

Structural Violence and Societies of Fear in Hamid's "The Prisoner" and Tanweer's "The Scatter Here is Too Great"

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Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the portrayal of different forms of structural violence that impact the constructs of social order and rhetoric around it in Karachi – one of the major metropolitan centers of Pakistan. Through a close textual analysis of Omar Shahid Hamid's "The Prisoner" and Bilal Tanweer's "The Scatter Here is Too Great", our study examines the underlying economic factors that give rise to various manifestations of structural violence in Karachi. For this research, we primarily draw upon Johan Galtung's concept of "structural violence" to analyze the detailed portrayal of alienation, elitism, and social stratification within the selected novels. This study mainly focuses on the underlying causes of structural violence, the effect of unjust neoliberal policies, and the subsequent establishment of societies of fear in Karachi. Ultimately, our research calls for greater social awareness and reforms to foster more inclusive and equitable socio-cultural structures in the city for the establishment of a peaceful society.

Keywords: Structural Violence, Societies of Fear, Neoliberalism, Inequitable Structures.

Introduction

This paper critically analyzes the selected fiction to examine the depiction of structural violence embedded within the socio-cultural landscape of Karachi. By conducting a detailed textual analysis of Omar Shahid Hamid's novel "The Prisoner" and Bilal Tanweer's "The Scatter Here is Too Great", this study delves into the economic determinants contributing to various manifestations of structural violence, particularly within Karachi. This study, therefore, aims to shed light on the intricate relationship between economic factors and structural violence in the context of a major metropolitan city of Pakistan, i.e., Karachi.

Karachi is known as an industrial hub for the people of Pakistan and is known to provide them sustenance. However, at the same time, it also encounters multiple incidents of violence regularly, leaving people in a state of fear as Bhuddani et al. (2010) call Karachi a "violent City- probably the most violent city of the comparable size in South Asia" (p. 2). They state that non-state violence in Karachi stems from political parties with armed cadres involved in targeted killings and clashes, especially during rallies and elections. However, their activities are not directly tied to jihadi extremism (Budhani et al., 2010).

Firearms are commonly used in organized crimes like robberies, carjackings, and kidnappings, often linked to networks. Allegedly, there are strong connections between criminal groups and political parties. Budhani et al. (2010) mention that in areas like "Lyari" gang leaders have ties to political factions, with some party cadres allegedly involved in crime (p. 4). Notably, certain

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kidnapping cases are linked to influential rural figures. There have been several such events over the past few decades which mark the violent history of Karachi. The persistent interplay of political rivalries, organized crime, and sporadic violence underscores the complex security challenges facing Karachi, demanding urgent and sustained efforts for stability and peace.

To analyze the structural violence in Karachi, as depicted in the selected texts, this research draws upon Johan Galtung's concept of structural violence. Galtung (1969) defines "structural violence" (p. 9) as a kind of violence that includes psychological harm, alienation, repression, and deprivation, particularly as it relates to urban contexts. He argues that inequality is the most essential form of structural violence that leads to the emergence of reactionary violence (Galtung, 1969, p. 9). The structural violence that persists in the culture of Karachi is significantly highlighted in "The Prisoner" and "The Scatter Here is Too Great". This study is essential as it focuses on the root causes which play a key role in perpetuating and shaping these violent behaviors in Karachi. It further highlights how the structures of violence that are deeply entrenched in the socio-cultural patterns and the institutions of Pakistan enormously impact the social order of Karachi. Both novels highlight the economic mechanisms through which structural violence operates and illustrate how these structures generate inequality, poverty and unstable social conditions.

One of the key aspects of this study is to analyze the economic structures that serve as a form of violence, creating systems that oppress the underprivileged strata of society in particular. Furthermore, this paper argues that to comprehend the mechanisms of structural violence, it is essential to explore the dimensions through which it manifests. The first dimension is the economic system, where the policies are designed to benefit the rich, whereas the poor sectors of society are entirely ignored. The neoliberal economic system, according to Kesztyus (2018), only gives power to the specific sectors of society whereas the "others" (p. 6) are left out of the social stream. She also argues that the states which follow neoliberal ideology and policies not only create economic and social structures that are unjust but also cause violence for economic reasons. These economic policies, such as reducing social spending and implementing austerity measures, can result in social inequalities that may lead to the emergence of right-wing populist or extreme nationalist movements (Kesztyus, 2018, p. 6). Thus, the economic and the political systems are intertwined in a complex fashion and are crucial in understanding how the powerful elite relies on and controls these systems to maintain their hold over the social hierarchies.

Structural Violence and Its Various Manifestations

Structural violence refers to the ways through which social structures and institutions create and perpetuate inequalities and injustices, causing different kinds of harm and suffering for certain groups of people. It is a form of violence that is often invisible, as it is embedded in the fabric of society and operates through systems of power and privilege. While Kent (2011) generally defines violence as "doing harm to others in the pursuit of one's own preferences" (p. 132), Johan Galtung (1969) outlines the concept of "structural violence" (p. 9), which extends the understandings of violence to include psychological hurt and, in turn, alienation, repression and deprivation. Galtung (1969) argues that in urban contexts, deprivation or "inequality" (p. 9) is the essential form of "structural violence" (p. 9). Also, it relates most significantly to the emergence of everyday reactionary violence. Galtung (1969) further extends the notion of violence beyond situations of overt brutality to include more implicit forms such as exploitation, exclusion, inequality and injustice. According to him, "in a society where life expectancy is twice as high in the upper class as compared to the lower classes, violence is exercised even if there are no concrete actors one can point to directly attacking others, as when one person kills another" (Galtung, 1969, p. 5). He

also refers to structural violence as "social injustice." He argues that societies normalize such injustices over time, which are not seen as abnormal and are passed on to the next generations. As he states in his article, "structural violence is silent, it does not show – it is essentially static, it is the tranquil waters" (Galtung, 1969, p. 7). Galtung (1969) further argues that "structural violence may be seen as natural as the air around us" (p. 8). One must have a keen eye to examine such structures because they will not be noticeable otherwise. Therefore, our research aims to analyze these forms of structural violence in the selected fiction. The chosen novels portray the recurring antagonism between multiple forms of authority (such as state, ideology, and capitalism) and the individual and political agency of the citizens of Pakistan. Besides, Hamid also depicts the use of subjective violence by terrorist entities in society as a potential means to secure political, ideological, and capitalist interests.

Structural violence is hard to detect in comparison to the direct violence as Winter and Leighton (2012) posit that structural violence, in contrast to direct violence, exhibits sales' conspicuous nature and permeate the very foundations of social structures and institutions (p. 1). It arises from entrenched political, legal, economic, and cultural traditions that systematically marginalize and disadvantage specific social groups. These disparities, often accepted as the status quo, become normalized within society (Winter & Leighton, 2012, p. 1). The authors further contend that although structural violence may lack the overt brutality associated with direct violence, its consequences are nonetheless grave, resulting in suffering, premature mortality, and a spectrum of health issues, particularly among impoverished populations. Denial of access to essential societal resources stands as a form of both physical and psychological violence (Winter & Leighton, 2012, p.1). This perspective emphasizes the pervasive and insidious nature of structural violence, highlighting its impact on vulnerable communities. By elucidating the enduring consequences of systemic inequalities, this analysis underscores the need to address the underlying mechanisms perpetuating such violence, in order to foster a more equitable and just society.

Structural violence operates through different mechanisms and exploits the system for its own benefit. The system becomes exploitative when it goes in the hands of few people like the elite class which utilize it for their own good. However, in the process, the common people get subjugated to violent constructs and suffer both physically and mentally (Kent, 2011, p. 133). George Kent (2011) explains the ways in which the system operates and uses structures of violence through conflicts that affect the common people but are permitted by the state and its institutions as they benefit them. He argues that in a conflicting situation, parties are individuals, groups, organizations, or entities with distinct preferences regarding the possible outcomes of the situation (Kent, 2011, p. 131). Some parties may not be able to express their preferences, in which case advocates or surrogates may speak on their behalf. Preferences are indications of the choices a party would make among the possible outcomes of a situation. In Pakistan, the ruling party and the state become the two prominent power houses that control and dictate the system as Kent (2011) argues that each party cares about the possible arrangement of things and has a ranking of preferences among the various outcomes (p. 131). These parties have capacities, which are resources or powers they can use to ensure that their preferences are fulfilled. The conflict arises when parties have incompatible preferences regarding the various possible outcomes of a situation (Kent, 2011, p. 131). This conflict then leads to exploitation as those who are in power use it for their own advantage, whereas the weaker party suffers. Some examples of structural violence include poverty, racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination that result in unequal access to resources, opportunities, and basic human rights. Structural violence can also manifest in the

form of environmental degradation, unequal distribution of healthcare, education, and other essential services, and various systemic factors that harm marginalized communities (Kent, 2011, p. 133). In essence, addressing structural violence requires systemic change and collective efforts to dismantle inequities and create a more just and inclusive society.

One way that it operates is through the economic system where the policies are structured to provide profit to those who are at the top. The neoliberal economic system is characterized and built to earn profit and focuses less on providing equal rights. As the economic policies constituted by the neoliberal state work for the elite and powerful sectors; those who live at the margins suffer. According to Gertz and Kharas (2019), neoliberalism is a highly contested term as few regard it a political and intellectual movement that came into being as an answer to the economic turmoil the world faced during 1930s, whereas for others it is a term that is characterized as an economic model which is based on consumerism and product value. Some take it as “a set of economic policies that have been implemented by governments espousing the same principles of individualism and markets as neoliberal thinkers” (p. 8). According to Venugopal (2015), it exhibits an economic policy that is based on a “powerful and expansive political agenda of class domination and exploitation, the manifestation of ‘capital resurgent’, an overarching dystopian zeitgeist of late- capitalist excess” (p. 1). It is a system that was placed to stabilize the world economic system but to which extend it was successful in achieving its purpose is still a matter of debate. Neoliberalism brought with it an economic system that vastly effected world’s economy. It introduced economic policies entitled for lowering the taxes, favored deregulation of markets along with “privatization or marketization of public services, cutting the welfare state, and curbing union power” (Venugopal, 2015, p. 1). Since the time it was introduced, neoliberalism has benefitted those in power and has impacted the distribution of resources where the poor still suffers from poverty and insecurity. The common people are pushed to the margins where they suffer due to poverty, joblessness and exclusion from the social hierarchies. The state institutions use structural violence to control the population but it further pushes them towards the periphery. It actually creates, “spatial segmentation and inequalities between settlements” (Wacquant, 2011, p. 73), that affects the lives of the common people. The segregation and exclusion that people face is made worse due to the structural violence which further agitates the situation and makes things difficult for them. The state itself becomes a tool of violence as in any of these contexts, state is not a “singular, unambiguous presence” as “different agencies pursue different agendas, as do different powerful individuals” (Wacquant, 2011, p. 73). However, the common people who want to improve their economic conditions, travel to and live in densely populated centers like Lahore and Karachi suffer the most due to structures of violence. The control that neoliberal economic system exercises in the cities such as Karachi affects the inhabitants of these urban centers who struggle for their survival every day. One of the ways it exercises its power is through structural violence that results in street violence, poverty, injustice, and lack of employment opportunities. This affects the common people of the city as they live in a society that is governed through fear which overpowers them psychologically and physically.

Structures of Physical and Psychological Violence in Karachi

Karachi is not only the largest metropolis of Pakistan and its commercial hub, but it is also known as ‘mini-Pakistan’. This metropolitan city has always been the center of attention because of its persistent state of violence and political unrest. The densely populated areas face problems of

inequality, poverty and joblessness that shape out the urban system where it works in the favor of the elite whereas others – the commoners, are suppressed. The dominant factor, of fear, affects the lives of common people both physically and psychologically. According to Budhani et al. (2010), the institutional breakdown in Karachi is due to the prevalence of “conflict and violence” (p. 1). They claim that Karachi is a neoliberal city and widely known for its persistent state of violence because of “unequal distribution of power and resources” (Budhani et al., 2010, p. 15). They further highlight that to succeed in the national and international market, movements such as political struggles, cultural renaissances, and trade union activism had to make a mark on the city. Currents like the Progressive Writers' Movement, feminist activism, student unions, and artistic revolutions that emerged in Karachi frequently influenced the national mainstream. The elite class has benefited from it whereas the common people struggle to just be a part of the system and face consequences which deeply affects their lives.

The structural violence, both the physical and the psychological, impacts the population that lives at the margins. The injustice that is part of the system, the worry of feeding the family and the threat they face due to the lack of security makes the lives of the common masses very difficult. According to Islam and Zinia (2020), “most marginalized— the urban poor—suffer more as violence is concentrated in their living spaces” (p. 539).

They argue that the neoliberal economic restructuring benefits the upper class as the system works for them whereas the common people are forced towards the margins deprived of any urban services. They have limited access to the state services and they only find low-paid employment in the informal sector which lacks security. One of the challenges is job insecurity, apart from living in densely populated areas, where they live under constant threat of street violence. Hossain (2012) in his work points out that the poverty ridden people suffer from poor nutrition, insufficient access to healthcare services and limited access to education (pp. 241-247). Moreover, the rapid urbanization and privatization of services have accelerated serious discontent and misery for the urban poor housed to live in various informal settlements or urban slums of the cities (Haque, 2014, pp. 3-8). The economic inequality plays a huge role in constructing the mechanisms of structural violence that predominantly thrives through poverty and systematic injustice.

The chaotic political environment and the unjust state policies play their role in making life difficult for the common people. According to Islam and Zinia (2020), most of the common people suffer in case of political instability as they are unable to go to work due to strikes causing anxiety and stress (p. 543). Furthermore, they are “often harassed at their workplace by their employers and the police depending on the nature of the jobs” (Islam & Zinia, 2020, p. 543). So, the insecurity they face at work places and in society are huge factors that contribute to different forms of structural violence that operate in Karachi. In other words, the common masses fear for their jobs and are bound to take risks due to their vulnerable positions. Most of the policies designed for the urban centers work in favor of the elite classes whereas the poor strata suffer from oppression, alienation, and exclusion due to the economic injustice and inequality.

Structures of Economic Violence in Karachi

The economy has long been viewed as a structure of power that is central to the functioning of the society. The policies through which the state governs and rules revolve around economy. Pakistan being a developing country faces multiple economic issues. Karachi is one of the largest cities of Pakistan and holds a significant position as far as economic situation is concerned. For instance, a report by World Bank published in 2019 states that Karachi is the “financial capital of Pakistan and generates approximately 65% of the total national revenue” (p. 13). The current

neoliberal economic regime holds the power and constitutes the social order of the country specifically Karachi. The article “Pakistan: Failing state or neoliberalism in crisis?” by Geoff Brown published in the *International Socialism Journal* in 2019, discusses the current political and economic situation in Pakistan. He argues that Pakistan's current crisis is not solely due to its status as a “failing state” (p. 143), but rather a result of neoliberal policies that have been implemented over the past few decades. According to him the current economic crisis in Pakistan, is characterized by high inflation, rising debt, and a growing trade deficit. The author argues that these issues are a result of neoliberal policies, which have failed to generate sustainable economic growth and have instead created a situation where the country is heavily dependent on foreign loans and aid. Brown (2019) also examines the political situation in Pakistan, which has been marked by corruption and instability. He argues that the country's political crisis is also a result of the neoliberal policies, which have undermined the state's ability to provide basic services and maintain social order (Brown, 2019, pp. 143-145). The neoliberal policies are formulated to benefit the elite and work on the value of the profit but they negatively impact the common people and social order of the society. Hence the power that the economy holds can also be counted as a structure of violence. Kesztyus (2018) while studying the structures of economic violence states that in an attempt to “regulate the economy, governments not only are unable to generate economic growth or social welfare but also worsen their people’s conditions by trying to improve them” (p. 1). The neoliberal policies generate unstable jobs from where stems out the inequality and thus there is a rise in poverty. The uncertain situation of the economy means rise in inflation and also enhanced sense of insecurity among the common and poor classes as they are directly impacted by it. So, everyone is in a race to get a secure status which raises the competition. As Vigil (2003) argues that “competition over resources often sparks aggressive behavior and actions that occasionally flare up and get out of control, resulting in very violent, unplanned incidents” (p. 234) as they live under a constant fear of losing jobs, money and home. Moreover, the uneven distribution of resources exacerbates the economic inequality within a social setup. In a similar vein, Galtung (1969) also argues that when there is unequal distribution of income (p. 171); it threatens the stability of social order and sparks uncertainty. This study therefore, specifically draws upon the detrimental impact of neoliberal policies on the common masses of Karachi as these policies not only intensify the economic disparities among different strata of the society but also reinforce different forms of structural violence, fostering insecurity and vulnerability among its wider poor population.

Structural Violence and Societies of Fear in “The Prisoner” and “The Scatter Here is Too Great”

Omar Shahid Hamid’s “The Prisoner” and Bilal Tanweer’s “The Scatter Here is Too Great” both exhibit examples through different characters and situations that show how the neoliberal economic mechanisms play a significant role in creating uncertainty, instability, and security issues that in turn become the leading factors in generating violence that affect people both psychologically and physically. The neoliberal economic policies build structures that benefit the wealthy whereas the other sections of the society are altogether ignored. The common masses live under uncertain circumstances and are always worried about their jobs and social security. The competition in the market is to gain profit which is good for the owners but creates a feeling of uncertainty among the workers. Moreover, the competition that neoliberal market intensifies to gain profit actually becomes a source of generating gang violence, and illegal means of earning money as people are unable to maintain a secure livelihood. As Galtung (1969) points out that if

you are earning low it means less access to other resources like education, and medical as having money means power; it ties you to the social structure of the society but if you are deprived of it then it means you hold no right and have to live under constant fear (p. 171).

In Karachi, as in many other contexts, the distribution of power is heavily influenced by economic factors, with wealth emerging as a primary determinant of who holds authority. Consequently, individuals who are economically impoverished often find themselves lacking power and are subject to the control of those who possess financial resources. This factor underscores the significant role played by money in shaping power dynamics within Karachi and reinforces the notion that socio-economic status strongly correlates with the ability to exert influence and control. In a neoliberal society, “the power to decide over the surplus from the production process is reserved for the owners of the means of production, who then can buy themselves into top positions on all other rank dimensions” (Galtung, 1969, p. 171). Firstly, it decides the social order of any society like Karachi and secondly it becomes significant tool to control the poor thus again violating the principles of basic rights. Those who have the money create safe havens for themselves where as others are left to suffer at the margins of the society. In Hamid’s “The Prisoner” (2013), when the kidnapping happens and Constantine– the protagonist, is doing his research; he goes to the ‘wealthy’ part of the city where according to the authorities, no crime happens. Hamid states, “Nothing like that happens in that area” (p. 58). He writes about the crowd, “you know the crowd over there- Clifton Defence wallahs, rich people looking for a goodtime” (Hamid, 2013, p.58). This phenomenon highlights the stark disparity between neighborhoods occupied by the affluent and impoverished segments of society. In wealthier areas, a notable absence of violence is anticipated and becomes the norm. Conversely, individuals living in poverty-stricken regions are disproportionately exposed to violence and endure the deprivation of fundamental rights. The spatial distribution of wealth and resources significantly influences the security dynamics within urban settings, such as Karachi. The novel documents that the privileged segments of society residing in prosperous neighborhoods enjoy a sense of safety and are shielded from the specter of violence, while the marginalized populations live under perpetual threat of violence and systemic violations of their basic rights.

The economic disparities among different strata of the society are shown in “The Prisoner”, where Hamid points out that ‘Zamzama’ (p. 108) in Karachi is an elite locality – a place for the elite which is considered safe and free of any violence. He writes that “[t]hings like this just didn’t happen in Zamzama. Kidnappings, car snatchings and armed hold-ups were bad anecdotes that happened in the faraway corners of the city” (Hamid, 2013, p. 108). He writes that “[p]eople in Zamzama were immune to these things, cocooned behind their high-walled mansions and legions of servants, watching satellite TV and dreaming of shopping excursions to Dubai” (Hamid, 2013, p. 108). The author presents a stark juxtaposition between the impoverished and the elite classes of Karachi, highlighting the differential treatment and rights accorded to the individuals based on their economic standing. The privileged segment, characterized by affluence, enjoys unfettered access to various rights and privileges. In contrast, the marginalized population inhabiting poverty-ridden areas faces a life plagued by destitution, instability, and pervasive uncertainty, with fear permeating their daily existence. This disparity underscores how socio-economic status becomes a decisive factor in determining the allocation of rights and the lived experiences of individual within the urban fabric. The economically privileged wield their economic power to

secure comprehensive rights and security, while those trapped in poverty are mired in a state of perpetual vulnerability, deprived of essential rights, and subject to the omnipresent grip of fear. The common people constantly live in a state of fear of physical violence, stress and uncertainty of their job, are denied their basic human rights and henceforth remain under perpetual control of those in the power. Thus, economic violence also becomes a source of generating societies of fear, where individuals are constantly anxious and uncertain about their economic future and well-being. Hamid (2013) further points out that the people living in Zamzama or in other elite areas are those who hold high offices and positions so “[t]hey were attuned to what went on in London than in Lahore. Their principal cause of concern since this war on terror had started were the problems, they had in securing US visas” (Hamid, 2013, p. 108). These people control the economy and make the policies but just to benefit themselves and are not concerned about the common people who mostly suffer the consequences of their decisions. In societies where economic power and resources are concentrated in the hands of a few, many people experience feelings of insecurity and vulnerability, and are forced to navigate a precarious existence in order to survive like using violence as a way to get what they want which is a principal feature of the societies of fear. As Moser (2004) extends the concept of Galtung and points out that violence is not always physical but it can be embedded in social structures (p. 5). Hence its effects are far more complicated due to its invisibility and the way it affects those who are further marginalized by it like the aggressive behavior of individuals and the rise in the street crimes (Moser, 2004, pp. 5-7). Even the kidnapping incident of journalist in Karachi mentioned in “The Prisoner” itself shows how economic violence generates fear and how these factors are tied together highlighting one of the many structures of violence operating in Karachi.

Under neoliberal policies, individuals are exposed to various risks. This creates a society with a two-speed system where those who can meet the competitive requirements of the market benefit from the inherent structures of competition and profitability, while others who cannot meet these requirements are placed into high-risk groups (Kesztyus, 2018, p. 2). As a result of these policies, there is a concentration of economic and political power among a particular segment of the population, leaving others at a disadvantage. In Hamid’s novel “The Prisoner” (2013) when, one of the central characters, Constantine decides to leave Zamzama and goes to the ‘other’ (p.110) part of the city; the disparity between the rich and poor is depicted in a detailed fashion. Constantine decides to meet his “informer” who lives on the other side of the city to get more information about the kidnapping. Hamid writes that, “[t]he drive to the Boulten Market, in the center of the old city, was like entering another world. Gone were the sights and scents of immaculately groomed begum sahibs and choti mem sahibs, flitting from one boutique to another, doing some late afternoon shopping or sipping a latte in a coffee shop” (Hamid, 2013, p. 110). Constantine observes the shift that occurs when he enters in the area that belonged to the lower middle and the poor classes. It shows the division of areas where one area belongs to the rich and has no place for the poor whereas the other is poverty ridden. It belongs to the class who lives under a constant fear of not being able to earn enough. He further writes, “[t]hese were replaced by the odours of working men’s sweat, and stink of the carbon fumes that choked the air. Instead of the glossy and spacious boutiques stood cabins, barely ten by ten, selling all sorts of wares, from car tires to open spices heaped in little mounds in front of the customers” (Hamid, 2013, p. 110). Hamid (2013) highlights the class difference that exists due to the neoliberal economic

regime, as on one side of the city, is Zamzama which belongs to the elite class where those who own most of the businesses and those who were at high positions live. However, on the other side, there are areas such as Boulten Market where the residents were mostly employed in the daily wages jobs or worked in low-paying jobs that barely provided them enough income to make both ends meet. As the area changes, so does the entire arrangement of the things (p. 110).

As Hamid writes, “It grew more congested as one travelled deeper into the heart of the city, coming to an almost complete stop in the alleys, where more than half of the road had been encroached by the shopkeepers stacking their wares. Auto rickshaws spouting black smoke, beat-up, old Suzuki wagons, camels and donkeys clogged the roads. There was no sign of the Mercedes saloons and Toyota SUVs that flocked Zamzama” (Hamid, 2013, p. 110). So, Zamzama projected “the most modern, liberal and prosperous enclave in the city” (Hamid, 2013, p. 118) owned by those who hold the economic power and positions; shaping the policies for their own good thus promoting economic violence which is one form of the structural violence.

Due to failed economic policies, poverty increases which results in a rise in the crime rate as common masses are unemployed and they are unable to find lawful means to sustain themselves as Galtung (1969) points out that in a society where there is a significant disparity in life expectancy between the upper and lower classes, violence can still be present even if there are no identifiable individuals or groups directly perpetrating it (p. 171). For instance in Hamid’s “The Prisoner” (2013), the protagonist, Constantine refers to the existence of Jihadis that, “these jihadis were different. They scared him. Their faith was frightening. They came from the poorest augment of the society” (p. 62). Hamid (2013) further states in his novel that, “[a] man with no hope was a man with no fear. You couldn’t reason with them” (p. 62). As they have faced the worst and are not afraid of any violence anymore. As Vigil (2003) points out that once a person or groups have faced the worst possibilities then it becomes less fearful and acts in a more aggressive manner to survive. Like if a criminal has faced authorities and has been punished before, he becomes less fearful to it, especially if the reasons behind his criminal act are not resolved (p. 234). He argues that people get involved in illegal activities due to the economic instability and to avoid poverty (Vigil, 2003, p. 234).

As mentioned before, the flawed economic policies that are shaped by the powerful sector of the society give rise to economic violence. It thrives on uncertainty, instability and poverty which impact the middle and the lower classes. The economic position of an individual becomes the deciding factor for allocating him or her space in a social frame. In Karachi, similar situations occur where individuals from various social classes experience marginalization and are denied fundamental human rights. Vigil (2003) argues that socioeconomic factors play significant role in placing humans in different strata of society where those who are economically successful rule whereas others are subjugated and marginalized (pp. 232-233). This marginalization then sparks violence and impacts them both psychologically and physically. They become members of society who are fearful and afraid to even ask for their basic rights as the system thrives on their fear and so they are not allowed by the system itself to act in any way. In the novel “The Prisoner”, Hamid (2013) writes about the brothels in Karachi. It is a space which is illegal but is allowed to exist because it brings huge amount of money for the people in power as they get their commission (p. 92). As he writes that, “all men, irrespective of which side of the law they were on, were welcome to spend their money there. As a result, the police were not allowed to conduct raid on the

brothels” (Hamid, 2013, p. 92). He further states, “[t]he price of breaking the *naiqa*’s rules were hefty. If she grew angry, she would stop the local police station’s rather lucrative monthly payments” (Hamid, 2013, p. 92). People made money and thus it was a place allowed to exist and the “pimps and tarts raked in the profit” (Hamid, 2013, p. 90). It shows that how money becomes the deciding factor in allotting place and space in social order but also shows the other side where the girls have to work as prostitutes due to poverty and are deprived of basic human rights. The girls over there suffered but had no right to speak as they belonged to the poor sector of the society and thus deprived of any rights. When Constantine raided the brothel, he saw “bruises on girl’s ribs” (Hamid, 2013, p.100), highlighting how they were treated by men and had to suffer as they feared for their lives as well. Apart from working as prostitutes, they had to bear physical torture but they did not have the right to complain. As prostitution is illegal so working as prostitute means that you are deprived of state protection and are unable to do anything regarding the physical torture inflicted by men who come to such areas and do what they want to without fearing the consequences. All such instances, highlight the impact of the economic disparities that operate in the city of Karachi and adversely affect its impoverished strata at various levels severely damaging their everyday living conditions.

Bilal Tanweer’s “The Scatter Here is Too Great” (2018) also documents various instances of structural violence. For instance, the novel records the story of a ‘writer’ (p. 9), who shows how his life was affected due to the employment issues that his father faced. The character of the writer, recalls “I also left school because we had become poor. Baba lost his job at the office” (p. 9) and losing the job became his fault. Tanweer’s (2018) novel also explores how the lives of common citizens come under threat when institutions like police become corrupt and use the law for their own good rather than protecting the citizens. In the section ‘writer in the city’ in the novel, when the writer skips school with his friend Sadeq, they are caught by the police men. They threaten both of them and they have to offer all their money to the police men (p. 89).

The fear of losing money invites violent behavior that impacts others physically and mentally. Tanweer illustrates that on multiple occasions in his novel. He shows how it affects the households as he tells the story of the writer in the city, where he and his mother had to live at his sister’s house after the death of his father. He once heard her sister’s husband shouting at her: as he writes, “I had heard him yelling through his bedroom wall, “I will cut your throat, you hear! Don’t you ever take money from the cupboard without telling me. I’ll leave you out on the road! That’s not your property. They are savings, SAVINGS! Bitch!” (Tanweer, 2018, p. 70).

Tanweer’s novel also documents that due to scarcity of employment opportunities, the crime rate also increases as the man whom ‘the writer’s father worked for’ was robbed and shot. Tanweer (2018) writes, “two people on a motorcycle tried to snatch his money. When he refused, they shot him” (p. 9). The poverty and uncertainty that the economic policies create becomes a tool to control the social order; turning out to be an important mechanism of structural violence and thus resulting in the establishment of the societies of fear. This fear and anxiety are exploited by those in power to maintain the status quo and to justify policies that further entrench structures of economic violence. By framing poverty and economic inequality as individual failings rather than systemic issues, those in power can deflect attention away from the root causes of economic violence and perpetuate the myth of meritocracy (Galtung, 1969, p. 171). This myth holds that people are rewarded in proportion to their hard work and abilities. In other words, the idea is that

if you work hard enough, you will eventually be successful. This myth ignores the fact that there are many factors that contribute to success, such as access to education, healthcare, and other resources.

The high rate of inflation and poverty with no jobs and rights to basic necessities of life become the reasons for the people to get involved in crimes (Vigil, 2003, p. 233). As they realize that they will not get punished and need money at any cost to survive they act violently. In the novel, "The Scatter Here is Too Great", Tanweer (2018) demonstrates this problem at several occasions. For instance, the character of Sadeq in the novel, gets involved with a gang because he is poor and needs money. He and his gang get involved in threatening people. It is mentioned in the novel that, once they followed a car and threatened the family inside (p. 121). Tanweer (2018) records the incident as, "[w]hen we got there we found the car outside the man's house; his wife was in the driver's seat, brushing her cheek with a blush-on. When Chief walked up from the side and pulled out the gun at her. She howled and flashed her nail polished hands at his face" (p. 121). They did not stop there but continued to threaten her even though the man was not present. He writes that, "[h]e backed up a couple of steps and kicked the side of the door, and yelled at her out of his gut, his sticky early morning spit flying out of his mouth. When she stepped out of the car, Chief caught her arm and yanked her aside and got into the car" (Tanweer, 2018, p. 121). It highlights how some individuals desperate for survival or seeking power and influence, may turn to criminal behavior as a means to meet their needs or gain a sense of control in an otherwise oppressive environment which can lead to physical harm as he further writes that a man walked out the door with a revolver dangling in his hand just as he was about to activate the ignition. He pointed it at the Chief's car, but I fired two bullets into the air before he could fire. He returned undetected and started firing at my bike. Despite trying to hit me, I was spared (Tanweer, 2018, p. 121). The whole incident highlights that not only the structural violence breeds direct violence but also how the people of Karachi suffer due to the unequal distribution of rights and are forced to take law in their hands. Moreover, it also shows the involvement of the system in perpetuating violence and how easily they could get out without being punished. Karachi is the city that has suffered physical violence as well as psychological abuse for years. The normalization of fear into the system and in the social order affects the common population the most and further marginalizes them.

Tanweer in his novel also show the incidents of physical violence due to high rate of street crimes which are direct result of poverty and inequality produced due to the structural violence. Like in the section of 'writer in the city', his Baba's friend was shot by two people, "old uncle, Baba worked for, was shot while walking out of bank. Two people on a motorcycle tried to snatch his money. When he refused, they shot him" (Tanweer, 2018, p. 9). Street crimes in Karachi are the one type of violence they suffer from like the incident of robbery in the bus. Tanweer (2018) records the instance in these words: "[t]hree thieves had come in the bus. One of them sat next to the back door, on Baba's side. The other was at the front door. And the third one stood in the middle with his gun. They all had shiny guns and their faces were covered with cloth, which kept falling away (p. 14). The impact of such incident on the people in the bus are far reaching and it shows how uncertain the situation of city has become. It could be observed during the bus incident as the writer explains it, "[t]he bearded thief-man shouted at us, "Whatever, whatever you have, drop it on the floor in front of you. If I find anything near anyone, I swear to God, I will fire a

bullet through his head without a thought” (Tanweer, 2018, p. 15). It also impacts those who are the victims of such incidents and suffer from insecurity and uncertainty as the fear that is invoked affects them psychologically. He further writes that, I wanted to fight him. But I was scared. No one stood up to fight him. The thief-man who was at the front sitting with the driver said to the ladies in the front compartment: “Do not fear. You are like our mothers and sisters. We will not bother you. We do not need your money.” When he said this, the fat man said, “Please let us go. Aren’t we like your brothers and fathers?” The thief thought that the fat man was trying to make fun of him (Tanweer, 2018, p. 15). The aggression that has become part of our social culture is illustrated by Tanweer (2018) as the thief looked at the man and said, “[w]hat did you say? Haan?” and then slapped him. It made a loud sound. He put the gun on his head, “You find this very funny, haan? Funny, haan?” And he slapped him again. Everyone turned to see the man being slapped. It was like in the class. When the teacher slapped one boy, no one spoke again” (p. 15). The fear of dying instilled in them made them miserable. They were poor people who were robbed by the thieves but they expected it to happen as the incidents like these have become part of the city culture. The people living in Karachi become aware of their helplessness and form a bond with violence, it's almost like they grow accustomed to it. Tanweer (2018) expresses it in “The Scatter Here is Too Great”, where he writes that, “[l]iving in this city, you developed a certain relationship with violence and news of violence” (p. 178). He further illustrates that “you expected it, dreaded it, and then when it happened, you worked hard to look away from it, because there is nothing you could do about it” (Tanweer, 2018, p. 178). The uncertainty that they experience creates fear of its own and they accept it as there is nothing, they could do to stop it as the structural violence is stable. Galtung (1969) points out that it is “built into social structures” (p. 173) and cannot be changed overnight.

The close textual analysis of the selected novels, Hamid’s “The Prisoner” and Tanweer’s “The Scatter Here is Too Great”, henceforth clearly shows that the economic and structural violence impacts the living standards of the inhabitants of Karachi, where poverty, inflation, uncertainty and instability is a part of its economic and social fabric. The major characters and the significant incidents in both the novels clearly demonstrate that the political and economic systems are carefully constructed to benefit the rich on the expenses of the poor whose lives are under constant fear. These structures can take various forms, such as neoliberal policies that prioritize market competition and profit over social welfare and public services, or discriminatory laws and regulations that disproportionately affect certain groups. “The Prisoner” and “The Scatter Here is Too Great” effectively document the effects of economic violence on the underprivileged strata of the society which remains in perpetual state of poverty, unemployment, homelessness, and limited access to basic resources such as healthcare and education. The major characters in both the novels are constantly subjected to the fear of physical harm, losing a job and a secure living space, which becomes a tool in the hands of the hegemonic system; that uses it to govern and benefit from it. So, the selected texts clearly demonstrate how the structures of economic violence perpetuate and maintain inequality and injustice, often to the detriment of marginalized and vulnerable groups.

Conclusion

The analysis of the selected fiction by Hamid and Tanweer, clearly highlights the discriminatory structures of the neoliberal economic system and its associated policies, revealing that the

economic structures established under this paradigm favor the interests of the privileged elite, consequently exacerbating the plight of the impoverished segments of society. By delving into the underlying systems that perpetuate structures of violence, our study seeks to unveil their concealed nature, often imperceptible to the human eye. This socio-economic configuration effectively consolidates power among the affluent few, engendering a hegemonic regime that creates societal divisions. Both of the selected texts highlight the adverse consequences of such divisions, which is manifested through increase in poverty and inequality, disproportionately impacting those residing on the margins of society. The major characters in both the selected texts, i.e., “The Prisoner” and “The Scatter Here is Too Great”, manifest the kind of discrimination they are subjected to on account of the precarious nature of violence that is so deep rooted in the social fabric of Karachi. The perpetual state of fear of loss of job, loss of home and ultimately loss of life governs their everyday routine and makes them live in an utterly miserable state. The analysis of these novels reveals that the precarious state of employment opportunities and the inequitable distribution of resources create an atmosphere of instability, which not only bolsters the structures of violence but also engenders a sense of misery and desolation among the common citizens of Karachi. Through a rigorous analysis of these interconnected dynamics presented in the selected novels, our study elucidates the complex interplay between structural violence and its impact on the lives of individuals within the city of Karachi.

This research not only underscores the detrimental effects of the neoliberal policies manifested through structural violence and creation of societies of fear on the common masses of Karachi but also highlights the need for social awareness regarding such gross violations and the dire need for urgent social and political reforms required at grassroots level for the eradication of such inequitable and unjust structures that further exacerbate the economic disparities among different strata of the society.

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