

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study does not analyze all narrative elements of “Look at Your Game, Girl”. It focuses specifically on character and characterization, setting, and conflict. These elements are selected for their relevance in revealing the psychological trauma experienced by the protagonist. The theoretical framework guiding this research is the psychological theories on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Through these narrative elements, the study examines how trauma manifests in the character of Jessica, emphasizing the causes, symptoms, and impacts of PTSD as central to the narrative’s emotional and thematic depth.

2.1 Character and Characterization

In analyzing fictional characters, it is important to understand that their identity is shaped by more than just their actions. As Kennedy and Gioia state, “A character, then, is presumably an imagined person who inhabits a story” (1995:67). Understanding characters requires more than just observing their behavior; it involves analyzing the roles they play within the plot and how those roles drive the narrative. One such role is the protagonist, the central figure whose experiences and growth shape the story. Opposing this figure is the antagonist, who introduces resistance and conflict. As Kennedy and Gioia explain, “...antagonist, we want to see for ourselves the outcome of his defiance” (1995:9–10). Although briefly stated, this suggests that the antagonist plays a crucial part in creating narrative tension

through opposition. These character roles, supported by characterization techniques, are key to understanding how stories reflect human behavior and convey deeper meanings.

In examining character development more deeply, Kenney presents a helpful classification between simple and complex characters. He states, “The simple, or flat, character is less a representation of a full human personality and more the embodiment of a single attitude or obsession” (Kenney, 1984:28). He further explains, “The complex character is more lifelike than the simple character because people in real life are not merely embodiments of single attitudes” (Kenney, 1984:29). Kenney also emphasizes, “The mark of a complex character is that he is capable of surprising us” (1984:29). These distinctions are valuable for evaluating how realistically a character is portrayed. A simple character often serves a symbolic or supporting function within the plot, while a complex character tends to reflect human inconsistency and growth. By recognizing whether a character can act unexpectedly yet believably, readers are better able to assess the depth of that character’s construction and their significance in the story’s progression.

In addition to identifying character types, the technique of characterization is also crucial in understanding how fictional individuals are portrayed. Mays defines characterization as “the art and technique of representing fictional personages” (2018:215), emphasizing its role in shaping how readers perceive each character. She outlines two types, direct and indirect. As Mays explains, “Indirect

characterization or showing (as opposed to direct characterization or telling)” (2018:215) involves revealing traits through a character’s actions, dialogue, and relationships with others. These two types of characterization are especially useful in this analysis, as they help uncover how the protagonist’s personality and development are presented throughout the story.

2.2 Setting

In analyzing setting in fiction, every action in a story happens somewhere and sometime, and the narrative element that addresses this is setting. DiYanni defines setting as “the context of time and place” in which a story’s action occurs, emphasizing that it “does not occur in a vacuum” (1988:31). Setting includes not only the physical location and historical period of the narrative but also contributes to the emotional and symbolic dimensions of a story. In some works, it enhances the tone and deepens the conflict, while in others, it carries symbolic weight that reinforces the theme.

For this study, Kenney identifies several elements that make up a story’s setting. First, he explains that setting includes “the actual geographical location, including topography, scenery, even the details of a room’s interior” (Kenney, 1984:40), which helps connect the story to a realistic place. He also notes that setting involves “the occupations and modes of day-to-day existence of the characters” (Kenney, 1984:40), offering insight into how characters live and carry out their routines. In addition, Kenney states that setting refers to “the time in which

the action takes place, e.g., historical period, season of the year” (1984:40), placing the events within a clear time frame. Finally, he adds that setting includes “the religious, moral, intellectual, social, and emotional environment of the characters” (Kenney, 1984:40), which reflects the larger cultural and emotional background influencing the story.

2.3 Conflict

As a central element of storytelling, conflict determines the course of events and reveals the complexities of characters. Holman defines conflict as “the struggle which grows out of the interplay of the two opposing forces in a plot,” and it serves as a key element in creating interest and suspense in fiction (Holman, 1980:98). At least one of these forces is usually a person, often the protagonist, while the other may be another person, society, nature, or even an inanimate object treated as if it were alive. Conflicts can be broadly classified into internal and external types. Internal conflict occurs when the struggle takes place within a character, as in “a struggle for mastery by two elements within the person” (Holman, 1980:98). External conflict arises when the struggle is directed against an outside force, such as nature, another person (the antagonist), society as a force, or even fate or destiny. In many narratives, these categories may overlap, combining different types of struggles. Recognizing how conflict not only places the protagonist against an opposing force but also reflects a specific motivation or goal is essential for understanding how it shapes the plot’s structure and the character’s development.

2.4 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a psychological condition that emerges as a direct response to an individual's exposure to extreme trauma. Trauma is defined as "exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence," which may occur through direct experience, by witnessing the event, by learning that the event happened to someone close, or through repeated exposure to distressing details related to the event (APA, 2013:271). According to the American Psychiatric Association, PTSD is defined as "the development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor involving direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity" (2013:424). This definition emphasizes that PTSD is not triggered by ordinary stress, but rather by events that severely threaten a person's sense of safety and survival. The trauma can be experienced firsthand, witnessed, or even learned about if it involves close relations. The *DSM-5* further outlines specific symptom clusters, intrusion symptoms, avoidance symptoms, negative alterations in cognition and mood, and alterations in arousal and reactivity, that must persist for over a month and significantly impair daily functioning. This comprehensive diagnostic framework illustrates how PTSD is distinguished by its intensity, duration, and impact, highlighting the psychological aftermath that follows intense traumatic exposure. However, it is important to recognize that not every distressing or negative experience leads to

PTSD. Many individuals may go through fear or emotional discomfort without developing lasting psychological symptoms. PTSD only occurs when the traumatic response is intense, persistent, and significantly interferes with daily life.

2.4.1 Cause of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

The cause of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is distinct among psychological disorders because it requires a specific traumatic event, rather than being diagnosed solely on the basis of symptoms. According to DSM-5, the trauma must involve “actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence” in one or more of the following ways: “experiencing the event personally, witnessing the event in person, learning that a violent or accidental death or threat of death occurred to a close other, or experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the event(s) other than through media reports” (Davison et al., 2014:214). Research shows that the severity and the type of trauma strongly influence the likelihood of developing PTSD, with “traumas caused by humans” more likely to cause PTSD than natural disasters (Davison et al., 2014:218). This means that interpersonal violence such as rape, assault, or combat often results in higher PTSD risk than natural events like earthquakes or floods, partly because such experiences challenge fundamental beliefs about human safety and trust.

2.4.1.1 Actual or Threatened Death

One cause of PTSD is exposure to “actual or threatened death” (Davison et al., 2014:214). Davison et al. explain that “the severity of the trauma influences

whether or not a person will develop PTSD” (2014:217), with more extreme life-threatening events creating greater vulnerability. Such situations can overwhelm an individual’s coping resources, producing intense fear, helplessness, and horror that may lead to the onset of persistent post-trauma symptoms. Over time, these symptoms can disrupt emotional stability, reduce a person’s ability to function in daily life, and heighten the risk of long-term psychological impairment.

2.4.1.2 Serious Injury or Sexual Violence

PTSD can also result from exposure to “serious injury or sexual violence” (Davison et al., 2014:214). Davison et al. note that “traumas caused by humans are more likely to cause PTSD than are natural disasters” (2014:218), and identify rape as the most common trauma preceding PTSD in women, with a significant proportion developing the disorder afterward (2014:214). These forms of interpersonal violence often cause both physical harm and deep psychological wounds, undermining fundamental feelings of safety and trust. The violation of bodily integrity and the betrayal involved can intensify emotional distress, increasing the likelihood of chronic trauma responses.

2.4.2 Symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a psychological response that may develop after exposure to traumatic events such as threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence. According to Davison et al. state “In the *DSM-5*, the symptoms for PTSD are grouped into four major categories” (Davison et al.,

2014:214). These four categories are intrusion symptoms, avoidance symptoms, negative alterations in cognition and mood, and alterations in arousal and reactivity.

2.4.2.1 Intrusion Symptoms

Intrusion symptoms, which involve repeated and involuntary recollection of the trauma. As noted, “Recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive distressing memories of the trauma, or in children, repetitive play regarding the trauma themes,” may occur (Davison et al., 2014:214). These symptoms may also include “recurrent distressing dreams related to the event(s),” “dissociative reactions (e.g., flashbacks),” and “intense or prolonged distress or physiological reactivity in response to reminders of the trauma(s)” (Davison et al., 2014:214). These terms describe the ways in which traumatic memories forcefully return into the individual’s awareness, often without warning or control. Flashbacks, for instance, can cause the person to relive the event as if it were happening again, while nightmares and physiological reactions (such as rapid heartbeat or sweating) show how the body and mind remain hyperresponsive to trauma-related cues.

2.4.2.2 Avoidance Symptoms

Avoidance symptoms, which reflect the individual’s effort to suppress reminders of the traumatic event. Davison et al. state, “Avoids internal reminders of the trauma(s)” and “Avoids external reminders of the trauma(s)” (Davison et al., 2014:214), which could include avoiding thoughts, conversations, people, or places associated with the trauma. These symptoms illustrate a psychological defense

mechanism where the individual attempts to protect themselves from emotional pain by steering clear of anything that might trigger distressing memories. Internal avoidance refers to efforts to block out feelings or thoughts, while external avoidance involves staying away from situations or environments that symbolically or literally resemble the trauma.

2.4.2.3 Negative Alterations in Cognition and Mood

Negative alterations in cognition and mood, which involve persistent changes in thoughts and emotional functioning. These may include an “inability to remember an important aspect of the trauma(s),” “persistently negative emotional state,” “markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities,” and a “persistent inability to experience positive emotions” (Davison et al., 2014:214). These symptoms reflect the deep psychological impact of trauma, often manifesting as emotional numbness, guilt, self-blame, or a bleak outlook on life. Memory gaps may result from dissociative processes, while the inability to feel joy or maintain interest in previously meaningful activities indicates a disruption in the individual’s emotional engagement with the world.

2.4.2.4 Alterations in Arousal and Reactivity

Alterations in arousal and reactivity, which as heightened physiological and behavioral responses. As cited by Davison et al., include: “irritable or aggressive behavior,” “reckless or self-destructive behavior,” “hypervigilance,” “exaggerated startle response,” “problems with concentration,” and “sleep disturbance” (Davison

et al., 2014:214). These symptoms indicate a state of chronic alertness in which the individual remains tense, easily triggered, and unable to relax. The nervous system is essentially stuck in a survival mode, leading to overreactions to minor stimuli, difficulty focusing, and disrupted sleep patterns. This state of hyperarousal reflects the body's ongoing perception of threat, even in the absence of real danger.

2.4.3 Impacts of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has a significant impact on a person's ability to function in daily life. As clearly stated in the American Psychiatric Association, "The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning" (APA, 2013:272). This means that PTSD is not limited to internal emotional suffering but also disrupts practical aspects of living. The DSM-5 outlines three main areas where this impairment may occur:

2.4.3.1 Significant Distress or Impairment in Social Functioning

PTSD frequently causes individuals to withdraw from interpersonal relationships. Davison et al. note that people with PTSD may show "feeling of detachment or estrangement from others" and "markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities" (2014:216). This withdrawal is often a coping mechanism to avoid potential triggers or emotional vulnerability, but it leads to isolation and a loss of social support networks. Over time, diminished social

interaction can worsen feelings of loneliness, distrust, and emotional numbing, further reinforcing the cycle of avoidance.

2.4.3.2 Significant Distress or Impairment in Occupational Functioning

The symptoms of PTSD, including “problems with concentration,” “sleep disturbance,” and “hypervigilance” (Davison et al., 2014:216), directly hinder an individual’s ability to perform consistently at work or in academic settings. Sleep disruption leads to fatigue and reduced alertness, while concentration problems impair decision-making and task completion. In jobs requiring sustained focus or interpersonal interaction, these symptoms can result in reduced productivity, strained workplace relationships, or even job loss. The resulting financial stress can further exacerbate PTSD symptoms.

2.4.3.3 Significant Distress or Impairment in Other Important Areas of Functioning

Beyond social and occupational roles, PTSD can interfere with many aspects of daily life, including education, parenting, and community involvement. As Davison et al. explain, people with PTSD may experience “markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities” (2014:216) and an “inability to experience positive emotions” (2014:216), which reduce motivation to engage in hobbies, volunteer work, or public events. This loss of engagement not only limits opportunities for recovery and personal growth but also reinforces a sense of disconnection from society, reducing overall quality of life.