



## THE EFFECTS OF ŽIŽEKIAN READING OF VIOLENCE IN SHAKESPEARE'S *HAMLET* ON READERS

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**ABSTRACT.** Literature has a greater impact on the reader's mind than media, as it activates the imagination, visualizes characters, and keeps their actions and behaviours in the reader's mind for longer periods. Famous literary works and authors attract more readers, causing greater effects if not adequately explained. The study, based on the constructivist paradigm, used a phenomenological strategy to show the negative effects of (constant) reading of the violence in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, an English play that is one of the most famous literary masterpieces in the world. Participants in this study were educated men and women who had the capacity to comprehend violence in literature. The participants included ten educated individuals with various university degrees, from an associate degree to a doctorate, from different fields of study, and between the ages of 20 and 50. Participants' experiences and feedback were analyzed, and the results demonstrated that violent actions in stories can have great effects on the lives of not only the readers themselves but their families and also the whole society.

**Keywords:** Effects; Violence; Mind; Literature; Media

### INTRODUCTION

Žižek and Lacan's View of Violence. In today's world, violence has become an inescapable part of modern life, and it seems that violence is limited only to physical force to injure or abuse. Slavoj Žižek, in his book "Violence: Six Sideways Reflections", shows that violence has not been limited only to physical force and visible acts (Valentić, 2016). He differentiates between what he calls subjective violence and objective violence. Subjective violence refers to violence that is seen and identified, such as crime and terror. Objective violence is the unseen form of violence, such as global poverty, for which no one can be blamed. Objective violence takes the form of "Symbolic violence", like the effect of social hierarchy on getting an education, and "Systematic violence", like limiting the human potential of students in an educational system (Packman, 2009: 3-4; Weiss, 2015). Today the word "objective" means existing outside the mind as something real, not only as an idea, and the word "subjective" means existing only in mind or imagination, but since the beginning of its use in the Middle Ages until about the nineteenth century, these two words have had a completely opposite meaning to their present meaning; thus, here, the word "subjective" means objective and the word "objective" means subjective (Afzali, 2020).

What Afzali said demonstrates that the meanings Žižek had in mind for the two words "subjective"

and "objective" were different from today's meanings. Thus, in his definition, "subjective" was something real that existed outside the mind, and "objective" was something that existed only in the mind or imagination. Žižek believed that he examined the ways we perceive and misperceive violence through Lacanian psychiatry as well as historical and philosophical books and movies. For Jacques Lacan, the Real is impossible and is located beyond the Symbolic. Unlike the symbolic, the Real implies that there is no absence and that it is always in its place. However, something may be missing from the Symbolic. Moreover, it is impossible to imagine the Real, and it resists symbolization. Consequently, the Real is impossible. Based on the Oxford Dictionary, the word objective means "not dependent on the mind for existence; actual", but according to Žižek, objective violence cannot be seen or identified; on the other hand, subjective violence can be seen and identified, but the word subjective, based on the Oxford Dictionary, is defined as "dependent on the mind or perception for its existence". As a result, Žižek intended to show that the real was impossible.

Violence in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The intended point about *Hamlet*, a play written in five acts by William Shakespeare, is that there is physical and psychological violence in almost all of its acts and that it revolves around the main character, Prince Hamlet ("Hamlet Violence Analysis"). The violence begins exactly when Prince Hamlet realizes that his

uncle has killed his father (Prince Hamlet's father), and his anger at his uncle makes him think of revenge, but other people unwittingly fall victim to this revenge. Prince Hamlet's anger continues until the end of the story, which ends with the deaths of both of them. At the end of the story, although Prince Hamlet kills his uncle, he is killed ("The Act of Violence in Shakespeare's Hamlet"). The first act shows King Claudius talking about the death of his brother, the old King Hamlet, saying:

"Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death/  
The memory be green, and that it befitted/  
To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom/  
To be contracted in one brow of woe./ Yet so far  
hath discretion fought with nature/  
That we with wisest sorrow think on him,  
Together with remembrance of ourselves", and then he announces his marriage to Queen Gertrude, his deceased brother's wife and Prince Hamlet's mother, saying "our sometime sister, now our queen"/ "With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage" (Shakespeare 11-12).

Gertrude marries Claudius two months after her husband's death. During the ceremony, Hamlet shows his dissatisfaction with their marriage by standing away from the crowd. Hamlet says:

"But two months dead: nay, not so much/  
Let me not think on't--Frailty, thy name is woman! --/  
A little month, or ere those shoes were old/  
With which she followed my poor father's body/  
Like Niobe, all tears:--why she, even she--O, God!  
a beast, that wants discourse of reason/  
Would have mourned longer--married with my uncle/  
My father's brother" (Shakespeare 15).

Only a short time has passed since the death of Prince Hamlet's father, and it is still too early for his mother to remarry. On the other hand, at that time, the brother-in-law was like the brother, and even after the death of King Hamlet, Gertrude's late husband, her remarriage is an act of betrayal (Conner). In Act 1, Ophelia is warned by her brother and her father not to trust Hamlet's declarations of love. Laertes, before leaving for Paris in order to study, says to Ophelia, "For Hamlet and the trifling of his favour/  
Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood/  
A violet in the youth of primary nature/  
Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting/", and then after Laertes leaves there, Polonius says, "Ophelia, do not believe his vows; for they are brokers" (Shakespeare 20-21, 24). Her conversation with her brother and her father, in which she uses few words and short sentences such as "Do you doubt that?" and "No more but so?", shows that Shakespeare has depicted Ophelia as an objectified female who is not able to think and decide without the help of the important men in her life, like Polonius, Laertes, and Prince Hamlet, and moreover, her only role is to support Prince Hamlet's role as a protagonist (Olivas). The female characters of the play, Gertrude and Ophelia,

should be regarded as important characters since they raised the value of the play, but the power of the male characters affected and victimized them (Günenç, 2015:164). Hamlet loves Ophelia and proves it when he says, "Be buried quick with her, and so will I", but in order to run his plan for taking revenge against Claudius, In act 3, he disparages Ophelia, and then, on the one hand, in act 4, he accidentally murders Polonius because Polonius is behind the curtains when Hamlet is arguing with Gertrude; accordingly, Ophelia loses the support of the two important men, Hamlet and Polonius; on the other hand, Laertes is not there to support her. All these factors together caused her to commit suicide.

"To be or not to be", said Hamlet, meant to struggle for the goal or to submit. Hamlet loses his father as Ophelia does, but the major difference between these two characters is that Hamlet struggles with his aim, which is to take revenge against his uncle, while Ophelia submits and kills herself. The other female character, Queen Gertrude, is stronger than Ophelia because, despite losing her first husband and losing the affection of her son, she acts as a strong Queen, is weaker than the male characters in the play (Günenç, 2015:164–170). Queen Gertrude, who could not win the heart of her first husband, King Hamlet, remarries only two months after her husband's death to win the heart of her second husband, Claudius, but she is even hated by her son, and at the end of the tragedy, she is mistakenly killed by the poisoned drink that was prepared by the male characters, Laertes and Claudius, for Prince Hamlet (Sarkar). In the first act, the Ghost of Prince Hamlet's father, King Hamlet, appears in front of him and says that Claudius killed him by pouring poison in his ears and deceived Queen Gertrude to gain the throne. However, before seeing the Ghost, Prince Hamlet, like others, thought that his father had died of snakebite. Then, the Ghost encourages Hamlet to avenge his father's death, saying:

"Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder. /  
Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard/  
A serpent stung me; so, the whole ear of Denmark/  
is by a forged process of my death/  
Rankly abused: but know, thou noble youth/  
The serpent that did sting thy father's life/  
Now wears his crown" (Shakespeare 28–30).

Snake is the same serpent in the Bible and a symbol for Satan that shows Claudius is like Satan because he killed his brother and married the Queen, his brother's wife, to gain the power and throne of King Hamlet ("Violent acts in the tragedy Hamlet"). Moreover, may Satan be the Ghost of King Hamlet that permeates like a satanic spirit in his mind and forces him to act as a mad person who is not able to have any control of his own emotions until he kills Claudius. However, Claudius is not the

only person who dies of Hamlet's revenge. The satanic spirit in Prince Hamlet's mind makes him mistakenly slay Polonius; his madness and cruelty toward Ophelia cause her to commit suicide, but the cruellest and satanic act that Prince Hamlet does is that he victimizes his two friends. In order to save himself, Hamlet switches the letters that Guildenstern and Rosencrantz are to give to the authorities in England; therefore, they are executed. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's only fault is their ignorance of King Claudius's plot against Hamlet and their ignorance of the contents of the letter, yet what Hamlet does to them is unjust (O'Connor: 2006:6–9).

The Ghost of King Hamlet, unlike the supernatural spirits in most of Shakespeare's plays, is one of the most significant characters in the Hamlet play because, without the Ghost, Prince Hamlet would have never thought of taking revenge; accordingly, he would not have killed Polonius accidentally, would not have been cruel to Ophelia, would not have sent Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their unfair execution, would not have killed Claudius and Laertes, and his mother and himself would have survived too (O'Connor, 2006:1, 8–9). In the fifth act, in the churchyard, the two gravediggers, who are preparing a grave for Ophelia, argue whether Ophelia should be buried there or not because, according to religious doctrine, giving a proper Christian burial to someone who commits suicide would be profane religion. When Hamlet and Horatio enter the graveyard, Hamlet and the gravediggers talk about the skull of Yorick, King Hamlet's jerk, who died twenty-three years ago. York's skull symbolizes death, the ultimate destination of life, and Hamlet symbolizes life, so the skull in Hamlet's hand shows the duality of death and life. Then he thinks about Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, who had achieved a lot but are now dead. Their conversation represents more deaths in the story, including the deaths of Queen Gertrude, Laertes, King Claudius, and Hamlet himself ("The Hamlet skull scene").

An important part in Shakespeare's Hamlet play, after the part related to the conversation between Prince Hamlet and the Ghost of his father, is the part in the final act, in which Claudius invites Prince Hamlet to a duel that was planned by King Claudius and Laertes, in fact, for killing Hamlet by a poisoned rapier or poisoned drink, but apparently for making peace between them; this duel ends with the death of Queen Gertrude because she mistakenly drinks poison prepared by Claudius and Laertes for Prince Hamlet, Claudius because Hamlet pours the remained poison in his throat, Laertes and Prince Hamlet himself because they stab each other by the poisoned rapier ("The tragedy of Hamlet 4-5). Prince Hamlet's mistake is that he accepts the

duel arranged by King Claudius, the murderer of his brother, and Laertes, who blames Prince Hamlet for the deaths of his father and sister; moreover, Hamlet does not pay attention to the point that Claudius, who killed his brother and once tried to kill Prince Hamlet in England, can do it again; and furthermore, Laertes may want to take revenge on his father and sister from Hamlet. At the end of the tragedy, Hamlet takes revenge on Claudius for killing his father, but in fact, he does not succeed because he first sees that his mother dies, and then he dies too (Morrison, 2012).

Horatio. Our last king,/Whose image even but now appears to us,/Was, as you know, by/ Fortinbras of Norway,/Thereto prick'd on by a most emulate pride,/Dared to the combat; in which our valiant Hamlet/For so this side of our/ known world esteemed him/Did slay this Fortinbras (Shakespeare 9).

King Hamlet of Denmark defeated and killed King Fortinbras of Norway years ago in a war to gain his land, and now his son, Prince Fortinbras, prepares an army to march into Poland and then Denmark to avenge his father's death and to recover his land (Eissler, 1969:203-204). The scene related to the murder of King Fortinbras of Norway that was first pointed out by Horatio in the first act is less important since it is not related to the murder of King Hamlet and Hamlet's revenge, but I explained it because it contains violent acts, such as murder and revenge.

The purpose of this grounded qualitative study was to find the types of violent acts in the Hamlet play based on Slavoj Žižek's classification of violence and see how those violent acts might affect our real lives. As we expect literature to reflect life and the world as a violent place, authors include violence in their works. When it comes to a famous literary work, it can influence not only the many people who read it but also the whole community. Therefore, we need to be able to recognize the types of violent acts. Shakespeare's Hamlet, which is full of violent acts from the beginning until the end, is one of the most famous plays in the history of world literature. Slavoj Žižek, the Slovenian philosopher, in his book, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, divided violence into two important types. Knowing this classification helped readers discover the violence in the play and its effects on them, as well as how to protect themselves from those effects.

## METHOD

Qualitative research aims to answer questions about developing an understanding of the meaning and experience dimensions of human life and social worlds (Fossey et al. 2002). The qualitative approach is interpretive, experience-based, and per-

sonalistic, which makes it similar to other approaches, but each researcher will do their research differently (Stake, 2010:31). Therefore, a qualitative study is appropriate when the purpose of research is to explain a phenomenon based on an individual's experience in a particular situation (Stake, 2010:11). Since the purpose of this study was to examine the experiences and perceptions of people reading Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, a qualitative approach was the most appropriate choice.

Grounded theory, methodology, and procedure have become the most influential modes of carrying out qualitative research when generating theory is the main aim of the researcher (Strauss and Corbin vii). The methodology of grounded theory is used in many research studies to discover or construct theory from data systematically obtained and analyzed using comparative analysis (Chun Tie et al. 2019). Grounded theory relies on theoretical sampling, which involves recruiting participants with differing experiences of the phenomenon to explore multiple dimensions of the social processes under study.

The researcher continues to add individuals to the sample until theoretical saturation is reached, which is when the complete range of constructs that make up the theory is fully represented by the data (Starks and Trinidad, 2007). Grounded theorists are interested in how social structures and processes influence how things are accomplished through a given set of social interactions (1374). According to grounded theory, observation allows the researcher to see how social processes are constructed and constrained by the physical and social environments in which they are practised (1375). A qualitative grounded theory study was used to try to uncover insights and develop a theory on the negative effects of reading violence in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* on readers. The role of the researcher in qualitative research is to try to get the thoughts and feelings of study participants. This is not an easy task, as it involves asking people to talk about things that are probably very personal to them. Sometimes the experiences being explored are fresh in the participant's mind, while on other occasions, reliving them can be difficult. However, the researcher's primary responsibility is to safeguard participants and their data as they are being collected.

The researcher used qualitative data, as there was no need for numbers or statistics to achieve the goal of this study. The researcher used secondary data to show people the violent scenes of the *Hamlet* play based on Žižek's classification of violence by using relevant information gained by previous researchers and primary data to show the destructive effects of those scenes on their lives and observed the behavioural changes of readers-- who

were educated and had the capacity of understanding violence and its effects in a work of literature-- after reading the play to get more accurate results by observing directly, then she provided questionnaires, thus they could answer the questions carefully, patiently, and honestly, as a result, she observed their behavioural changes after reading the violent scenes of the *Hamlet* play to find out how some of those scenes could form a belief and cause permanent or temporary changes in their behaviour, and how readers, after reading the play, changed other people's beliefs. Questionnaires let the readers give more honest answers at the right time and with enough focus. Then, finally, the researcher compared the effects of the play on readers before and after knowing the types of violence used by Žižek.

The sample was purposively selected from a population of educated men and women who could understand violence in literature. Children, adolescents, and uneducated people were not included in this population. Everyone of any age has some ability to recognize and understand violence in real life, but understanding violence in literature is different from real life, so it requires a university degree and, as a result, a little familiarity with literature, including plays and other famous works. Therefore, children, adolescents, and uneducated people may not be able to understand it, so they cannot be suitable samples for this research. Carroll (2013) suggested that it makes a difference when we talk about violence, and when we talk about violence in art or the media, whether we think we are living in a violent time, and it makes a difference whether we think that violence is somehow essential to who we are and the time we live in or rather something exceptional, regrettable, but not central.

#### Participants's list

Participant	Gender	University degree	Field of study	University	Age
Participant 1	F	Associate degree	Governmental management	Payam Noor university of Kashmar	48
Participant 2	F	Doctorate	Pediatrician	Ahvaz University of medical science	36
Participant 3	M	Bachelor	Accountancy	Azad University of Neyshabour	44
Participant 4	M	Doctorate	Doctor of pharmacy	Tehran University of medical science	39
Participant 5	F	Master degree	English education	Azad University of Neyshabour	25
Participant 6	F	Bachelor	Accountancy	Azad University of Neyshabour	33
Participant 7	M	Bachelor	Teacher education	University of Mashhad	50
Participant 8	M	Master degree	Biology	Azad University of Tehran	27
Participant 9	F	Bachelor	Laws	Azad University of Tehran	29
Participant 10	M	Associate degree	Environmental health	Azad University of Birjand	25

Men and women were asked to respond to a computer questionnaire, including multiple-choice and dichotomous questions sent via email. Therefore, (as said in BRM, or Business Research Methodology), it helps the respondents not to feel pressured and to answer questions accurately with sufficient time. The participants, after reading violent parts of the *Hamlet* play, answered a two-part

questionnaire, including questions about before and after reading the types of violence by Žižek, and then the answers were examined based on the respondent's gender in order to find out the effects of violent scenes of the *Hamlet* play on men and women separately. The researcher anticipated approximately 10–12 participants for this study. The final number of participants was 10, as determined by saturation. This study used the computer questionnaire method, where both the questionnaire and the questionnaire questions were the instrumentation used. The files of participants' answers were saved and coded manually. The questionnaires began with a summary of different violent parts of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, followed by closed-ended questions about the way they were influenced by reading those parts, and then a summary of Žižek's classification of violence, followed by multiple choice and dichotomous questions to see the effects of being able to recognize violence in the play on readers' reactions to the play, that is, whether knowing types of violence influences respondents' reactions to violent scenes of the *Hamlet* play or not.

### Questions

Part A: The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark shortened to Hamlet, written between 1599 and 1601, is Shakespeare's longest play. The ghost of the King of Denmark tells his son, Hamlet, to avenge his murder by killing the new king, Hamlet's uncle. Hamlet feigns madness, contemplates life and death, and seeks revenge. His uncle, fearing for his life, also devises plots to kill Hamlet. The play ends with a duel, during which the King, Queen, Hamlet's opponent and Hamlet himself are all killed. In revenge for his father's murder, Prince Hamlet causes other characters' deaths, including two of his school friends, Ophelia (his love), Ophelia's father and brother, and his own mother. Although he manages to take revenge on his father, he himself dies.

Question 1: How familiar are you with Hamlet and Shakespeare? A) I do not know either of them B) I have little knowledge of Shakespeare and Hamlet C) I have complete knowledge of both Shakespeare and Hamlet D) I only know Shakespeare.

Question 2: According to the passage above, which one does Hamlet play evoke in your mind? A) violence B) family C) morality D) spirituality

Question 3: How much do you think the reading of literature like Hamlet can affect readers' behavior? A) It has very little impact B) It has a great impact C) It is more or less effective D) It has no impact

Question 4: Can the stories and literature of other cultures influence the values of a society or a country? A) Yes B) No

Part B: In today's world, violence has become an inescapable part of modern life, and it seems that violence is limited only to physical force in order to injure. Slavoj Žižek, in his book, "Violence: Six Sideways Reflections" shows that violence has not been limited only to physical force and visible acts. He differentiates between what he calls subjective violence and objective violence. Subjective violence refers to violence that is obviously seen and identified, such as crime and terror. Objective violence is the unseen form of violence, such as global poverty. Shakespeare's Hamlet is a play full of violence, including both subjective violence (physical violence) and objective violence (non-physical violence).

Question 5: Which one is more impacted by reading about violence? A) Women B) Men

Question 6: Which one is more interested in reading violent stories? A) Women B) Men

Question 7: What type of violence which has increased in society under the influence media and literature do you think is more common in real life? A) Non-physical violence B) Physical violence

Question 8: How might your familiarity with violence in a story influence your reaction to it? A) I am less influenced by that story because I no longer follow it. B) It makes me more interested in that story and the characters. C) It has no effect on my reaction to that story. D) I pass on my knowledge after I stopped following that story.

Participants choose answers from the provided options; in addition, it saves the researcher time and energy (Dawer, 2019).

For this study, qualitative questionnaires were the primary method of data collection. Qualitative questionnaires are useful for researchers in many ways. The content provided by the respondents from various aspects of daily life, past and present, is very informative and deserves more attention from scientists (Eckerdal and Hagström, 2017). Qualitative questionnaires are used when exploratory information needs to be collected to help prove or disprove a hypothesis, unlike quantitative questionnaires, which are used to confirm or test a previously established hypothesis (Bhat, 2020).

Limitation and Delimitation. There were two limitations and one delimitation in this study. First, the lack of sufficient research sources about "violence in literature" limited the scope of this study. Despite many sources about "violence in the media", there were a few sources about violence in literature. Second, another limitation of this study was the effect of personal, cultural, and religious beliefs and biases. This limitation existed in both research sources and in participants' answers to the questionnaires. "The delimitations of a study are the factors and variables not to be included in the investigation. In other words, they are the boundaries the researcher sets in terms of study duration, population size, type of participants, etc." (Discover PhDs, 2020). The effects of different types of violence in Shakespeare's Hamlet, based on Slavoj Žižek's classification of violence, were limited to educated and mature people who had at least a little familiarity with the literature and the capacity to understand different types of violence. Consequently, children and uneducated people couldn't participate. The findings may not be applicable across generations, as people's viewpoints on literature are changed by changes in cultural values.

Trustworthiness is described in different ways by researchers. Trustworthiness is defined as the quality, authenticity, and truthfulness of qualitative research findings. It depends on the reader's degree of trust or confidence in the results (Cypress, 2017:254). Seale asserted that the trustworthiness of a study is based on the two concepts of validity and reliability. Sullivan believes that reliability refers to whether an instrument used in a research study gives the same results each time, in the same setting, and with the same subjects, whereas validity refers to how well the instrument measures the underlying outcome of interest. Guba and Lincoln stated that the four concepts of credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and conformability (objectivity)

A closed-ended question refers to a question that provides some choices of answers for the respondents to select from among the provided choices, and they are not free to write their own opinions. Among the benefits of a closed-ended question, we can mention first that it is easier for participants to answer this type of question as they do not need to think a lot and write the answers in their own words; they just select the answer among the provided options; in addition, it saves the respondents' time. Second, it helps the researcher get rid of irrelevant answers by the respondents, unlike an open-ended question that gives the chance of irrelevant answers, which makes it difficult for the researcher to gather and analyze feedback data. Third, the answers are easily compared together because all par-

are important in establishing the trustworthiness of a research study. According to Salkind, the term triangulation refers to using multiple sources of data or multiple approaches to analyzing data to increase the credibility of a study. Therefore, in this qualitative study, in addition to preparing questionnaires, observation and referring to the data of related prior studies were done, and the results were compared to each other to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

One way to establish conformability is to ensure no researcher bias. It is important to interpret what the data tells the researcher in an unbiased way. Coding folders of answers to the questionnaires helped ensure a deep understanding of the questionnaire content and the participant's intent. In order to enhance dependability, the researcher described in detail how data was collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the study. The qualitative researcher enhanced transferability by doing a thorough job of describing the research context that was central to the research and enabling other researchers to make decisions about transferability (Qualitative Validity, 2017).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Reasons for getting help from Slavoj Žižek's book to show different types of violence were: First, the alignment of his beliefs with those of Jacques Lacan and their theoretical validity. Second, he explicitly categorizes and explains the types of violence with examples in his book, "*Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*." When comparing the results of this study with the theories mentioned below, similarities exist.

*Jacques Lacan's Theory of Poststructuralist Psychoanalysis: "Reality"* For Lacan, the real does not exist. Slavoj Žižek, in his book "*Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*", examined the ways we perceive and misperceive violence through the use of Lacanian psychiatry. Žižek intended to show that reality was impossible.

*Arousal Theory:* The theory of arousal is one of the theories of media violence and increases aggression in real life because it increases the provocation or arousal of viewers. Based on the theory and findings in this study, violence in literature also increases violence in real life.

*Disinhibition Hypothesis:* According to this hypothesis, children and other people who are prevented from engaging in aggressive behaviour when they watch violent television programs gradually accept violence as a way to solve problems. Reading Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as a violent literary work causes readers to resort to violence as a way of solving their problems in their real lives.

*Desensitization Hypothesis:* According to this hypothesis, constantly watching violence on television may reduce the emotional response to the violence on the television screen and accept levels of violence in real life. Also, reading violent scenes, like the violent scenes in the *Hamlet* play, increases the demand for more severe forms of violence in real life. The researcher coded each question manually and analyzed it for themes. The two themes of the study were individual-centric and community-centric.

### Theme 1: Individual-centric

It contains questions in the questionnaire that were asked to find out the effects of reading *Hamlet* on their personal lives and to understand their ideas about this play. The theme of individual-centricity is described below in four parts: Acquaintance with *Hamlet*, *Hamlet* and violence, Violence in society, Acquaintance with violence

*Acquaintance with Hamlet:* Participants were asked if they knew about Shakespeare and his play, *Hamlet*. Their answers in questionnaires showed that before participating in this study and reading about the *Hamlet* play, six of them, including four women as well as two men, had complete knowledge of both Shakespeare and the *Hamlet* play.

*Hamlet and Violence:* A question was asked to find out whether the participants were able to find violence and its types in the *Hamlet* play or not. The answers showed that more than half of them were not able to find types of violence, especially the non-physical type, which is called objective violence by Slavoj Žižek. Awareness of danger helps us find a true way to protect ourselves and other people around us from danger. From what was said, it was concluded that it was necessary for those who could not find violence in the *Hamlet* play to learn to protect themselves and others from the danger of being influenced by the violent scenes of the story they read.

*Violence in Society:* Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a world-famous play that has many readers who could be influenced by reading the play, and as *Hamlet* is a play full of violence, it can have a negative influence on readers. Furthermore, each person has a different idea about the impact of another culture's literature on society. Therefore, to see what kind of violence has increased under the influence of the *Hamlet* play, a question should be asked: "Which type of violence, which has increased in society under the influence of media and literature, do you think is more common in real life? A) Non-physical violence B) Physical violence" was asked in the questionnaire to see if each person's idea about violence increased in society under the influence of reading the literature. More than half of the

participants selected non-physical violence, and only two participants selected physical violence. Based on their answers to this question, the non-physical violence, which was called the objective violence type by Žižek, in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was in the scenes including gender discrimination related to the two female characters of the play, Queen Gertrude and Ophelia, could affect society more than the scenes of murder that were of the physical or subjective type of violence.

*Acquaintance with Violence:* After a short description of the classification of violence by Slavoj Žižek in the second part of the questionnaire, the researcher asked a question to see whether teaching participants a way to find the types of violence helped them protect themselves from imitating cruel characters and violent scenes after reading a violent story like *Hamlet*. The question and its alternatives were: "How might your familiarity with violence in a story influence your reaction to it? I am less influenced by that story because I no longer follow it. B) It makes me more interested in that story and the characters. C) It does not affect my reaction to that story. D) I passed on my knowledge after I stopped following that story. All participants selected alternative A. That means having the necessary knowledge to recognize the types of violence in the stories that readers read makes their values, cultures, beliefs, behaviours, and speeches less negatively affected in their real lives.

## Theme 2: Community-centric

It contains questions in the questionnaire that were asked to find out the general effects of the *Hamlet* play on the values, beliefs, and ideas of society. The theme of community-centric is described below in four parts: Media or literature, cultural transmission, the impact of *Hamlet*, and the tendency to read violence.

*Media or literature:* Media are one of the most important factors that form a community's culture (ShirAlipour). But the effect that reading a story has on the mind of the audience is much greater than the effect of the media, because by reading a story, the imagination is activated, and the reader visualizes the characters in his mind and identifies with them. The actions and behaviours of the characters in that story stay in the reader's mind for a longer time and affect them more easily (Samiei). The researcher asked a question to ensure the impact of constant reading of the story and literature on the reader. Of the four alternatives, (A) has very little impact. B) It has a great impact. C) It is more or less effective. D) It has no impact. Eight (80%) participants selected alternative B, which means constant reading of a story has a great impact on the readers.

*Cultural Transmission:* In order to understand the importance of stories and literature in cultural transmission and in forming new values and beliefs, a question was asked, and all participants believed that literature was an important tool for cultural transmission. Khorshidian et al. said that the media are the main tool for transmitting information and ideas at the community level, which can help the development process of society by creating new ideas and thinking and promoting them every day. Furthermore, stories are an important instrument for imparting cultural values (77). The participants' answers to the question showed that the role of literature, like the role of the media, in shaping the values of society was inescapable.

*The Impact of Hamlet and the Tendency to Read Violence:* Finally, the researcher asked the participants the last two questions: 1. "Which one is more affected by reading a violent story? A man or a woman?" 2. "Which one is more inclined to read a violent story? A man or a woman?"

For the first question, only two women out of ten participants (men and women) believed that men were more affected by reading about violence. However, the eight others assumed that women would be more influenced by reading a story. But for the second one, all participants presumed that men were more inclined to read about violence.

### Codes

Question	Theme	Individual-centric code	Acquaintance with violence
Question 1	Theme 1	Individual-centric code	Acquaintance with violence
Question 2	Theme 1	Individual-centric code	Hamlet and violence
Question 3	Theme 2	Community-centric code	Media or literature
Question 4	Theme 2	Community-centric code	Cultural transmission
Question 5	Theme 2	Community-centric code	The impact of Hamlet
Question 6	Theme 2	Community-centric code	Tendency to read violence
Question 7	Theme 1	Individual-centric code	Violence in the society
Question 8	Theme 1	Individual-centric code	Acquaintance with violence

## CONCLUSION

In the minds of most people, the word violence means physical harassment of others or oneself, while violence is not only physical but can also be non-physical, like insulting and humiliating a person. Half of the respondents were not able to recognize all types of violence, especially the non-physical type, in the *Hamlet* play, which indicates that they did not know violence well; thus, they could not recognize it. Since non-physical violence is not easily recognizable, it can affect people much more easily, so that people do not even notice the violence perpetrated against them. For this reason and also because, based on the answers of most participants, the type of violence that has increased as a result of reading violent stories in society is non-

physical violence, such as verbal violence, class, race, gender discrimination, etcetera, that has increased more under the influence of reading stories in society.

A lack of knowledge causes people to make more mistakes. When a person reads Shakespeare's *Hamlet* play, they may imitate the characters, for example, Prince Hamlet, as their role model and as a strong character because he decided to resist and avenge his father's death and even devoted the lives of his family and himself for this revenge instead of succumbing to the new king, who killed Prince Hamlet's father. There is no problem if the person knows what to learn from those characters in the play, but Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a play full of violent scenes, and even its main subject is "revenge", and if the reader does not know about types of violence and is not able to find them in the play, in real life people behave violently as the characters behaved in the story, thus confronting a problem using violence instead of solving the problem logically.

If the person knows about the different types of violence and is able to find them in the story, they can find the negative aspects of those characters in the story; therefore, the reader's behaviour would not be changed easily under the influence of the violent acts that the characters do in the story. Behavioural changes in men and women caused by imitating violent characters in the story manifest in men and women differently. A study by Im et al. showed that men were more likely to read violent stories, but women were more likely to be influenced by the stories they read. Im et al. suggested that men engage more indirect and physical aggression, and women engage more in indirect and relational aggression.

The more famous the story and the author are, the more people will read it and be influenced by the play. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a world-famous play that has many readers from all over the world, and if most of them are not familiar with the types of violence and are not able to recognize them, they will be affected by the scenes and violent acts of this play and increase various types of discrimination, poverty, etcetera in any society. As a result, being able to recognize the types of violence in the *Hamlet* play, which are described in Chapter 2, not only protects the reader and his family but also protects society from the negative effects of reading the violence and blindly imitating it. Participants' answers to the question asked about the effect of familiarity with the types of violence on their reaction to the violent story they read showed that familiarity with the types of violence caused their behavior in real life to change much less under the influence of the story.

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