

Exploring gender relations in Shamsie's Home Fire: A symbolic interaction perspective

Maryam Akbar* | Zareena Qasim

Department of English, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Pakistan.

*Corresponding Author Emails: zarinaqasim@yahoo.com | zareena.qasim@uos.edu.pk

Received: February 2, 2022

Accepted: May 2, 2022

Published: May 26, 2022

Abstract

The present study examines Kamila Shamsie's novel Home Fire (2017) for gender roles and demonstrates how gender roles determine the characters' individuality in the text. The study has employed symbolic interaction theory to explore gender roles in the selected text. Mead (1964) and Blumer's (1969) concepts of interaction and interpretation have been adopted to analyse gender roles. The probe into the text finds Home Fire an objective example of gender equality in terms of behaviours, professions, power, and appearance. The novel presents gender roles in natural and unique situations rather than in stereotypical ways. Shamsie has portrayed modern men and women performing distinct roles in society without engendering them. All characters behave according to their circumstances and individual personality patterns. Shamsie has maintained a terrific balance between male and female characters and has not presented women as victims or overburdened with the duties or responsibilities; nevertheless, she has presented genuine people who act differently in varying situations according to their temperaments.

Keywords: symbolic interaction, symbolic interaction theory, gender roles, gender representation, individuality, concept of interaction, concept of interpretation.

How to Cite:

Akbar, M. & Qasim, Z. (2022). Exploring gender relations in Shamsie's Home Fire: A symbolic interaction perspective. *Journal of Humanities, Social and Management Sciences (JHSMS)*, 3(1), 267-282. <https://doi.org/10.47264/idea.jhsms/3.1.19>

Publisher's Note:

IDEA PUBLISHERS (IDEA Publications Group) stands neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in the published maps and institutional affiliations.

Copyright:

© 2022 The Author(s), published by IDEA PUBLISHERS (IDEA Publications Group).

Licensing:

This is an Open Access article published under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)



1. Introduction

Symbolic interaction theory is applied to explore the gender roles in the selected text. Mead (1964) and Blumer (1969) pioneered the symbolic interaction theory and established the concepts of 'interaction' and 'interpretation' to understand the meanings of symbols and objects. They believed that interaction is vital in attributing the meanings to the symbols, and interpretation helps explain symbols and objects. Moreover, Blumer advocated those objects have no inherent meanings but human attributed and can be modified and supplemented according to the necessity and circumstances. There are four categories through which the gender roles are examined, in which behaviour characterization, communication patterns, source of power, and physical appearances are included. 'Interpretation' plays an essential role in reviewing the gender roles in the text, and the researcher has analysed them through the unique contexts, cultures, and histories. Because without explaining the culture or context, one cannot explore the gender roles.

Kamila Shamsie is a British-Pakistani fiction writer recognized for her postcolonial themes and female characterization. Notably, the novel 'Home Fire' has also been longlisted for the Man Booker prize. 'Home Fire' narrates the story of a Pakistani migrant family that came to London. The main protagonists are Isma and Aneeka Pasha, who suffer from their father and brother's terrorist actions. Adil Pasha, the father, was executed at Guantanamo Bay, and Parvaiz was assassinated in front of the British Consulate in Istanbul, Turkey. Aneeka endeavoured to save her brother through Eamonn, the Home Secretary's son, but was ineffective and suffered immensely. Shamsie has portrayed characters with individual personalities without stereotyping their roles, actions, performances, and communication manners.

The study's main aim is to analyse the gender roles of the characters in 'Home Fire' and how male and female characters maintain their individuality throughout the novel. Gender roles are generally accepted social norms according to which people choose their professions, duties, and responsibilities. Social and cultural variations can alter the norms and traditions of gender roles through modern interpretations. The gender roles are reversible if peoples' interpretations change perception and thinking to classify masculine and feminine roles. People are changing their attitudes, ideas, and conceptions in the modern world, so the social or gender roles are also getting complex. In many areas of the world where people were restricted and rigid in ideas, particularly about females' progress, now there are included in progressive countries as they have worked on female education, professions, and social status. Thus, Symbolic Interaction is a significant way to analyse gender roles and evaluate the individuality of characterization in a literary text. The research questions of the study are: a) How do the male and female characters perform their roles in the text? and b) How do the gender roles determine the characters' individuality in the selected text?

2. Literature review

Copenhaver (2002) analysed the gender roles in modern and postmodern American plays. The study aimed to examine gender representation and how gender roles are depicted in the selected plays. Gender roles and gender representation have been analysed in literary works through the symbolic interaction theory. The gender roles were divided into four categories: behaviour characteristics, communication patterns, sources of power, and physical appearance. The collected data was presented through the narrative technique that explained the selected texts

from all four perspectives and described the gender representation comprehensively. He concluded that all of the gender trait categories used for defining traditional male and female behaviour were evident in most of the plays, and gender portrayal in modern plays was more in keeping with traditional patterns than in postmodern plays.

Ebrahimkuty and Dhantal (2020) examined the interconnections of individuals and society at both social and personal levels. They analysed the gender roles in the marital relationships in the novel, *A Game of Thrones* and selected precisely two central couples. The researchers concluded that Symbolic Interaction helped to analyse gender roles comprehensively and explored the development and health issues in the marital relationship of the couples in the novel.

McLuhan (2014) examined two Protestant Christian seminaries as an empirical case. The researcher interpreted three empirical papers to evaluate the character-making process. He concluded that Symbolic Interaction theory helped examine the character development that found the severe problems in using individuals as the analytic focus in its identification and explanation.

Gussak (2008) examined gender identity in the art theory literature through the Symbolic Interaction theory. The data was collected through interviews with practicing art therapists to analyse their perspectives on gender identity and compare their views with the art therapy literature. The study found that the perceptions of practicing art therapists about gender identity, particularly women, differed from the ideas presented in the art therapy literature. Moreover, he elaborated on his results that gender identities' division into two binary groups of masculine and feminism is defined by the societies or groups and maintained in the art therapy literature.

Stets and Burke (2000) analysed femininity and masculinity through Symbolic Interaction theory. They followed Mead's patterns of 'Self' and argued about the origin of femininity and masculinity that this division is social rather than biological. They also analysed the significant theories that define femininity and masculinity in their frameworks; Psychoanalytical, Cognitive-development, and learning theories that emphasized direct reinforcement and modelling. They concluded that there are no significant differences between the traits and behaviours of both sexes and their temperaments are not biological but social.

Ahmed *et al.* (2021) explored *Home Fire* from a unique perspective and investigated the evolution and portrayal of modern Orientals in Pakistani fiction. Moreover, probing this, they determine the possible causes, factors, and impacts of the shift from simple Orient to the new orient. They have applied the New-Orientalism theory, the concepts provided by Said, Lau, and Haggan, to analyse the character of Aneeka and Parvaiza as the new Orientals. They argue that the new orient that the West describes is an unwanted person involved in terrorism, disloyalties, violence, and inconsistent life choices, which is stereotyped. The findings demonstrate that Shamsie has portrayed the new and unique problems of the Orient and presented her Orient characters as more sophisticated. Moreover, she has devised a unique way to shift from traditional to diverted Orientals through her sensible characterization.

Rivaldy *et al.* (2019) analysed *Home Fire* through close textual analysis with the perspectives of Hall's identity theory (1990) and Bhabha's *Unhomely* (1992). They examined three main

characters to explore how Pakistani diaspora communities construct their identities. They argued that Shamsie has presented heterogeneity within Pakistani Muslim diaspora identities and criticized the portrayals of Isma and Aneeka for being a misrepresentation of Muslim women. Furthermore, they criticized Shamsie's representation of male characters, showing stereotyped Muslim men who always have connections with ISI or some terrorist organizations. In this article, Shamsie's misrepresentation of both male and female Muslims has been analysed, allegedly infected with stereotypical professions of Muslim diaspora males and women's liberal Muslim lifestyle relying on Veil and Hijab to be connected with Islam.

Haque *et al.* (2020) examined the cultural hegemony represented in the novel Home Fire through the Marxism theory. The researchers examined the class system and hierarchies in a multicultural society through Antonio Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony concept. They argued that cultural hegemony rigorously affects the novel, creating cultural infidelity and class conflict between the characters. They explained that the immigrants resisted the host country's cultural hegemony, resulting in a class clash like the Pasha family resisted Karamat Lone and faced adverse consequences.

Ahmed (2021) analysed Home Fire and examined the ethics of reading across differences in a secular literary marketplace invested in the representation of Muslims. He examined the characters' conflicts and encountered as an implied author by using Iris Marion Young's perspective of 'How we read across cultures and religions and social and racial differences. The researcher asserted that depicting British Muslims' lives in fiction is popular in secular literature, and Muslim writings have a remarkable position in the market. He claimed that the 'Home Fire' has a unique plot that narrates the story of the British Muslims rather than the Muslims versus Non-Muslims. Moreover, it has broken the stereotypical images of Muslims, and these images have presented a melodrama which has a remarkable place in the literary marketplace.

Lodhi *et al.* (2009) compared the novel Home Fire and A case of Exploding Mangoes (2008) to examining the working of politics and political imbroglios at personal, social, civil, politicized, military, and religious levels; furthermore, the conversion of politics into capitalization through Marxist theory. They asserted that positive politics strengthens peace and prosperity while the malicious use of politics causes destruction.

Brigida and Pinho (2019) examined the novel Home Fire in the light of decolonial studies. The researchers scrutinized how Shamsie has illustrated the idea of instability of the rule of law for the colonized people. They analysed the subject with the support of Achille Mbembe's Necro Politics (2003). They investigated the structures of inequality and institutionalized violence against minorities through Boaventra de Sousa Santo's concept of 'Abyssal Thought.' They argued that Shamsie has reconstructed 'Antigone' in the modern setting to contrast the laws of God and the rules of the world. They concluded that Shamsie has allowed her readers to criticize the laws, assessment of the public discourse, and political actors to reconstruct the rules of minorities and the concept of otherness.

Behaviours (2018) has applied Gayatri Spivak's concept of "Can the Subaltern Speak?", converting it to "Who Will Listen" and illustrating the relationship between the textual and sonic sounds in the novel Home Fire. He examined both in textual and visual forms. He explained that 'Home Fire' is impregnated with several texts such as sacred texts, secular texts,

chatting, Online texts, and typographies. He claimed that all texts in the novel are linked to torture, violence, and radical activities. He applauded *Home Fire*, which deserves a hearing, and suggested that it should be played in Britain's House of Parliament.

Shaheen *et al.* (2018) dissected the concepts of obsessive Westoxification by comparing two extreme perspectives in *Home Fire* through the Postcolonial idea of Klaus Stierstorfer to analyse the West and fundamentalism. They explored two juxtaposing characters, Karamat and Parvaiz, as two extremists who represent the rise of obsessive detoxification and fundamentalism. On the other hand, Aneeka and Eamonn's love affair depicts the inconsolable destiny of their collateral damage. They claimed that Shamsie had misrepresented the British-Pakistani Muslims, thus complicating their social, political, and psychologically unstable image.

The novel *Home Fire* has been analysed by various researchers and examined from distinctive perspectives. Meanwhile, the characterization of the novel is still unexplored, particularly from the viewpoint of individuality. Doubtlessly, all characters in the novel have diverse personalities, attitudes, and life approaches. Thus, this study aims to analyse the gender roles of all male and female characters to determine their individuality.

3. Symbolic interaction theory

Mead (1964) and Blumer (1969) established 'interaction and interpretation' concepts to understand and explore the meanings of the symbols and objects. Symbolic interaction theory is a significant way to analyse the gender roles in a literary text, focusing on meaning and symbols. It emphasizes how meanings are generated and modified through the interaction of people and the interpretation of various objects in a natural environment. According to Mead, symbols are verbal and physical gestures are used to state their actions, ideas and thoughts. When people interact, they use language, facial expressions, gestures, and overall body language; they cannot express their views or act without it. Similarly, Blumer emphasized the interpretation of gestures, symbols, and objects that people use, and others interpret them and act upon them in a specific way.

Symbolic interaction is a practical approach to analysing gender roles in a literary text. In the present paper, all male and female characters of the *Home Fire* have been examined through four categories of gender roles' framework, including behaviour characteristics, communication patterns, source of power, and physical appearance. The paper's main aim is to determine the individuality of the characters. According to the analytical framework of Symbolic Interaction Theory, the category of behaviour characteristics describes how women and men behave with each other and the world at large. These traits are the most numerous, and they reflect the domestic and work lenses usually attributed to each gender.

Moreover, communication patterns refer to how men and women communicate. These linguistic traits describe how men and women behave toward each other, members of the same sex, and the world. Furthermore, the source of power defines that woman in the domestic sphere and men in the public sphere find their loci of control. These traits define the domestic sphere as less prestigious and as a less desirable place to work. At the same time, the physical appearance category emphasizes how men and women were physically viewed from a social standpoint.

4. Analysis

Shamsie has delineated gender roles with a realistic approach and reveals the complexities of the modern world, which challenges the stereotypical approach. The members of a particular society attribute the meanings to the specific roles and responsibilities through interaction and repetitive interpretations. Mead and Blumer's ideas about meanings confirmed that interaction between individuals, people, and society could change the stereotypical gender roles. If the world is changing, people's understanding and interpretation regarding gender roles are also modifying, accepting contemporary miscellaneous roles for both sexes. Interaction plays a significant role in changing people's thinking and understanding about any matter; consequently, in the new world, people want to lessen the burden of their partners, better communication, and share the power sources to have a healthier life.

4.1. Behaviour characterization

Behaviour Characterization defines how male and female characters behave with each other, the same sexes, and the other people. Certain expected behaviours in society are acceptable for both sexes in different situations; otherwise, society will consider them rebellious or deceived people. The novel *Home Fire* portrays both conventional and unconventional behaviours performed by male and female characters that prove the individuality of all characters. Isma was a responsible sister, a motherly figure for her twin sister and brother. She dedicated her youth to the care of her siblings when her mother and grandmother died. Later on, she decided to complete her studies and enrol in the Ph.D. program in America; before, she worked as a manager at a dry-cleaning shop to earn money.

Meanwhile, her brother Parvaiz proved to be an irresponsible boy who never cared for his sisters and joined ISIS without bothering about how his sisters would be facing its consequences. Both Adil Pasha and Parvaiz Pasha were irresponsible, ambitious, and emotionless; they left their families for extraneous duties and ignored their responsibilities. Isma told Eamonn that her father, Adil Pasha was habitual of leaving his family; he appeared once when Isma was eight years old and stayed enough to impregnate Zanaib Pasha with twins. After that, he never came back, while "this time his excuse for going was not a get-rich-quick scheme but an aid convoy to Bosnia" (Shamsie, 2007, p. 48), and eventually, he died. Moreover, she told him that her mother and grandmother raised her twin siblings and "she'd never really known her father" (Shamsie, p. 20). Even though Parvaiz never admitted to his father's presence in his life, during his training, he was abashed by the words that every father wants to have a son like him; Parvaiz answered that "But I never had him as a father" (Shamsie, p. 128). Upon this Farooq, the ISIS recruiter boosted again that Adil had to do some more significant work and hold duties than "the ones his wife and mother want to chain him to" (Shamsie, p. 128).

There is a massive irony in enduring more extensive responsibilities while escaping from actual liabilities at home to feed, care for, and to love the family. Later on, he was beaten by an opposing party; Farooq embraced him and encouraged his strength to endure as Adil Pasha's son. However, Parvaiz did not respond and walked away while texting Aneeka to come home. Farooq cheered up for being male and the son of Adil Pasha. Soon, Parvaiz returned to Farooq's flat and asked him, "Tie me again. I want to feel my father's pain" (Shamsie, 2007, p. 141); this shows his confused personality with hideous ambitions and vulnerabilities.

Parvaiz is a disoriented person between expectations and reality. He also realizes facts and tries to fulfil the expected roles, but he fails in both; even, in the end, he admits that he is similar to his father in the abandonment of family, who always deserved better. Adil Pasha was not only an escaper but a short-tempered person; when Eamonn asked Aneeka about her mother, she told him that “Stressed. Always. It is what killed her” (Shamsie, 2007, p. 93). Her father was not a terrorist but an angry man who could throw anyone out of the house if someone disobeyed him. Parvaiz was similar to his father in several ways; he also admitted that Aneeka complained to him about not telling his plans to join Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Isma responded, “his father’s son; fecklessness in the gene pool.” Moreover, she said that “they see what they want through tunnel vision” (Shamsie, p. 26); thus, she pointed out that males are different from females and act distinctively.

Aneeka is a self-sufficient, independent, and robust woman who gets a scholarship at LSE in Law and supports her sister Isma in going for the Ph.D. program in America. She gave questions to Isma for rehearsal, which Isma had to answer at the airport during the expected investigation. On the other hand, Aneeka is daring and vigorous; when she decides to use her body to get her brother back and protect him from the police. Indeed, she fell in love with Eamonn, but initially, her motive was to use sex as a tool, and she trapped him in it. At the first meeting with Eamonn, she behaved recklessly and asked him whether he lived alone at home, and he replied in affirmation. Soon, she entered his house and unpinned her hijab completely; meanwhile, she looked at Eamonn as a seducer. Even Eamonn was perplexed and hesitant to understand Aneeka’s gestures and could not infer her intentions. Lately, when Aneeka placed his hand on her chest, he misinterpreted it as a soft behaviour to show his heartbeat, and then she said, “We match” (Shamsie, p. 69). It shows how the attributed male behaviours are performed by Aneeka, while Eamonn was confused in this situation and could not interpret it correctly, whereas males are more responsive and cleverer. Eamonn seemed responsible and did not overthink; even Aneeka gave him strong signals to take her as an opportunist, but he waited for Aneeka to start. Besides it, Aneeka loved her brother and devoted her body to guarding him. When she learned that Isma had reported Parvaiz to the police, she accused her of betraying twins and showed her love for Parvaiz “Parvaiz is not our father. He’s my twin. He’s me. But you, you’re not our sister anymore” (Shamsie, p. 42).

Isma has raised both twins and loved them as a mother, but Aneeka’s short temper and adoration for her brother ruined the sacrifices she made for them. Of course, Isma did this on purpose because she thought Parvaiz would get less charged if he stopped before doing something prominent or participating in terrorist activities. Aneeka is also stubborn in showing love to her brother; she insists on bringing her brother’s dead body to London and goes to Pakistan without telling anyone. She assuredly told the media that there was no law but no justice and requested the Prime Minister of Pakistan to “let me take my brother home” (Shamsie, p. 225). She fought for her brother till the last moment, and she won when the government of Pakistan decided to make her wish true.

However, Eamonn was a charming and ambitious person; at the first meeting with Isma, he showed dominant gestures and boldly took Isma’s coffee mug from her hand to reheat it and said, “Allow me” (Shamsie, p. 16). He spent time with Isma walking, chatting, and discussing current affairs while always expressing Karamat Lone’s father as a hero. He admired his father as the best politician, father, and guide. Meanwhile, he played with Isma’s feelings, especially when he saw Aneeka’s picture at Isma’s flat; he fell in love with her. He escaped from the

problematic situation when Isma told him about her brother and father. He called Isma a sister and walked away onto the street, "rolling back his shoulders as if released from the weight of her company" (Shamsie, pp. 53-54). It shows his hegemonic attitude towards women as he shoved them off after spending a significant time with her and exploiting her emotions. Eamonn's assertive and fearless behavior transformed when he ambitiously went to see Aneeka in London at Isma's home and saw her; she was dressed in a white hijab, and he wished to "unpin the white hijab that framed her face" (Shamsie, p. 64). After meeting with Aneeka, it is evident that he lost himself as a person and transformed from emotionless to more emotional. He followed her in every condition, no matter whether he succeeded. Even though he knows that Aneeka trapped him to save her brother, he shows anger for a while, but later, he calms down and promises never to leave her in any situation. So he went to his father, Karamat, to help Parvaiz in the safe return and told him about Aneeka, whom he loved very much.

Nevertheless, when Karamat completed his investigation of Aneeka's matter, he locked him up and restricted him from meeting Aneeka again. At that moment, he proved to be a punk while Terry Lone sent him to his friends' house; he did not protest and remained unseen for a long time. This time he should be aggressive and stubborn as a male, but he followed his mother quietly. Later on, when he came to know about Aneeka's visit to Pakistan, he secretly arranged his visit to Pakistan to meet Aneeka and help her. During the interview with the media in Pakistan, Eamonn admitted his cowardness that "I've been paralyzed by indecision" (Shamsie, p. 242). Moreover, he acknowledged to the media that his father has some personal matters with the Pasha family. Due to his hatred, he poisoned their lives; further, he admired the Pasha sisters' courage during challenging times.

Karamat Lone was a self-centred, reckless, and corrupt person who used his religion to win a political position and left his people behind. He locked up Eamonn when he came to know about Aneeka and Parvaiz and did not allow Eamonn to talk with Aneeka in the crucial moments. Karamat acted ruthlessly and did not allow Parvaiz's burial in London and was not permitted to bring the dead body to England. Before this, he was distant on the death of Adil Pasha and given a harsh statement as MP of that time; he said to Pasha's family that "They're better off without him" (Shamsie, p. 50). Moreover, he commented misogynistic statements about Aneeka when he recognized that Parvaiz and Aneeka were siblings. While Aneeka trapped his son to play hideous games, he called Aneeka a "manipulative whore" (Shamsie, p. 216). A common thing between son and father is childish and cowardly behavior in challenging situations; when Aneeka told Eamonn about Parvaiz and Adil Pasha, he behaved like a child and ran randomly in the flat. Upon this, Aneeka commented, "Fight like a man, not a boy" (Shamsie, p. 96); similarly, when Eamonn went to Pakistan secretly, Karamat acted anxiously and could not reveal it to his wife. "Terry, he said, in the way that as a child, he had mouthed prayers to ward off the darkness of the world" (Shamsie, p. 240).

Karamat also proved to be illogical and short-tempered when he muted the Tv; At the same time, Aneeka was being discussed and reported globally and suspected that she might be wearing a "suicide vest under those clothes?" (Shamsie, p. 221). It shows his illogical tendency towards sensitive matters and suspicious nature that he did not feel sorry when Aneeka was mourning her brother; instead, he commented harshly. Terry Lone is an intelligent, brave, and self-sufficient woman; she is an interior designer and has a chain of stores worldwide. She represented authoritatively and controlled the people around her. Whenever Eamonn and Emily wanted some expensive gifts, they approached her and got that immediately. Terry managed

Eamonn's escape before Karamat's response to the hazardous situation regarding Parvaiz's death and Aneeka's visit to Pakistan.

Moreover, she knew that if Karamat came to know about Eamonn's escaping spot, he would accidentally reveal it to the media, so she kept it a secret. Eamonn travelled to Pakistan to meet Aneeka and acknowledged the Pasha sisters' courage, intelligence, and effort. Karamat also acknowledges Terry's supremacy upon his failure to prevent Eamonn from going to Pakistan; he says, "It's true I wouldn't be here without you. There are never forgotten" (Shamsie, p. 253). It shows that males could be submissive, and females could be dominant in particular situations. There is no determined behaviour for specific conditions or times, so it depends on the interaction that prompts people to respond differently.

4.2. Communication pattern

Communication Pattern is a significant component of a relationship that determines how male and female partners interact, whether dominant, bold, submissive, or balanced. Throughout the novel, the female characters remain robust, authoritative, and confident in conversation with the male characters. However, the male characters are also dominant in their actions and behaviours, but the female characters control the communication. Eamonn and Isma shared a balanced pattern of communication that was polite and convinced. The first meeting between Isma and Eamonn shows the dominant nature of males in conversation with females. Still, Shamsie has successfully maintained females' voice and authority to speak in time and defend them. After having a good time at a coffee shop, Isma bought some food and picked up the bags, Eamonn offered his services to pick those bags, but she resisted his services and said roughly, "there was no need of such chivalry" (Shamsie, p. 18). Unlike typical females who accept such offers and become vulnerable to males, it portrays the autonomous approach and responsible way of life that Isma persisted strong.

Isma conversed with Eamonn indirectly, knowing Karamat, but she ignored and asked indirect questions. She responded to Eamonn when he desired to become like his father; she responded straightforwardly, "That's not true. You're a much better person than he is" (Shamsie, p. 36). As a self-boosted and proud man, Eamonn always tells stories of his father's greatness whenever he gets the chance. Most of the time at coffee shops, Eamonn boasted about his father, and Isma got annoyed, as she knew the wickedness of Karamat. Once, she asked Eamonn how his relationship with Karamat, as father and son, he replied that they have a genuine relationship in which "They're our guides into manhood for starters." She didn't comprehend it and thought that "becoming women was inevitable for boys, becoming men was ambition" (Shamsie, pp. 35-36). Eamonn could not understand her expression at that time. Later on, when she tells him about his father's doings and the Pasha family's sufferings, he acknowledges her strength and bravery. He says, "I'm so sorry for everything you've suffered; you're a remarkable woman" (Shamsie, p. 51). It shows Eamon's polite behaviours, unlike stereotypical men, who never accept their father's wrongdoings and others' endeavours.

Isma and her twins communicated with some extreme edges like polite and aggressive, care and carelessness, motherly and annoyed vice versa. Isma and Parvaiz have less talked throughout the novel, while Aneeka and Parvaiz shared some conversations, but a few. Aneeka and Isma had pleasant and polite communication before Parvaiz's incident; they were like mother and daughter. Once Parvaiz messaged Aneeka that he was good, Isma got angry that he

didn't inform her; Aneeka asked her not to express her concerns through anger. At the same time, she said, "stay with me until I fall asleep and said I miss you" (Shamsie, p. 27), and her hands on the screen were reaching out for Isma's face to the touch. However, when Aneeka realized that Isma had reported Parvaiz to the police, she was anxious and forgot that Isma was her elder and motherly sister; she accused her and said, "You betrayed us, both of us. And then you tried to hide it from me. Please don't call, don't text, don't send me pictures, don't fly across the ocean, and expect me ever to agree to see your face again. We have no sister" (Shamsie, p. 42). Isma remained polite and quiet as she knew her concerns and reason to report Parvaiz, whom she had raised with affection and responsibility.

Moreover, when Isma came to see Aneeka after Parvaiz's death, Isma did not speak annoyingly; even she was accused of being selfish and reckless by her sister. Aneeka said to her, "why don't you love our brother enough to do it yourself" (Shamsie, p. 194); she endured her. Still, Aneeka was not ready to talk to her; she painfully requested Aneeka that "Stop acting as if you're the only one whose heart is broken. He was my baby boy" (Shamsie, p. 195). Further, Parvaiz was not so interactive with his sisters, but he was pompous, arrogant, and aggressive whenever he talked. When Isma announced her visa approval for America, Parvaiz called her a traitor.

Moreover, when she suggested selling their house as they could not afford bills, he responded, "You can't decide this for us" (Shamsie, p. 120); even Aneeka was agreed at that time Isma's decision. He was jealous when Aneeka got a scholarship, and he blamed her for being rebellious and said, "They only gave you a scholarship because you tick their 'inclusive' and 'diverse' boxes" (Shamsie, p. 132). Parvaiz proved to be an aggressive, self-centred boy; he was curious about his father's activities as Farooq made him crazy to know about Adil Pasha. He asked Aneeka about their father's doings; before getting the answer, he turned his face from her and said, "You're just a girl. You don't understand. Aneeka took his foot in her hands for massage. She said, "don't get your heartbroken, and he responded coldly, shut up, leaves me alone. You don't know anything" (Shamsie, p. 142). The only moment when he talked to his sisters respectfully was when he was ready to depart for Karachi; he said to Aneeka that "both you and Isma are leaving. What will I do all alone? He held her earlobe between thumb and finger" (Shamsie, p. 152).

Aneeka was domineering over Eamonn in communication patterns. At first sight, Eamonn fell in love with her when he deceived Isma's feelings and called her a sister. Aneeka is individualistic and self-sufficient and never allowed anyone to exceed her in words and decisions. At the first meeting with Eamonn at her house, she asked him frankly to leave her house if he had done his task there and said that he "could leave with me" (Shamsie, p. 65), even if he was in the middle of a conversation with Aunt Naseem. Later on, on the way to the station, Eamonn flirtily told her that he had never seen such a beautiful face in person; she responded disgustingly and "strode away without another word" (Shamsie, p. 66). It symbolizes her straightforward personality, an attribute of males, but she has a specific context and situation to communicate and respond this way. She has some contradictory traits that can confuse anyone, but she dares to defend it the right way; once Eamonn asked about her reason for offering Prayer, she replied, "Prayer isn't about transaction, Mr. Capitalist. It's about starting the day right" (Shamsie, p. 70). It has a context in this novel that Aneeka had sex with Eamonn, and the following day she was praying as a Muslim girl, so Eamonn gets confused over this, as he has seen Muslim girls opposite to this and their stereotyped lifestyles.

Further, Eamonn argued about her timings to come to his flat, that Aneeka should inform him that in which timings she would be expected to visit him. When she told her schedule to visit him, he complained about her timings, and she snipped his shoulder and said, "Let a woman hold on to her mystique!" (Shamsie, p. 78). Aneeka's dominative communication is evident in this novel; she is assertive and direct throughout her relationship with Eamonn. In comparison, Eamonn was submissive and indirect; thus, it is proved that both have advanced or modernized communication patterns with each other as male and female characters.

Besides it, the meeting between Isma and Karamat is also manifested in the traditional communicational patterns of female characters, as Isma asks him for permission to go to Pakistan without any trouble and says, "I want to fly to Karachi in the morning without anyone at the airport stopping me" (Shamsie, p. 234). Nevertheless, Karamat argued that a visa was not possible and that he would not allow her to go there. Upon this, Isma scolded his ruthlessness and said, "I only meant to suggest your son has more character than you, give him credit for" (Shamsie, p. 236). In this meeting, there were more meanings than the words, and Isma had power over Karamat without using many words to explain her authority and command. Shamsie explained it as "she looked directly at him, and something passed between them - it wasn't about sex, but something that felt more dangerous. She was familiar to him, a reminder of a world he'd lost" (Shamsie, p. 238). It was a symbolic interaction with no words but more impact and meaning to tell Karamat that he has no power over all females he used to show to the Pasha family in the past. This meeting made Karamat distracted while his shoulders were tightened, and he tried to lose them to have a further conversation on Parvaiz's matter. Terry and Karamat's communication do not depict a stereotypical husband-wife conversation but female-dominated patterns. She persisted in governing Karamat in communication acts.

When Eamonn confessed in front of the media about his father's 'Personal Animus,' Terry got anxious. She messaged Karamat to come home immediately. Otherwise, the following headline will be "your name; it will have the story of your wife moving out to a hotel." After getting this message from his wife, he was bothered and managed to go home as soon as possible. When he confronted her, he talked to her indirectly and used Emily, his daughter, as his mouthpiece, but Terry stopped her from talking. Terry spoke for the poor Pasha family and made him realize his brutality and selfishness that saving his son could be his duty, but not her. She cleared that she was not talking about Eamonn but Parvaiz, "You self-important idiot", and why 'can't you leave him alone?' (Shamsie, p. 252). Karamat became a man in wolf's clothing and could not defend himself, unlike the typical males, who shout and bully females, even though they are wicked or illogical. Moreover, Terry passed a humanistic statement to awaken his humanity that was dead already; she said, "Be human. Fix it" (Shamsie, p. 254).

Additionally, Auntie Naseem has been depicted as the representative of the past generation, who were submissive and delicate. They had to obey and follow their male partners. She is proved to be a conventional female character who has a natural tendency to be slavish, whether it is required or not. When she met with Eamonn at her house, she warmly greeted him and took him as Isma's future husband, which is typical to expect young boys to be suitors for the daughters. Moreover, she asked him questions about his relationship with Isma, his job, and his parents during their conversation. This typical approach compelled her to stick his sleeve's loose button, and "she bent down to set it right" (Shamsie, p. 62). It is symbolic interaction with no verbal, but Auntie Naseem's physical gestures symbolized and portrayed her submissive character and colonized mentality.

4.3. Source of power

Home Fire is a remarkable novel in which the characters are not engendered; instead, they have acted and communicated through their impulses and nature. The fourth category of the gender roles theory explores the power struggle of characters, like how the characters have power and control over others in social institutions. In this novel, it is evident that females have more power than males; whether they have financial or political power, they dominate males. Isma worked as a manager at a dry-cleaning shop and paid for household duties. When she felt that her twins had become grown-ups, she decided to study abroad. She did not need permission from her siblings, but she was worried about their future.

Moreover, when she decided to sell their house, Parvaiz opposed this idea, but she convinced Parvaiz to work more if he wanted to keep the house, as "it would be impossible to pay home bills on his job as a greengrocer's assistant" (Shamsie, p. 119). Isma's authority over her siblings is apparent. She also influences Karamat, even though they met once in the novel, but she makes him bewildered and baffled through her talking style, and "he flexed his shoulders, trying to loosen them" (Shamsie, p. 238). Even though he tried to convince her that she must be sensible in Parvaiz's matter and stop Aneeka from protesting, she was consistent with her demand to visit Pakistan and meet Aneeka. Isma's brilliant and robust nature never let her bow before anyone, and she has the power to face people and dominate them.

On the contrary, Parvaiz has been depicted as a failure who has no prestige. He worked in ISIS as a media person. Before this, he was unemployed while his sisters worked for their living. After joining ISIS, he experienced disastrous sights and events, so he decided to leave that and wanted to come back. Similarly, Adil Pasha was also impotent, even useless; he always escaped from responsibilities and never had such power to face the realities of life. He had no power over anything; meanwhile, he chose to run away like an escaper. Isma explained to Eamonn that Adil Pasha had tried many things in his life; he worked as a "guitarist, salesman, gambler con man, jihadi- but he was most consistent in the role of the absentee father" (Shamsie, p. 47).

Aneeka's portrayal is fearless, sexually independent, and intelligent. She has power over Isma, Eamonn, and Parvaiz. When she realized Isma was reporting Parvaiz to the police, she accused Isma of being treacherous to the twins and warned her never to contact her again. She was stiff enough to think that she could get her brother back at any cost; thus, she decided to use sex as a tool and trapped Eamonn. He was already in love with her and quickly came into her trap. Later on, both fell in love, but initially, it was Aneeka's secret to using her power over Eamonn to save Parvaiz. She convinced Eamonn to keep their relationship secret until she allowed it and said, "I won't tell anyone about you; you don't tell anyone about me. We'll be each other's secret," Eamonn questioned it. "Why? Upon this, she answered, 'I don't ask 'why' about your fantasies, Do I?'" (Shamsie, p. 73). She had authority over Eamonn effectively, using her power through actions and dialogues.

On the other hand, although Eamonn had no power over any character, he still could hold severe matters as the Home Secretary's son. Aneeka trusted his political power; even though he was not a politician, he could still do many things. Unfortunately, Aneeka was broken when Karamat did not let him meet with her, and he did nothing to protect Parvaiz or bring back his dead body to London. Besides it, Eamonn went to Pakistan; he spoke to the media about his father's bitterness and urged the media not to propagate Aneeka. He just used his power to save

Aneeka's repute. In front of the media, he defended that Aneeka was committed to him and loved him respectively.

Moreover, he explained, "she is doing completely legal protests against a decision by the Home Secretary that suggests Personal Animus" (Shamsie, p. 45). Indeed, he ruined his father's political career through his statement to the international media. It shows that his power could not protect Parvaiz but destroyed Karamat's political career.

On the contrary, Karamat Lone has power in political spheres while holding the position of Home Secretary of London. He has different sources of power, which he had used to keep away Eamonn from the Aneeka and Pasha families. When Adil Pasha died in Guantanamo, Karamat was MP, dealt with Pasha's family heartlessly, and showed his excessive power to feeble people. But he has no power; in front of his wife Terry Lone and Emily Lone, he could not win an argument with them. When he expressed his wish to make his house a haven, Terry bluntly responded, "Don't talk to me as if I'm some housewife here to bring your slippers at the end of your working day" (Shamsie, p. 52).

Meanwhile, Terry Lone has more political and financial power than Karamat and Eamonn. She is an interior designer and runs a chain of shops worldwide while having political influences over many matters. She controls her husband and son and never allows them to dominate her in any action or decision. However, she had made Karamat a triumphant politician by using her political sources. Thus, in the novel, females who have more power are authoritative, self-reliant, and self-governing. They are intelligent and well aware of using power in acute conditions, while males are ambitious and intend to use their power to spoil other people.

4.4. Physical appearance

In gender characteristics, Physical Appearance explains how males and females look and dress. Typically, males do not pay more attention to their looks and dress and have big-sized fitness. On the contrary, females are expected to be a small-sized beautiful while more concerned with their dress and age. In the novel, when Eamonn appears for the first time at the coffee shop, the writer explains that "his looks weren't startling because they were exceptional - thick dark hair, milky-tea skin, well-proportioned features, good height, nice shoulders" (Shamsie, p. 14). Moreover, he was displayed "in blue jeans and an olive-green quilted jacket" (Shamsie, p. 16). It shows Eamonn's concentration on his dress and stylish lifestyle, modern, not cliched. On the contrary, Parvaiz is described that he had his mother's features as looking attractive. When Parvaiz saw his father's photo, he searched for the similarity with Adil Pasha. But he found that Aneeka's and his features are similar to their mother's, while Isma's "unfairly, who had their father's wider face, thinner lips" (Shamsie, p. 135). Moreover, Isma's dressing is explained as wearing a "wool Turban and called her Greta Garbo" (Shamsie, p. 19).

Aneeka is the only character whose dress and personality are explained numerous and differently in every situation. At the Isma's flat, Eamonn saw Aneeka's photo in which she was dressed in "Black knee-high boots, black leggings, and long white tunic, a black bonnet cap accentuating the angles of her face, a scarf of black and white gauze wrapped loosely over it" (Shamsie, p. 46). However, this description is an impression of her personality, not gender; she chooses what she prefers to wear and feels confident. Later on, when Eamonn met with Aneeka, and they went to his flat, Aneeka was wearing a white hijab; after a bit of chat, "she unpinned

hijab ... pulled off the tight-fitting cap beneath it. She shook her head slightly and her hair, long and dark" (Shamsie, p. 68). It is another side of her personality and preferences; it suits her as she was striking, bold, and connected to her culture creatively.

Furthermore, when she was protesting for Parvaiz's body in Pakistan, she was dressed in a shalwar and kameez with a dupatta. She was mourning her brother's death while well aware of Pakistan's culture, so she had covered her head; it is mentioned that when Karamat muted the Tv during her interview, he watched "the doe-eyed girl in white, head covered" (Shamsie, p. 220). On the other hand, Auntie Naseem, a stereotypical lady from Pakistan, her dress is described by Eamonn. When he visited Isma's house for the first time, he observed Auntie Naseem as "an elderly woman made small by age answered, wearing a shalwar kameez with a thick cardigan that signalled her internal thermometer was still set to another country" (Shamsie, p. 61). Auntie Naseem's character is stereotyped in dressing and looks accepted in Pakistan's society but irrelevant in the West. In another paragraph, Shamsie explains the typical view of people about women's beauty; when Eamonn listened to a song suggested by Isma. He enjoyed it but could not understand that correctly, as it was in the Urdu language, so he requested her to explain it. She elaborated on the song's theme that "it's in praise of fair-skinned girls who have nothing to fear in life because everyone will always love their fair skin and blue eyes" (Shamsie, p. 29). It shows the white-face complex of the people and the expected skin colour of women in Pakistan.

5. Discussion

Home Fire has presented the gender roles with diversity and novelty; all characters performed according to their personality, attitude, and context, which determined their individuality. Rivaldy *et al.* (2019) claimed that Shamsie's misrepresentation of male and female Muslims had been infected with stereotypical professions of Muslim diasporic males and women's liberal Muslim lifestyle relying on Veil and Hijab to be connected with Islam. Unfortunately, this claim promotes the stereotypical representation of postcolonial characters. Isma's character is entirely different from Aneeka and others; she wears a Turban with jeans and a modern lifestyle. She preferred her education over marriage, wanted a prosperous life, and was not interested in sex. She also offers prayers and dua when she gets in trouble. She is responsible and authoritative to her siblings and has a confident and self-independent lifestyle. On the other hand, Karamat is a politician and has an authoritative position in America, unlike the characters of Parvaiz and Adil. Similarly, Baglama (2020) asserts that Shamsie's characters in '*Home Fire*' follow an individualistic approach and have distinctive traits, personalities and actions regardless of their religious and social status.

Interestingly, Shamsie depicted fashionable world relations and gender roles as unique, natural, and practical. She has removed tags from professions, behaviours, and actions. In the novel '*Home Fire*,' all male and female characters are unique; instead, they act responsibly, thoughtfully, and intelligently. Ashraf and Hashmi (2020) argued that the Islamophobia environment of the West had caused a considerable sense of security in the diasporic communities of the West. People are emerging into two types of extremist groups. One shows extreme loyalty or affiliation to the host country, and the other is still stuck to the loyalty to the origin country. This argument shows the validity of the people's choices while living in the West, whether they follow their religion prominently or moderate and rebel from this. It proves the context of the characters' actions, what type of problems they face there, and what they

choose solutions according to their feasibilities. For instance, Karamat entered into politics with a Muslim play card. Still, when he observed he needed to become a secular anti-Muslim to get a higher position, he chose the other. Similarly, Isma remained loyal to the state by reporting her brother because Pasha's sisters could have been in trouble forever if she was not.

Shaheen *et al.* (2018) claimed that Shamsie had misrepresented the British Muslims through the depiction of detoxification and fundamentalism that, has deteriorated the image of the central characters. They have demanded that Shamsie portray and justify all characters with their socio-political and psychological standings to comprehend their contexts of actions or lifestyles. Provenly, Shamsie had given a complete background of all characters and their life before the novel's central conflict. She has depicted their socio-political and psychological understanding, and characters have been presented with their context and denying the idea of generalization as Muslim or postcolonial people. Remarkably, the female characters are elaborated transparently and proved responsible for their actions and choices with solid determination.

6. Conclusion

Through the analysis of the gender roles, it is proved that Shamsie has portrayed personality-based social roles performed in unique circumstances. The gender roles have been reversed in this novel and broken the barriers between the male and female roles, as the world has changed enough, and people interpret the things and roles with different interpretations. Interpretation is vital for understanding modern meanings, as postcolonial people must be seen from a new perspective. The interpretation of the characterization of central characters' behaviours, communication patterns, physical appearances, and power struggles among the other characters has proved the individuality of the male and female characters. *Home Fire* holds a remarkable place in the postcolonial and post 9/11 literature and has been explored by several researchers. However, the Psychoanalysis study is required to explore the characters from a psychological point of view. Shamsie has presented genuine and unique characters; their personality development could be examined through psychological analysis. Moreover, the Pasha family's trauma could be analysed from the central characters' inner feelings and mental conditions.

References

- Ahmed, R. (2021). Towards an ethics of reading Muslims: Encountering difference in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*. *Textual Practice*, 35(7), 1145-1161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2020.1731582>
- Ahmed, Z., Buzdar, H. Q., & Kamran, U. (2021). Postcolonial subject as modern orient: A critical analysis of Shamsie's *Home Fire*. *International Journal of Linguistics and Culture*, 2(2), 159-171. <http://ijlc.wum.edu.pk/index.php/ojs/article/view/52>
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism*. Prentice-Hall.
- Brigida, M. S., & Pinho, D. (2019). Necropolitics and national identity in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*. *Interdisciplinar-Revista de Estudos em Língua e Literatura*, 31, 153-167. <https://doi.org/10.47250/intrell.v31i1.11493>
- Chambers, C. (2018). Sound and Fury: Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*. *The Massachusetts Review*, 59(2), 202-219. <https://doi.org/10.1353/mar.2018.0029>

- Copenhaver, B. B. (2002). *The portrayal of gender and a description of gender roles in selected American modern and postmodern plays*. East Tennessee State University.
- Ebrahimkuty, S., & Dhantal, S. (2020). Gender role in marriage: A symbolic interactionist perspective of a *Game of Thrones*. *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, 8(10). 29-34.
- Gussak, D. (2008). An interactionist perspective on understanding gender identity in art therapy. *Art Therapy*, 25(2), 64-69.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07421656.2008.10129414>
- Haque, S. A. A., Iqbal, H., Siddique, N., & Saeed, A. (2020). Locating cultural hegemony: A Marxist analysis of Home Fire. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 17(9), 7925-7938.
<https://archives.palarch.nl/index.php/jae/article/view/5676>
- Lodhi, M. A., Muqqadas, S., & Sikander, S. (2019). Political Imbroglios in Kamila Shamsie's Home Fire and Mohammad Hanif's A Case of Exploding Mangoes. *English Language and Literature Studies*, 9(1), 120-133.
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/9d7c/fa2c567d578da1df1645fdce5f9de5caff0d.pdf>
- McLuhan, A. (2014). *Character as a sociological phenomenon: An interactionist analysis of seminary life*. Doctoral Dissertation.
<https://macsphere.mcmaster.ca/handle/11375/14120>
- Mead, G. H. (1964). *On social psychology*. University of Chicago.
- Rivaldy, P. M. R., Budiman, M., & Tambunan, S. M. G. (2019). Muslim diasporic identities in Kamila Shamsie's home fire (2017). *International Review of Humanities Studies*, 4(2), 962-972. <https://doi.org/10.7454/irhs.v0i0.198>
- Shamsie, K. (2017). *Home fire*. Riverhead Books.
- Shaheen, A., Qamar, S., & Islam, M. (2018). Obsessive 'Westoxification' versus the Albatross of Fundamentalism and love as collateral damage in Kamila Shamsie's Home Fire. *Journal of Research (Humanities)*, 54(54), 150-167.
http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/english/PDF/09_LIV_Jan_18.pdf
- Stets, J. E. & Burke, P. J. (2000). Femininity/Masculinity. In E. F. Borgatta, & R. J. V. Montgomery (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Sociology* (pp. 997-1005). Macmillan.
<https://hmmcollege.ac.in/uploads/00b.pdf>