

Gender Dynamics in Naguib Mahfuz's "The Answer Is No" A Critical Discourse Analysis of Power, Trauma, and Independence

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Abstract

"The Answer Is No" by Naguib Mahfuz unveils the subtle emotional and psychological agony that a female teacher goes through when Badran Badawi, her former private instructor, takes on the role of headmaster at her school. A woman's childhood trauma is shown through flashbacks when the protagonist exposes Badran's reprehensible actions as well as his perjury to marry her. Using Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of CDA, the paper explores the multi-layered element of power relationship, trauma, and resilience in the process of the protagonist. Through textual, discursive, and social practices, the analysis reveals how the author's work presents the conventional, professional, and sociocultural perspective. Overall, the paper emphasizes the importance of literature as a tool that illuminates the issues of social injustice that take place in society, and as a depiction of the main character who does not give up her identity in front of societal collapse.

Keywords: Trauma, Power, Independence and Tri-dimensional Model

Introduction

Egyptian author Naguib Mahfouz was awarded the 1988 Nobel Prize in Literature. Throughout a 70-year career, he authored over 50 books, over 350 short stories, dozens of screenplays, and five plays. Many of his writings have been adapted into Egyptian and international cinema.

The 1991 publication of "The Answer Is No," a short tale by Egyptian author Naguib Mahfouz, winner of the 1988 Nobel Prize for Literature, tackles the subject of consent and claims that relationships in the future might be impacted by terrible events in the past. Mahfouz provides evidence to back up his assertion, including hints in the title about how the story will end, similes that liken the dominant nature of the rapist to a strong stream in the water, and specific language that conveys the feelings the woman goes through.

Mahfouz's main goal is to educate the world about how one traumatic experience can have a lasting negative effect on women and how challenging it may be for them to heal as they attempt to move past the memories and go on with their lives. In one instance, a thirteen-year-old girl is sexually assaulted by her math tutor, who was also her family's friend at the time. When the girl reached adulthood, the rapist asked for her hand in marriage, but she turned him down out of fear, resentment, and contempt. Given that Mahfouz, the author, was born in Egypt, it is evident that Middle Eastern culture is the central theme of his narrative. Similar to the situation in his story, it is evident that pre-arranged marriages are common among Egyptian or Middle Eastern households. It is strange that the author's decision in this instance to have the young girl's attacker propose to her after she reached adulthood. The author does, however, try to emphasize that many Middle Eastern women and girls find themselves in similar circumstances. The prearranged marriage does not work out as expected, and it is evident that the young woman is "content" to be alone because her background has paralyzed her (Mahfouz, 1991, p.27).

The Impact of Sexual Abuse on Both Primary and Secondary Victims One of the most heinous crimes is sexual assault. It may appear that a sexual assault exclusively affects the victim. However, the victim of sexual assault's family and social support systems are also impacted; these individuals are referred to as secondary survivors. Victim of an assault experiences a range of emotions, including the possibility of never fully recovering, from the moment the assault occurs until they receive proper medical attention, therapy, and, in most circumstances, all the procedures associated with filing charges and accompanying legal

proceedings. This happens with the mother of the victim in "The Answer is No". She is always torn between the doubts and the uncertain future imminent to her daughter right after her death.

Literature Review

According to Moya Morales and Moya Garófano (2018), the ideas, preconceptions, and expectations that people hold about men and women are known as gender stereotypes. Society has assigned different roles to the genders. Genders are supposed to work in a specific circle. According to a report by the British Council, "Next Generation The power of gender norms" published on 7 March 2024 Violence against women and girls is often accepted in part because of harmful gender stereotypes. Many people see it as typical and acceptable social behaviour. These norms, which are shaped by prevailing religious, cultural, and traditional beliefs, encourage discriminatory behaviours that impede women's and girls' potential development from an early age. Consequently, women who conform to the stereotype are regarded more favourably than those who appear to defy gender stereotypes (Eagly & Mladinic, 1994). Gender stereotypes suggest that women should be less assertive and more emotional than men, as well as that this is how they should be (Ramos, Barreto, Ellemers, Moya, & Ferreira, 2018). The male, most of the time, asserts his authority and exercises this authority whenever he gets a chance to exercise the authority.

Females are often considered sexual objects and nothing else. Bareket and Shnabel (2020) found the social role theory framework. Eagly (1987) illustrates how gender stereotypes that impose prescriptive roles on men and women—men as the “stronger sex” and women as the “fairer sex”—cause both sexes to act in ways that support men's social dominance. Males can demonstrate their authority by sexually objectifying women, but women can't do the same for men. The concept of power is complicated and very subtle. A recent study by Charafeddine et al. (2020) claims that male-female interactions frequently exhibit an unequal distribution of power. Compared to women, men are prone to impose their will on them, exhibit more authoritative bodily positions, and lead talks more

frequently. Sexual dominance is also the form of male dominance which causes insoluble dilemmas for the females affected by this trauma. Trauma is defined as an injury or set of injuries that can alter or end a person's life (Kappeler et al., 2022). Rape and sexual violence are widespread across all the nations and the socioeconomic classes. Furthermore, these norms discourage victims of violence from getting assistance, denouncing their abusers, and pursuing justice since they uphold social stigma and blame against them. Survivors must thus overcome considerable obstacles to obtain assistance and resources for their recovery. Very few societies rescue the victims and encourage them to speak up otherwise they have to repress themselves to avoid any untoward outcome that might stigmatize them and their families. Society has assigned different roles to genders. Gender is a social construction and everyone has to act in a defined situation. As a part of social norms, gender norms define what is considered appropriate behavior in society for those who identify as male or female or are labeled as such by others. These norms frequently ignore non-binary or genderfluid identities (Harper, Marcus, George, D'Angelo, & Samman, 2020). These expectations are in line with other social conventions about gender identity, age, race, class, and handicap. It is essential for norm reform to identify and address these intersections (Harper et al., 2020). Usually, uneven gender interactions are reflected in and sustained by gender norms. They also have an effect on males and boys who defy conventional gender standards, in addition to women and girls (Harper et al., 2020).

Stark and Flitcraft (1988) in their book say that post-traumatic therapy is an important approach for supporting victims of violence. Trauma results in hyper-independence. Hyper-independent people don't rely on other people, avoid asking for assistance, and frequently turn down support—even when it could be detrimental to them. Because they were let down by others, frequently when they were young, they have learnt to defend themselves.

Additionally, people may feel that their complete independence will increase their importance which will prevent them from assigning chores to others. The victim becomes

hyper-vigilant as well as hyper-independent. Hypervigilance is a subliminal danger detection state, which is the main distinction between it and hyper-independence. On the other hand, hyper-independence is the deliberate and deliberate decision to refuse assistance. These are trauma reactions that are frequently felt at the same time. Shame, Personal seclusion, Depression, Exhaustion, Anger at oneself or other people and Anxiety in society are the common outcomes of sexual assault. A traumatic reaction that frequently results from early life trauma is hyper-independence.

Pemberton and Loeb (2020) say that women are mostly exposed to sexual trauma as compared to men and often they experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The global public health crises of sexual violence and intimate partner violence (IPV) have serious psychological and health-related repercussions for women (Basile & Smith, 2011; Wyatt et al., 2017). Furthermore, they state that the outcomes of sexual harassment and psychological trauma are sensations of surprise, incredulity, bewilderment, remorse, shame, and self-blame; withdrawal; assault flashbacks; and insomnia. Survivors frequently express extreme dread of the attacker, anxiety about the possibility of repeat attacks, and worry about disclosure-related problems. Koss, Goodman, Browne, Fitzgerald, Keita, and Russo (1994) state that along with changes to normal routines, reports of emotional numbness, hypervigilance, and avoiding reminders of the occurrence are also frequent. It is common for these variables to co-occur, although the links between the psychological and physical repercussions of sexual abuse are often studied separately.

According to research by Rutter, Weatherill, Krill, Orazem, and Taft (2013), for example, there is a relationship between worse health and more severe PTSD and depressive symptoms. However, this relationship is mediated by less frequent physical exercise. Considering that coercive interpersonal attacks resulting from power imbalances, such as sexual assault and interpersonal violence, affect women disproportionately to men, survivors' healing journeys must address these concerns. Because trauma victims are frequently the victims of known offenders, they may feel unsafe in the outside world. Since

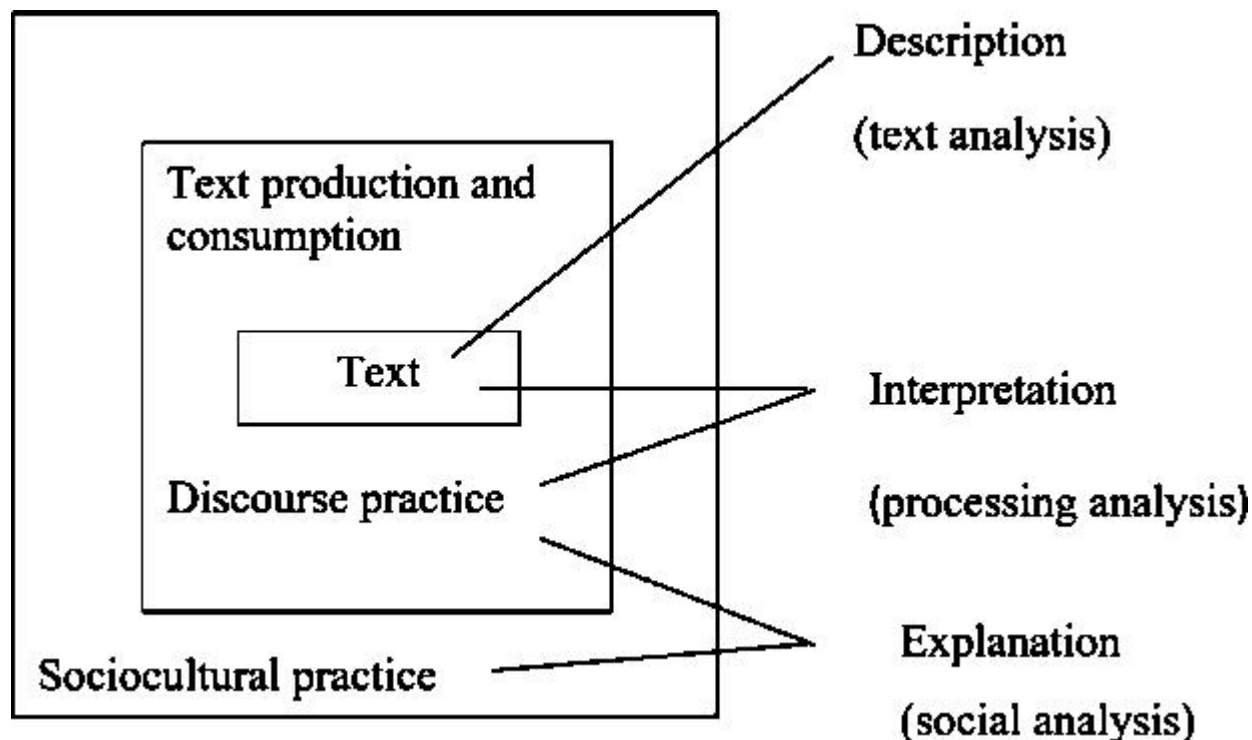
many victims have suffered trauma at the hands of a "trusted" individual, transparency and trustworthiness are crucial considerations (Johnson, 2022). Bourke (2012) first proposed the detrimental effects of sexual assault trauma on mental health, and this impact has been well-documented ever since. Among the outcomes linked to sexual assault are depression, social maladjustment, sexual anxiety, and PTSD (Byrne, Resnick, Kilpatrick, Best, & Saunders, 1999; Ellis, 1983; Goodman, Koss, & Russo, 1993; Kilpatrick & Acierno, 2003; Koss, Bailey, Yuan, Herrera, & Lichter, 2003) According to Byrne et al. (1999) victims of sexual assault may experience long-term effects in the areas of financial and employment stability in addition to mental health issues. In an attempt to give their experiences meaning and to create a sense of control and predictability that will stop them from experiencing more trauma, survivors of trauma create explanations and causal attributions (Hassija & Gray, 2013).

To end this situation or to get rid of this situation the females must have independence and power in their lives. Power is a multifaceted and intricate concept that may be interpreted as both a process and a result that gives people more control over their lives and choices. For women to feel empowered, they need to possess not only essential resources like health and education, but also opportunities and the agency (i.e., viewed and real confidence and making decisions control) to go from making preplanned decisions to accomplishing objectives of their own (Ewerling, Raj, Victora, Hellwig, Coll, & Barros, 2020). Furthermore, they state that the empowerment occurs on an individual basis when women use their resources, opportunities, and agency to make intentional decisions and take actions that change their surroundings. This could involve acting to promote economic and health development as well as engaging in constructive actions.

Method and Material

The term "research design" describes a methodical and structured strategy. It contains models, tools, theories, and procedures for data analysis. The present investigation uses a qualitative research design, and it is exploratory. According to Nunan (1992), qualitative research is focused on discovery. A category analysis is done on the data. A three-

dimensional model of critical discourse analysis developed by Fairclough (1992) is used to examine the ideological implications of this short story. This method is dialectal in connection with relationships. This paradigm is divided into three sections: social practice analysis, discursive practice analysis, and textual analysis. Four primary headings are used to further arrange text analysis: grammar, coherence, vocabulary, and text organization. Whereas cohesiveness and text structure focus on how various sentences and clauses are joined with one another and what the organizational characteristics of a text are, vocabulary and grammar deal with words and combinations of clauses in sentences. Discursive practice is concerned with the creation, dissemination, and consumption of texts. Perspectives from the family, medical field, culture, and ideology are all considered in social practice analysis. The text is examined at the macro, meso, and micro levels using this model. The term "micro-level" describes language elements (Text Analysis). The discursive practice is referred to as the meso level (Processing Analysis), while the institutional level is referred to as the macro level (Social analysis). The Fairclough model is shown in Diagram 1 below.



Purposeful Sampling is used in this research along with Thematic sampling. Purposeful Sampling is used to analyze the relevant passages and the dialogues. To analyze the themes of authority and autonomy in "The Answer is No," purposeful sampling will be employed. Thematic sampling is used to highlight important ideas that are employed repeatedly to establish overarching themes throughout the narrative, such as gender roles, resistance, and personal agency. Only one short story "The Answer is No" by Naguib Mahfouz (1911-2006) is selected for the analysis. There will be an ideological analysis of the short story. The researcher will examine the many lexical patterns the short story author employed to spread the philosophy at the textual level. Discursive practices, according to Chouliaraki and Fairclough (2021) are routine behaviors at particular times and locations. A society's social practices include discursive practices, of which textual analysis is an integral aspect. It is challenging to interpret the text if one is unaware of these customs. We shall examine the writer's ideology in the story by utilizing the aforementioned three levels.

Data Analysis

Through the examination of text, discursive practice, and social practice, Fairclough's three-dimensional model offers a framework for discourse analysis. By utilizing this framework in the given text, the researcher will explore the themes of trauma, power, and independence.

Textual Analysis

The essential textual elements within the scope of Fairclough's model as outlined above are focused on the text's linguistic and semiotic levels. The right to self-determination, sexual approval, and other facets of cultural interactions are among the issues that may be understood in Mahfouz's amazing language because of its exact style and impassioned tone. Mahfouz enforces modifications in the setting where women are so constrained in their actions, starting with the protagonist's thought process and conversations with other characters.

This dimension is concerned with the text's language, organization, and content.

Language and Structure

Using a formal narrative style, the text includes in-depth conversation and descriptions. The language employed in the exchanges between Badran Badawi and the female lead emphasizes the emotional strain and power tensions. Her inner anguish and pain are conveyed by descriptive phrases like:

"A shudder passed through her body, but it was unavoidable." and "Her pretty face paled, and a staring look came to her wide black eyes" (Mahfouz, 1991, p.24). Sentences like "What was she to say? Just what the others had said? However, she kept silent, uttered not a word"(Mahfouz, 1991, p.24).

"She advanced with her eyes fixed on his chest. Avoiding his gaze, she stretched out her hand"(Mahfouz, 1991, p.24).

These sentences depict the protagonist's mental and bodily responses, encapsulating her inner anguish and unease. Mahfouz attempts to convey themes about choice, freedom, and concessions in both his internal monologue and his conversations with other characters. The protagonist's inner monologue and responses are depicted in exquisite detail, highlighting her fight for autonomy.

Vocabulary

The usage of specific words makes the reader able to go inside the minds of the characters.

"They speak highly of his abilities," said a colleague of hers. "And they talk too of his strictness"(Mahfouz, 1991,p.24).

"In her innocence, she had not noticed any change in his behaviour to put her on her guard"(Mahfouz, 1991,p.25).

"Words like "strictness," "tragic position," "rapacious eyes," and "coercion" are examples of vocabulary that highlight the concepts of trauma and power. The headmaster has an authoritative look just to show that he has a composed and strict disposition. The male character is portrayed using assertive and authoritative language, which reflects the societal

expectation of male dominance. On the other hand, the protagonist did not bother him as she knew her true intentions of power and authority.

Dialogue

The exchange of dialogues between the female teacher and the headmaster is also significant to see in the minds of the characters.

"Then, the first time he was alone with her in his room, he asked her, 'How are you?' She answered coldly, 'I'm fine'"(Mahfouz,1991,p.27).

"What, she wondered, did his eyes express? His rough hand shook hers, and he said in a gruff voice, 'Thanks. 'Though short, the character conversations are profound. "I told you, I am fine" (Mahfouz,1991,p.27).

The main character's terse answer to Badran's questioning illustrates her reluctance and desire to hide her feelings. The protagonist and Badran's tense and strained exchanges are depicted in these brief yet powerful talks. When Badran forces her to marry, she refuses his proposal. Such lexical and grammatical features demonstrate how language is used to maintain the dominance of the male sex, and the cooperation of the female one prescribing appropriate machismo and femininity behaviours and positions (Talbot, 2014). On the other hand, the use of the language employed by the protagonist of the story is rebellious. Her employment of the word "no" is an effective verbal weapon that subverts the male character's dominance, as well as the social structures supporting it. This single but powerful answer is the reflection of the protagonist's rebellion against the imposed patriarchal model and her desire for self-determination. Language is thus used by the protagonist and this aligns him with Lazar (2007) views that language can challenge the existing power relations.

Imagery and Symbolism

Mahfouz depicts the protagonist's social and cultural imprisonment through the veil symbol and the actual Cairo setting. The veil particularly symbolizes her outer attire and her socially acceptable way of dressing. The veil is considered a social norm and confinement (Paul, 2024). The article "The Image of the Veil in Social Theory," explores the veil's complex

meaning concerning the mask within social theory (Baehr, 2019). Baehr (2019) further gives the concept of the veil additional weight in his analysis of social antagonism by citing their views. The veil is described in the article as a tool for thinking about and analyzing issues related to politics, identity, and conflict. The veil in the short story highlights the roles that society forces women to play while highlighting her resistance to these expectations.

Discursive Practice

The discourse practice dimension examines how the text is distributed and constructed within the culture in question. Looking at interpersonal connections and dominance methods, Mahfouz does it with a great deal of skill and knowledge of Egyptian civilization. It is delivered in the form of dialogues and monologues, taking aim at the audience's nerves and making them consider the truth of the restrictions imposed on people in that society.

This aspect looks into how the text is created, shared, and used.

Production

It appears that the story is designed to highlight the protagonist's emotional journey and to arouse empathy in readers. To highlight how historical trauma affects the protagonist now, the author purposefully contrasts her past and present circumstances. "The important piece of news that the new headmaster had arrived spread through the school."

"It had always been a possibility that might occur, and now it had" (Mahfouz,1991,p.24).

These examples show how the whole story is built to be as mysterious as possible and to underline the feeling of fear for Badran's return.

Distribution

Readers who can relate to or comprehend the nuances of gender dynamics, authority, and personal autonomy appear to be the story's intended audience. It is probably read by people who appreciate complex, character-driven stories in literature.

"She forgot her worries through her daily tasks, though she did not look in good shape. Several of the girls remarked, 'Miss is in a bad mood'"(Mahfouz,1991,p.24).

"When she returned to her home at the beginning of the Pyramids Road, she changed her clothes and sat down to eat with her mother" (Mahfouz,1991,p.25).These instances highlight the aim of the narrative, which is to appeal to readers who are aware of the subtleties of power dynamics and tragic emotions.

Consumption

The protagonist's struggles and power disparities are subjected to criticism from readers who are inclined to identify with her. Readers are prompted by the book to consider the striving for independence and the wider consequences of trauma.

"Badran, Badran Badawi," she said briefly. 'Do you remember him?

He's been appointed our headmaster.'" "It's of no importance at all - it's an old and long-forgotten story"(Mahfouz,1991,p.25).

These quotes show how the protagonist's need for emotional closure and independence is made clear to the audience, allowing them to identify with her. In other words, the protagonist's stance reveals how, in the context of different power relations, people can challenge and redefine discursive practices, stressing the processing nature of power (Fairclough, 2013).

Social Practice

This indicates that the study is expanded to encompass the socio-political culture that the tale is situated in by the social practice dimension. In this sense, Mahfouz frames his writing as a conversation about identity, particularly as it relates to Egyptian women's autonomy. Because the protagonist faces moral conundrums before rebelling against the system that engulfs her, Mahfouz encourages critical readers to consider how tradition and modernity affect people's lives.This aspect places the text in a larger social and cultural framework.

Power Dynamics

The protagonist and Badran's struggle for dominance is shown in the story. Because of his prior abuse of authority and his authoritative position as headmaster, there is still tyranny in place. This is similar to the ways that the males in positions of authority manipulate the

women in society. The narrative illustrates several facets of highly quotable relationships, most notably Badran's control over her life. This characteristic makes sense given that men are typically given more privileges and influence over how relationships are managed in most civilizations.

"It had meant little to her to sacrifice marriage. She had welcomed being on her own, for solitude accompanied by self-respect was not loneliness"(Mahfouz,1991,p.26).

The process by which marriage has been transformed into a tool of women's subjugation is examined in the article "Made for Man": Marriage as Subjugation in American Women's Literature. It examines how marriage evolves as the arbitrator of gender hierarchy and women's subjugation while focusing on the literary works of American women writers.

"To have abused her innocence was one thing, but for him to have the upper hand now that she was fully in possession of her faculties was something else"(Mahfouz,1991,p.26). These sentences highlight the institutional and societal power dynamics at work, contrasting the protagonist's desire for autonomy with Badran's authority. Subordination often seeks to understand, how language and social structures sustain power. According to Van Dijk (2015), discourse reinforces power relations. Discourse can be used to reproduce and represent power relations. This relationship is illustrated in the text through such aspects as the authority of the voice of Badran against the background of the protagonist's mild responses.

Trauma

The protagonist's mental monologue and bodily responses reveal her trauma. The story highlights the enduring consequences of trauma by demonstrating how the violence she endured in the past still affects her choices and interactions with others.

"Without love or desire on her part, the thing had happened. She had asked in terror about what had occurred, and he had told her, 'Don't be frightened or sad. Keep it to yourself and I'll come and propose to you the day you come of age" (Mahfouz,1991,p.25).

"She had found that she had no love or respect for him and that he was as far as he could be from her dreams and the ideas, she had formed of what constituted an ideal and moral

person"(Mahfouz,1991,pp.25-26). This critique correlates with the feminist discussions, where people speak for change to remove oppression and the social change that is required to eradicate the problematics of trauma (Hooks, 2000).

These examples show the enduring effects of trauma on the protagonist's choices and life, as well as the social setting in which her events occurred. On the arrival of Badran once again in her life tortures her a lot. The sentences show her conflict clearly. "But she was certainly unhappy that he could again make his appearance in her life, that she would be dealing with him day after day, and that he would be making of the past a living and painful present"(Mahfouz,1991,p.27).

It is important to note that patients often exhibit dissociated and hyper-aroused affect regulation; Herman's (2015) reflection on the posttraumatic impact on discourse supports this statement. Actions and attempts to avoid the protagonist are in line with these findings, overall depicting the woman's enduring efforts to deal with the trauma she experienced.

Independence

The main character's decision to be unmarried and her refusal to wed Badran highlight her quest for independence. This subject promotes individual liberty and self-respect while challenging societal norms regarding women's roles.

"For me, any outcome is preferable to being married to you"(Mahfouz,1991,p.26).

"She had told her mother quite straightforwardly, 'No,' to which her mother had replied, 'I am astonished you did not make this decision from the first moment'" (Mahfouz,1991,p.26).

By using, assertive language especially the word "no" she over and over powerfully portrays the rejection of societal norms and assertion of independence. This use of language is also a defiance of the patriarchal language structures which in a way empowers her and triggers her transformation (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013). The phrase 'No,' which the heroine says to deny something signifies the victory of the woman character over the

oppressive patriarchal system. This act symbolizes how language can resist oppression and enable a person's action.

These excerpts amplify the subject's resilience to resist conformity and the pressure to transform into typical gender roles, further stressing overall social practice regarding gender roles and the ability to be independent. She was happy to enjoy the liberties she had in her life without marriage. "Day by day she becomes older. She avoids love and fears it. With all her strength she hopes that life will pass calmly, peacefully, rather than happily"(Mahfouz,1991,p.27).

Political and social research on gender and independence that may include works such as Butler (1990) explores how women empower themselves in male-dominated contexts. More to the feminist discourse is the cutting of marriage to chase a job by the protagonist which is rebellion against gender norms. About Fairclough's 3-dimensional framework, the plot covers the areas of concern, which are power, trauma and autonomy.

Conclusion

In "The Answer is No", Naguib Mahfouz offers a complex story which addresses women's position in modern society with the main issues to concentrate on topics as far as power relations, sexual violence, and freedom. By applying the Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by Norman Fairclough, the researcher has identified how Mahfouz utilizes language and 'realistic' mode of narrative to address these issues and consequently provide critiques of these morbid social relations from the patriarchal angle.

Thus, "The Answer is No" by Naguib Mahfouz gives a thoughtful insight into the relationship between a man and woman, the problem of abuse and control, and the question of individuality in the context of the Arab world's Patriarchal culture. The major premise of this analysis is Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis, which reveals points where language, narrative, and social practices connect to maintain or disrupt social relations.

Thus, the presentation of the process from subordination to liberation as a goal and transition in the life of the female protagonist also becomes a profound comment on gender oppression and the need for change in society. Mahfouz shows the readers that via individual actions one is capable of fighting oppressive structures and becoming an agent for change in the struggle for women's rights and gender equality.

In this paper, the researcher has analyzed Naguib Mahfouz's short story "The Answer is No," which may be viewed as a masterful attempt at depicting the relations between men and women and the role of the former as the dominant gender that controls women's lives, traumatically. By using this discussion, Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis, it has been discussed how and where language and narrative, as well as, social practices work together and reproduce or resist the dominant social order. The protagonist's transformation from a powerless and oppressed woman to a strong and independent individual against the background of a vicious Patriarchal society represents a critique of gender oppression and inequality in today's societies. Thus, focusing on the agency of the main character and her attempt to fight her fate, Mahfouz's narrative can be placed into the framework of the global fight for women's rights and gender equality, offering hope for change. Thus, the short story "The Answer is No" by Naguib Mahfouz paints a rather complex picture of gender relations with emphasis on such aspects as power relations, trauma, and personal freedom.

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