corresponding with agentic behaviours and indirect with the communal behaviours of social role theory"(Neupane, 2014, p. 41). On the other hand, while dealing about the causes of human aggression, in a longitudinal study, Farrington(1998, p. 460) identified the following key social predictors of violent and aggressive behaviour: poverty, family history of criminality, precarious upbringing, failing at school, attention deficit, and hyperactivity and antisocial behaviour during childhood. Scott et al.(2015, p. 2)studied the main determining socio-environmental factors leading to aggressive behaviour.

This present study aimed to study reasons behind husband-to-wife aggression in Khalid Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. In evaluating the reasons behind Rasheed's aggression over his wives the researcher is tracing it through the three out of four aspects that influence human aggression, in other words it could instigate or intensify the aggression that someone does over someone. The explication is adopted from Bandura's explanation which are ethological theory, drive theory, and social learning theory(Bandura, 1973, p. 4). Another explanation from another author, Berkowitz, is also considered to add up simpler terms and explanation. Those expectedly simpler terms are some factors namely biological influences, psychological influences, and family influences(Berkowitz, 1980, p. 17). As it has been mentioned before, that Berkowitz's is the small-supporting information, which will go along with the main guide, which is from Bandura's. Thus, this study was based on assessment approach with research question: "What are related theories that explain Rasheed's aggressive behaviours over his wives described in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*"? In other words, the objective of this study was to assess the reasons behind Rasheed's aggression over his wives.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Subject matter, approach of the study and method of the study were three main parts of methodology in this present study. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini is a

novel. It is taken as subject matter of the present study. Two main characters of the novel Mariam and Laila who experience turmoil in their journey of life. Their husband Rasheed is merciless character as presented in this novel. His aggressive behaviour is ever seen upon Mariam and Laila either psychologically or physically. Finally, Rasheed's unbearable anger has headed him to his death at Mariam's hand (Neupane, 2017, p. 231).

The evaluation of reasons of man's aggression in relation to his psyche condition especially Rasheed's mental condition to express aggression against his wives is the focus of the study. Thus, approach of the study was chosen psychology. Psychology is expected to give hidden answers behind someone's doing aggression.

While talking about the method of the study, this study adopted qualitative research method. The study of literature is a qualitative research.

## **DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

### **Reasons Viewed from Ethological Theory**

Ethological theory traces man's aggressiveness from their physiological conditions. It will consider how Rasheed looks like and what properties he possesses which support Rasheed's adherence to commit aggression. From Berkowitz this explanation is categorized as biological influence.

#### **Rasheed's Physical Appearance**

The novel describes Rasheed in overall as a big old guy by the details as; "Mariam saw a tall man, thick bellied and broad shouldered, stooping in the doorway" (Hosseini, 2013, p. 52). Then his slow, heavy-footed movement across the room the candy bowl on the table clinked in tune with his steps. With a thick grunt, he dropped on chair beside her. He breathed noisily" (Hosseini, 2013, p. 52). His harsh, raspy voice reminded Mariam of the sound of dry autumn leaves crushed underfoot" (Hosseini, 2013, p. 52)." In the mirror, Mariam has first glimpse of Rasheed: the big, square, ruddy face; the hooked nose; the flushed cheeks that gave the impression of sly cheerfulness. The watery, "bloodshot eyes; the crowded teeth, the front two pushed together like a gabled roof; the impossibly low hairline, barely two finger widths above the bushy eyebrows; the wall of thick, coarse, salt-and-pepper hair" (Hosseini, 2013, p. 53). His nails were yellow-brown, like the inside of a totting apple, and some of the tips were curling, lifting" ... (Hosseini, 2013, p. 53).

As explicitly stipulated in the review the ethological theory count the description of someone's appearance as a thing that counts for his aggressive acts. By the help of those physical conditions, man can or tends to aggress against the other. Let us look at the man here, Rasheed with a strong and big body seems ready to prey at both Mariam and Laila, which at the time he experiences their first acknowledgement with aggression when they were under the age of 20. Compared to Rasheed his two wives are also at least a half smaller than he is. From the novel we can see how the impaired power balances between the strong Rasheed and the weak Mariam and Laila. That is the way they come to be the victims since they bear a weaker status.

#### **The presence of a Gun**

The novel's page 81 describes that Rasheed possesses a gun that he places inside a drawer in his room. Miriam encounters this fact when she was cleaning that room. Guiltily, she slid open the top drawer of his dresser. She saw the gun first. It was black, with a wooden grip and a short muzzle. Mariam made sure to memorize which way it was facing before she picked it up. She turned it over in her hands. It was much heavier than it looked. The grip felt smooth in her hand, and the muzzle was cold. It was disquieting to her that Rasheed owned something who is solely (Hosseini, 2013, p. 81).

For some researchers, the presence of lethal object has become a clenching reason to envisage that someone is aggressive. In more receptive sentence someone has, more possibility to aggress against someone else measured up to those who do not have that property. Here, the novel also assures the aggressive impression seen implicitly through Mariam's feeling over observing the gun in the drawer. Mariam imagines that Rasheed is a harsh person. The conclusion of the findings scented by ethological theory is that Rasheed is a big male who possesses a gun and it is not unexpectedly found that a time proves his aggressiveness.

### **Reasons viewed from Drive Theory**

#### **Frustration Generated from Rasheed's Bitter Ordeal in His Past**

Drive theory arbitrates the act of aggression is preceded by the rise of aggressive drive. This psychological matter is defined from the notion of frustration-aggression. This psychological matter is defined from the notion of frustration-aggression. This tension is basically the accumulation of frustration that leak out in the form of physical force or to be more specific. It is an intentional attack that will inflict injury. Therefore, in attempt to understand Rasheed's source of frustration lets trace the citation below of Mariam's relation of Rasheed after she finds his gun, improper magazines, and photo of his deceased wife and child:

He too had had hard life, a life marked by loss and sad turns of fate. Her thought returned to his boy Yunus, who had once built snowmen in this yard, whose feet had pounded these same stairs The lake had snatched him from Rasheed, swallowed him up just as a whale had swallowed the boy's namesake prophet in the Koran. It pained Mariam- it pained her considerably- to picture Rasheed is panic-stricken and helpless, pacing the banks of the lake and pleading with it to spit his son back onto dry land. (Hosseini, 83)

It is storied that Rasheed has miserable past life before he shares with Mariam, that he loses his beloved son. When Mariam is expecting for the first time his past sadness seems cured and he is looking forward to welcoming a boy that he will not Zalmay. Rasheed is singing and happily humming on their ride to carry home a good news from the doctor "What about Zalmay?".... "I think it's a boy. Yes a boy" (Hosseini, 85). It is also described that in the next morning Rasheed begins to fix everything up that possibly harm the hopeful Zalmay "he said the stairs worried him .... The stove worried him too he said.

The knives and the forks would have to be stowed somewhere out of reach (Hosseini, 86). And he said to Mariam “You can’t be too careful. Boys are reckless creatures” (Hosseini, 86). It is a proof that Rasheed really loves a boy and longs madly for it from Mariam. Nevertheless, the fate turns off Rasheed’s hope along with the turning in of his aggressive behaviour after all and everything for Rasheed perishes away with the bloody incident in a bathing house. Rasheed’s early frustration is shown by his denial

“What kind of answer is that?” he said again. That is what a mullah is supposed to say. You pay a doctor's fee but, you find a better answer than God’s will”....” God’s will” he simmered. He sat in his room smoking cigarette all day (Hosseini, 89).

It is learned that Rasheed has been heavy smoker and he becomes heavier to smoke to reduce his tension. If we trail back to the first meeting between Rasheed and Mariam “Mariam smells him before she saw him. Cigarette, smoke and thick, sweet cologne, not faint like Jalil’s” (Hosseini, 52), it shows that Rasheed loves to smoke. Cigarette now and then is often linked with frustration where it can reduce someone’s tension but it can as well make aggression worse when it is deprived.

Frustration is supplementing as the time passes by “a change had come over since he day at the bathhouse...he hardly talked anymore”(Hosseini, 2013, p. 93). Moreover, it is in parallel with Mariam’s second miscarriage, third, fourth to sixth. “In the four years since the day at the bathhouse, there has been six more cycles of hopes raised then dashed” (Hosseini, 2013, p. 98). When we talk about drive once, the drive reservoir is overload then it needs a sewage, which the researchers commonly pinpoint as a drainage catharsis because it is painful. If it is not released, it finally spews out. We can observe here through Rasheed’s level of aggression is developed. Rasheed begins spilling his aggression by keeping silent to Mariam then responding with devaluing answer, faulting her cooking, and finally to the physical aggression that is levered to Mariam. All the hatred over Mariam is inflamed by the frustration that he cannot see a boy that will be named Zalmay. Infuriating remarks is continually name to Mariam based on everything that Rasheed can use as an excuse. The physical appearance is the worse because Rasheed compares the old Mariam with his new beautiful wife, Laila. The aggression instigated by other frustration is detected from the story when Sharia Police halts Laila and Mariam’s conspiracy to leave Rasheed. Rasheed is very angry then he delivers physical threat to teach them a lesson. However, a bigger quarrel, which lead to Rasheed’s death, is instigated by Tariq and Laila reunion.

#### **Deteriorated by Frustration of Food Deprivation and Loss of Jobs**

Although this specification takes the reader quite long to decide, the researcher is more apt to rendering it as subdivision of drive theory. Even through this condition can also affect his body’s condition like hunger that turns into aggression-which means one of ethological factors, the frustration of losing his jobs in what affects Rasheed’s behaviour most. From the abovementioned citation- “After fired, Rasheed was home almost every day. He slapped Aziza. He kicked Mariam. He threw things. He found fault with Laila, the way she

smelled, the way she dressed the way she combed her hair, her yellowing theft”(Hosseini, 2013, p. 297). It is shown that he is frustrated by the jobless condition.

### **Reasons Viewed from Social Learning Theory**

The social learning theory advises us to view aggression from the surrounding of the aggressor-the role, specially the social role. The job, education and other environment that can influence to stick more on the explanation of the power role modelling form familial relation. However, we will exceed to the society since the story only provides the eviction of Rasheed from the age of near 40 “Forty-five at the most” said Afsoon. Here now we are tracing Rasheed’s social surrounding with its impartiality, which is apt to man.

### **The Male Domination over Woman**

The male domination is shown in the marriage system on which man can marry more than one woman. It is told in the novel that Jalil has three wives who stay together and still more he is the illegitimate father of Mariam. When it counts still a hypothesis then the statement of Rasheed over his insisting proposal to marry Laila can boost it to get the conclusion, “Don’t be so dramatic. It’s common thing and you know it. I have friends who have two, three wives. Your father had three. Besides, what I’m doing now most men I know have done it along ago. You know it’s true”(Hosseini, 2013, p. 209).

### **The influence of Taliban’s Ruling**

In the novel, we can learn that Rasheed is a fan of Taliban as many of other people, especially men. He listens to the voice of *Sharia* – a radio owned by Taliban-and he is quite cooperative with their command. Laila is grunting over the *shari’a* manifesto sounded by Taliban on the radio and delivered in written fliers. She says, “This isn’t village. This is Kabul. Women here used to practice law and medicine they held office in the government”(Hosseini, 2013, p. 271) but Rasheed reproaches her argument by saying is shown by this following citation:

Rasheed was not bothered much by the Taliban. All he had to do was grow a beard, which he did and visit the mosque, which he also did. Rasheed regarded the Taliban as a forgiving, affectionate kind of bemusement, as one might regards an erratic cousin prone to unpredictable acts hilarity and scandal. Every Wednesday night, Rasheed listened to the voice of *shar’iaw* when the Taliban would announce the names of those scheduled for punishment. Then, on Fridays he wants to visit Gazi Stadium, bought appease, and watched the spectacles. In bed, he made Laila listen as he described with a queer sort of exhilaration the hands he had seen served, the lashings, the hangings, the beheading.(pp. 274-275)

Therefore in Rasheed’s tendency to Taliban it is not surprising when Rasheed can commit a lethal-physical attack to his wives just like he loves of watching same thing performed by the Taliban’s punishment becomes the role model for Rasheed to commit aggression.

## CONCLUSIONS

The present study is applying the three out of four point of views to address aggression namely ethological theory, drive theory, and social learning theory proposed by Bandura. Ethological theory views someone's aggressiveness from their physical condition and here at this study it views Rasheed' aggressiveness which comprises his appearance and his property that enable him to aggress against his wives. Briefly, the conclusion of seeing the matter from this theory is that Rasheed is a man with a big body and possesses a gun, which provides more chances for him to commit aggression over his wives. The drive theory addressed in this matter provides an understanding that aggression is produced by frustration. In other words, frustration-aggression hypothesis is the reason proposed by drive theory. Herein Rasheed's aggression analysis, this theory helps to yield two findings that Rasheed's source of frustrations are first, his encounter with his old-painful experience of losing a son and the second is his sad condition over losing all his jobs and lacking foods to eat. The last but not least is the social learning theory, which proposes a help to see the surrounding of aggression as also the consideration for its initiation. The conclusion of this view is husband-to-wife aggression, especially in the marriage system – in Afghanistan provide more spaces for man to aggress against woman as a wife. The story implies that it has been common in Afghanistan to find polygamous husband living under one roof. The second conclusion is that Taliban's ruling is a possible role model for the male Afghans to commit harassment towards woman, as Taliban tends to force women into corner by enacting many banning and restriction upon them. Without cessation on that, this group sets a deadly punishment to a-find-guilty woman by stoning them to death on a football field surrounded by large of people (men) who favour to Taliban.

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