

The Role of Society and Family in shaping mindset: A study of Ryu Murakami's Audition

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Abstract

This research delves into the crucial interplay between physical and mental well-being in a child's growth and development, emphasising the enduring impact on their psychological health. Drawing from the theories of John Broadus Watson, a notable behaviourist psychologist, the study explores the persistent influence of childhood experiences on an individual's fears and psyche throughout their lifetime. These theoretical underpinnings guide an analysis of Ryu Murakami's novel *Audition*, revealing the intricate relationship between early-life trauma and its repercussions on mental well-being. The narrative follows Asami, a character marked by a traumatic past of abuse, neglect, and betrayal, leading to profound psychological scars that shape her present relationships and decisions. Through a lens of parental responsibility, societal impact, and individual resilience, the paper underscores the critical role of childhood experiences in molding a person's psychological landscape and advocates for a compassionate approach in fostering a child's growth.

Keywords

Psychological Health, Early-life trauma, Parental Responsibility, Social influence, Negative influence

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Proper growth and development in a child are essential for the child's psychological health. Ensuring a harmonious blend of both physical and mental well-being is a shared responsibility. The equilibrium between physical health and mental wellness is pivotal in fostering a wholesome upbringing. The challenges faced during childhood can affect the child's entire lifespan. This dynamic underscores the profound responsibility parents hold in guiding their child through a balanced developmental journey.

The theories of John B. Watson, an influential American psychologist, shed light on the intricacies of childhood development. Watson, a prominent advocate of behaviourism, posits that a child's initial fears could persist throughout their lifetime. In a research article which is published in *Psychological Review Research journal*, he states that "Human psychology has failed to make good its claim as a natural science" (Watson, John B., 176). This enduring influence not only perpetuates fears but also shapes the intricate landscape of the child's psychology, affecting them well into adulthood. In essence, the parental role in nurturing both the physical and mental aspects of a child's growth forms the cornerstone of a resilient and well-rounded individual, influencing not only their present but echoing into the years to come.

These themes are explored in Ryu Murakami's novel *Audition* [1997], a Japanese work that found its English audience in 2009 through the translation efforts of Ralph McCarthy. The narrative unfolds as Yamasaki Asami, a captivating twenty-four-year-old woman, applies for an audition orchestrated by Aoyama and his longtime friend Yoshikawa. Aoyama, a

widower at thirty-five, tragically lost his wife to rapid-onset cancer, leaving him to care for his son, Shige.

As Shige reaches the age of fifteen, he expresses a desire for his father to remarry, prompting Aoyama to approach his producer friend, Yoshikawa. In a twist of narrative intrigue, Yoshikawa concocts a deceptive plan—a literal audition for the role of Aoyama's wife, under the guise of creating a new movie. This sets the stage for a story that delves into the complexities of relationships and the unintended consequences of orchestrating one's personal life as if it were a work of fiction. In response, Asami applies for the audition.

Aoyama, drawn to her, initiates a romantic relationship, envisioning her as a potential replacement for his deceased wife. Their dating becomes a regular occurrence, and during one such encounter, Asami opens up about personal incidents that had profoundly affected her psychologically. Asami says to Aoyama, "This isn't a pretty story, and it might not be pleasant to hear, but it's the truth" (*Audition* 96)

She begins by recounting her childhood, revealing that her parents' divorce leads to her being sent to live with her mother's younger brother. In this new environment, she endured mistreatment at the hands of her uncle's wife. Shockingly, one winter day, she is bathed in cold water, resulting in pneumonia. Another harrowing incident involved her head being forcefully slammed into a window, causing a substantial gash on her forehead and significant bleeding. Furthermore, she experiences the trauma of being pushed down the stairs by her uncle's wife.

These incidents left a profound impact on her mental well-

being, at times making her feel on the verge of death. The fear escalated to the point where she perceives her uncle's wife as a potential threat to her life, leading to deep-seated psychological wounds.

The torment doesn't cease with her uncle's wife; it extends to her mother's remarriage. Her return to her mother's care introduces a new challenge as her mother has remarried, making the stepfather a part of her life. The stepfather says to Asami, "I'd Just as soon kill you as look at you. You smell bad." (97) Her stepfather hates her. He doesn't even allow her in the same room during dinner. Her mother also never tries to protect her and never says she was sorry. In this itself, we are able to know how she was mistreated by her uncle's wife and stepfather. This affects her both physically and mentally. She is searching for true love which she never has in her life. So she is affected psychologically; no one bothers about her, even her mother doesn't show real love. She longs for true love but thought that her life was destined like this. A child must never experience mistreatment like this. Instead of all, she tries to be strong, but it is very difficult for her. She said to Aoyama that, "I'll give you everything, but I've got to be the only one you love." (153) Even at the age of twenty-four, she continues her quest for true love. After an extended period, she believes she has finally found it in Aoyama. However, the revelation that Aoyama has deceived her shattered this newfound sense of love and trust, intensifying her emotional distress. The narrator states that "She hasn't been able to accept or forgive" (178)

The revelation that Aoyama had a son, initially concealed from her, becomes a source of profound distress. This undisclosed aspect of his life intensifies her emotional turmoil. Despite her efforts to overcome the trauma inflicted by a stepfather who subjected her to beatings and abuse during her upbringing, the scars persisted, affecting her daily life.

In light of this, she formed a resolution: any man who betrayed or lied to her would be equated with the painful memories of her stepfather. This decision reflected the enduring impact of her past experiences on her ability to trust and form connections in the present. The narrator states, "She would become intimate with a man and simultaneously begin forging a plan to cut Off his feet " (178)

These traumatic experiences profoundly impacted her psyche, leading her to a tragic resolution ultimately, the decision to take Aoyama's life. In her meticulous planning, she acquired the necessary tools by watching a cooking show on TV and delving into pharmaceutical knowledge to obtain the required drugs. It's important to recognize that her actions were not solely her mistake; rather, they reflected the profound influence of her family and society on shaping her mindset. This tragic outcome underscores the critical importance of treating children with kindness and care, as the psychological well-being of a child, from birth to death, is profoundly shaped by their upbringing and environment.

References

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