



IDENTITY CRISIS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY YEMENI FICTION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF ZAYD MUTEE DAMMAJ'S *THE HOSTAGE*

Abdullah Hassan Shoui Gassim¹, Riyad Abdurahman Manqoush, Ph.D.²

¹Master Student, English Language Department, College of Arts and Languages, Seiyun University, Yemen.

²Professor of English Literature, English Language Department, College of Arts and Languages, Seiyun University, Yemen.

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the depictions of identity crisis in one of the well-known Yemeni novels i.e. Zayd Mutee Dammaj's *The Hostage* (1984). The study is an attempt to uncover the reasons behind that kind of crisis in the novel, which reflects the Yemeni internal conflict at that time. The research methodology is a qualitative analytical one and its theoretical framework has been appropriated based on Erikson's Psychological Stages of Human Development Theory and Silitonga's and Ambarita's features of identity crisis frame the analysis. The paper has been constructed in six sections: In addition to this introductory section, the second one provides a background about Yemeni fiction and Dammaj and his novel, *The Hostage*. The third is a literature review where some previous studies are discussed. The fourth provides the theoretical framework of the study. The fifth highlights the discussions and analysis in detail. And finally, the sixth section exposes the conclusion of the research paper. The paper concludes that identity crisis is portrayed in the novel through the character of the protagonist who undergoes crisis in identity as characterized by role confusion, isolation and irritation feelings, self-hatred and feeling of powerlessness. On the same issue, three reasons are figured out as causes of identity crisis. They are puberty reaching, degrading or humiliation as well as the bad mistreatment.

KEY WORDS: Identity crisis, Zayd Dammaj, *The Hostage*, Human development stages.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the depictions of identity crisis in one of the well-known Yemeni novels i.e. Zayd Mutee Dammaj's *The Hostage* (1984) which is originally named *Al-Raheenah* in Arabic. Anyhow, from now on, it will be referred to as *The Hostage*. In other words, we will use its English translated name. In fact, the study is an attempt to uncover the reasons behind that kind of crisis in the novel, which reflects the Yemeni internal conflict at that time. The research methodology is a qualitative analytical one and its theoretical framework has been appropriated based on Erikson's Psychological Stages of Human Development Theory and Silitonga's and Ambarita's features of identity crisis frame the analysis. The paper has been constructed in six sections: In addition to this introductory section, the second one provides a background about Yemeni fiction and Dammaj and his novel, *The Hostage*. The third is a literature review where some previous studies are discussed. The fourth provides the theoretical framework of the study. The fifth highlights the discussions and analysis in detail. And finally, the sixth section exposes the conclusion of the research paper.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This section provides a background about Yemeni fiction, a biography of the author, Zayd Mutee Dammaj, and finally, it ends up with a synopsis of the novel selected for the analysis i.e. Dammaj's *The Hostage*.

A. Yemeni Fiction

Yemeni fiction refers to the literary works such as short stories, novellas and novels which are written by Yemenis at any period of time. According to Yahya Al-Wadhaf & Noritah Omar (2007), the emergence of the Yemeni fiction was after the postcolonial period, particularly in the late of the 20th century and after the Yemeni revolution that took place in 1962 (p. 1). Similarly, Radhwan Rashed (2021) ascribes this lateness to the fact that modernism came late to Yemen if compared to other Arab countries due to the isolation policy implemented by the Imam regime and that is why the Yemeni novel was prone to a somber exclusion inside the country and outside and within the national, Arabic and world literature (p. 37).

As for publishing the first Yemeni novel, Rashad Al-Areqi (2015) argues that critics and scholars differ in specifying the real beginning of the Yemeni narrative. While some critics think that Ahmad Abdullah Al-Saqqaf (1882-1950) has the priority in Yemeni narrative by his novel *Fatat Qaroot* (1927) i.e., *Qaroot's Girl*, others bet that Ali Luqman's *Saeed* in 1939 was the first novel (Al-Areqi, 2015, p. 103). Considering the time, the two literary works were written, it is obvious that Al-Saqqaf's novel is the first since it was written in 1927, about twelve years before Luqman's. However, some critics think that Al-Saqqaf's *Fatat Qaroot* was written in Indonesia, but that does not deprive it from the priority since the writer is Yemeni and moreover the novel discusses Yemeni



issues. Al-Areqi (2015) points out that the outset of the Yemeni novel is marked with historical, national, romantic and Islamic themes (p.104).

Referring to Al-Saqqaf and Luqman as the first Yemeni generation of novelists, Al-Areqi (2015) continued to name the second generation represented by Zayd Mutee Dammaj, Mohammed Abdulwali, Saeed Awlaqi, Saleh Ba Amer, and Yahya Ali Al Aryani (p. 104). The third generation, according to Al-Areqi (2015), includes contemporary novelists such as Habib Abdelrab Sururi, Wajdi Al Ahdel, Nabila Al Zubaire, Abdelnaser Mujali, Mohammed Abdelwaqeeel Jazem, Nadia Al Qawqabani, Ahamad Zain, Ali Al Muqri, and others (p. 104).

Like Dammaj, Mohammed Abdulwali is more a short story writer than a novelist. However, he is famous for his novel, *They Die Strangers* (1971) which has been translated into other languages and *Sana'a, an Open City* (1977). Among the other renowned Yemeni publications, Ali Al Muqri's novels which have been translated into English and French: *Hormah* (2012) i.e. *A Woman*, *Bakhoor Adani* (2014) i.e., *Adani Incense*, *Taam Aswad*, *Raehah Swada* (2008) i.e. *Black Taste*, *Black Odor*, and *Al-Yahwdi Al-Hali* (2009) i.e. *The Handsome Jew*. Nadia Al Qawqabani also wrote *Soug Ali Mohsen* (2016) i.e. *Ali Mohsen's Market* and *Sana'ai* (2013) i.e. *My Sana'a*. Besides, Mohammad Al-Gharbi Omran wrote *Mas-haf Ahmar* (2010) i.e., *Red Mas-haf*.

Besides, Al-Areqi (2015) considers the remarkable transition of the second generation of Yemeni novelists represented in taking the novel out of the traditional scope and to work on the text to enrich textuality and technicality (p.104). Within the same context, Redhwan Rashed (2021) considers Mohammed Abdulwali as the pioneer who declared the commencement of the Yemeni short story. For Rashed (2021), the second major writer is Dammaj and his work *The Hostage* makes him eternal. Moreover, Rashed continues to name a collection of Yemeni authors such as Dammaj, Al-Muqri, Habib Abdelrab Sururi, Sameer Abdul Fatah, Wajdi Al Ahdel, Al-Gharbi Omran, and others who form what might be known as the new generation of Yemeni novelists. Their narratives adhere to and reflect the artistic element of novel in its contemporary sense (p. 37).

b. Zayd Mutee Dammaj

Abdulrahman Hezam (2018) states that Zayd Mutee Dammaj (1943-2000) is a Yemeni author, a politician, and a diplomat who comes from a famous revolutionary family (p. 134). Al-Areqi (2015) confirms that, the father, Mutee was born in Al Sayyanni district, Ibb governorate. He was one of those people who strongly objected the Imamate rule (p. 102). Granted, to oppose the Imamate rule means to put yourself in trouble. This can be seen in Al-Areqi (2015)'s where he adds that Mutee was taken to prison by reason of his bold attitudes and acts against the oppression, corruption and mistreatment of Imamate to the people. Managed to escape from prison, Mutee headed to Aden to start a new life there and to set up a new period of struggle against Imamate rule using his political articles that were issued in a magazine called, *Al-Jazeera Girl* (p. 102).

Running away from the narrow circle represented by Imamate rule to the open space characterized in Aden the city, Mutee aimed to make his opposition more effective utilizing all means available at the time. Al-Areqi (2015) adds that in order to enhance the revolutionary work, Mutee, with the frequent assistance of his fellows, succeeded to develop his ways of struggle to found a party named, *Al-Ahrar*. Furthermore, he fetched some historical, political and literary books from Aden that formed the vision of the son, Zayd, who later joined a primary school in Taiz called *Al Ahmadiyah School* from which he graduated in 1957. Thereafter, Zayd travelled to Egypt to pursue his secondary school education (p.102).

Tracing Zayd's life abroad, Nubarak Altwaiji and Mona Telha (2020) state that in the beginning Zayd meant to study law in Cairo. His journey with law did not come to the end because he changed his major and joined Faculty of Arts instead of Faculty of Law when he noticed a decline in his skills related to literature. Zayd's first writings appeared in the *New Yemen Magazine*. Seemingly, he returned to Yemen to take part in the revolution before getting a degree and that was in response to his father's request (p. 320). It turns out that Zayd was interested in literature since he was a student and he practiced literary writing as he was a student too. However, the situation of the country forced him to return home before completing his study.

In all his life, Dammaj has written collections of short stories as well as the novel under investigation. However, Altwaiji & Telha (2020) claim that he has written other novels such as *Al-Inbihar wa Al-Dahshah* (2000) i.e. *The Amazement and the Astonishment*, *Al-Aqrab* (1982) i.e. *The Scorpion*, *Ahzan Al-Bint Mayyasa* (1990) i.e. *The Sorrows of the Girl Mayyasa* (p.321). Unlike Altwaiji and Telha, Abdulaziz Al-Magalah (n,d) provides another view in the excerpt below:

Zayd Dammaj came to the novel from the door of the short stories. After he had written two short stories collections out of five which are *Tahish Alhoban*, *Al-Aqrab*, *Aljessr*, *Ahzan al-bint Mayyasa*, and *Al-Madfa Al-Asfar*, he had died before he finished his second novel which is until now remains unpublished and unfinished. (Al-Magalah, n,d, p.16).

It is obvious that Al-Magalah doesn't mention any other novels written by Dammaj except the unnamed one that is still unfinished and this assures the prominent belief that *The Hostage* is the only novel published by Dammaj. Another proof in favor of this belief is what Al-Magalah states that Zayd came to the novel from the door of the short stories. Consequently, Zayd's literary production



made him more a story writer than a novelist. Even though, Dammaj has written collections of short stories as well as the one published novel only, *The Hostage* (1984), which is considered one of the most famous Yemeni novels. According to Ali Al-Subari (2017), *The Hostage* was selected as one of the greatest Arabic novels of the twentieth century (p. 10262).

c. Dammaj's *The Hostage*

The Hostage centers on a nameless character who is repeatedly addressed by his nickname that only reveals his profession, the duwydar. Duwydar, as defined by the author of the novel, is "an intuitive boy who is used to work in the palaces' of princes and governors" (Dammaj, 1984, p. 3). The duwydar is taken as a boy by force by Imam's soldiers because his father and members of his family are against Imam's regime. The duwydar lives a part of his life in the hostages' castle where he learns to read and write together with learning some religious principles. He is taken again from the castle to the palace of vice-Imam to work as a duwydar. In the palace, he meets another duwydar named Obadi and become friends. Duwydars should always obey and should not reject or mutiny. However, the duwydar is seen as a rebel in some situations and thereupon he is severely punished. Later, after being the duwydar of Sharifah Hafsa, vice-Imam's youngest and pampered sister, he is taken to work in vice-Imam's sitting room, though it is not a job for the duwydar, but for servants. The duwydar is bullied, hurt, and bothered by Sharifah Hafsa, the guards, and some members of Imam's family throughout his life in the palace and therefore he plans to run away.

Altwayji & Telha (2020) confirms that *The Hostage* is a real enrichment to the Yemeni culture and literature. It remained active in shaping the domestic identity (p.317). Al-Subari (2017) elucidates that *The Hostage* portrays the miseries of a boy that is kidnapped by force and taken as a hostage by reason of his family members' revolutionary actions. He is made to work as a duwydar in vice-Imam's palace. It also exposes the life-threatening events of North Yemen during the late 1940's (p.10263). Obviously, Imams used to take sons of tribal people as hostages to guarantee their loyalty and oblige them to obey imamate rule. Al-Areqi (2015) argues that it is very easy for Imam to enforce his family and his tribe to obey and respond to his demands and to stop both struggling and leading the ordinary people to revolt and act against Imam's rule and consequently to reduce the dangers of rebellion of their parents and their tribes. This is on the one hand, and on the other, it would be very easy to control the hostage who still does not reach puberty and reconstruct his identity according to the concepts of the imamate rule (pp. 102-105).

The hostage in the novel who became a duwydar is the main character and from the first day he got to the palace, another more obedient and active duwydar named Obadi who was frequently addressed by guards at the gate as the handsome or sweet duwydar, made his acquaintance and they became close friends. Obadi has been in the palace for a long time and was familiar with everyone and everything inside the palace. They shared the same room and same concerns. Unlike Obadi who appears more obedient and willing to perform any tasks given to him by the people in the palace, the new duwydar looks rebellious and hard to guide. Obadi introduced the new duwydar to everyone in the palace including Sharifah Hafsa to whom the latter was passionately attracted and whom he also served. In an occasion, he did not meet her command and therefore she found it necessary to chain him. The new duwydar together with the old one, Obadi, suffered a lot in the palace. Besides being forced to serve in the palace, they missed their mothers and families and that is depicted in the guards' frequent chant whenever they see Obadi saying: "*O Duwydar! your mother is missing you! Her tears are pouring down just like rains*" (Dammaj, 1984, p. 19).

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Even though some researchers have started lately to pay attention to Dammaj's works, their scholarly works are still insufficient if compared to other Arabic literary works.

Al-Areqi (2015) attempts to "go through reconstructing the identity of a hostage who was still young and reshaping his identity" (p. 102). The researcher uses the qualitative descriptive design and concludes that people in vice-imam's palace work to ignore the hostages' identities by giving them other names that do not reflect their identities. Those names just show their professions, submission, and suppression. The people in vice-imam's palace exploit hostages' innocence since they are too young to realize the good out of the bad behaviors (p. 110).

By the same token, Al-Subari (2017) analyzes the anguish and the bad circumstances of the Yemenis throughout the rule of Imam Yahya and Imam Ahmed as depicted in *The Hostage* (p.10262). Al-Subari (2017) discusses three aims: The first is to expose the unjust corrupt political regime which exploits citizens to consolidate the foundations of this regime. The second aim is to show the deep wickedness of the regime in suppressing people and restricting their freedom. The third is to depict the historical facts before independence and their impacts on Yemenis until today (p. 10262). In analysis of the story, Al-Subari appropriates the descriptive design namely content analysis concluding that Imam "used all means to suppress the opposition movement against him, including the use of violence and hostage-taking, which exceeded hundreds of opposition movement members in all parts of Yemen, including some scholars, tribal elders, military officers, traders, and civilians" (p. 10269). Apparently, Imam was a dictator who worked hard just to make Yemenis subjugate and follow him even though they are not happy with his regime. In addition, Al-Subari (2017) comes to another conclusion that in spite of the national revolution at the end of the novel, Yemenis of today still face the same



situations of the pre-independence time. The war, the conflict, and the inequality and discrimination as well as the violence are all extensions to the period of Imam's rule (p. 10269).

Likewise, Abdulrahman Mokbel Hezam (2018) investigates and compares the concept of history used by the writer in the novel, the concept of traditional approach and the concept of new historicism. Hazem (2018) elucidates:

The natural integration of history and fiction makes Dammaj a natural historian, extracting and presenting a single kernel of meaning. With his narrative art, he is trying to manipulate a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity. The novel is an attempt by the present in the form of fiction to give a meaning to the past in the form of history (p. 133).

Based on the quotation above, the novelist, Dammaj, succeeded to process the fiction, time very well. He has managed to give his novel a broad extension in terms of time to cover the past, the present and the future, and subsequently to saturate his novel with timelessness.

Hazem (2018) applies the analytical approach and finally sums up that "Dammaj was able to use a new approach to history which was his own and which put him closer to new historicism of European decent. The novel, *The Hostage* is not mere history, it is not mere fiction" (pp. 133-134). Focusing on the quotation above, Hazem claims that, in *The Hostage*, Dammaj managed to create a new narrating technique that mixes both history and fiction which reflects the true vision of ordinary life that the Yemenis lead.

Mubarak Altwaiji & Mona Telha (2020) study *The Hostage* from a different angle. In their journal article, they investigate both the growth of Yemeni novel and the depiction of the major social and economic issues in early Yemeni novel between the 1970s-1980s. Altwaiji and Telha (2020) considered *The Hostage* as the first Yemeni Novel that has unflinching determination and frankness in representing injustices and miseries in the society (p. 320). Using the descriptive qualitative approach and via content analysis, Altwaiji and Telha (2020) conclude that the novel in Yemen is a new art that comes to existence as a result of Yemeni students' interaction abroad. Moreover, since its emergence, the Yemeni novel addressed many different issues with a main focus on the political and social issues. Furthermore, in *The Hostage* other norms and practices, apart from the Imam's regime, are blamed and criticized such as social traditions, peoples' subjugation and their belief in the eternity of the regime (p. 323).

Based on the reviews in the previous section, it can be clearly seen that most of the literature review about *The Hostage* addressed other themes such as history, harsh times, corruption, poverty, subjugation and political issues. Even though Al-Areqi's paper dealt with the theme of identity, it addressed identity from a completely different angle. In other words, it discussed reconstructing the identity of the hostages who are still young and not mature enough to maintain their original identities. In contrast, the current paper is different in term of addressing identity crisis, examining the reasons that led to identity crisis, and discussing the forms of identity crisis and the impact of identity crisis on the people's sense of belonging in Dammaj's *The Hostage*. Consequently, the novelty of current paper arises from the fact that it could be the first one to center on identity crisis in Dammaj's *The Hostage*.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

James Marcia (1980) relates identity "to an existential position, to an inner organization of needs, abilities, and self-perceptions as well as to a sociopolitical stance" (p.109). That means identity is within an individual's personality that appears in the ways he deals with things, activities, problems and controlling his time. In addition to that, Erikson (1968) defines identity crisis as a conflict or a necessary turning point that takes place during adolescence and when development should go on one way or another (p.15). By the same token, Andi Silitonga and Ismaniar Ambarita (2020) confirm that identity crisis is the state when humans feel that they are without a value in their societies. They, instead, feel confused and doubtful about themselves under any conditions and feel unable to evaluate themselves, and unsure of their features and distinctives as a human being (p. 3).

Mahendra Ananda (2022) states that literary criticism is a field of literature that involves theories which might frame the analyses of any literary work. Psychological approach is a branch that comes under the big umbrella of literary criticism. Included within the category of psychological approach, psychosocial development or social psychology theory is a significant approach that considers both the psyche and the society (p. 13). Christopher Bishop (2013) confirms that Erik Homburgur Erikson is the pioneer of the Theory of the Psychosocial Development (p. 1). Moreover, Rahma Larrissa (2009) assures that Erikson is the most effective writer about identity development during the past decades (p.8). The Theory of Identity Development is an extension or a development of Freud's ego psychology. Schultz Duane & Schultz Sydney (2017) allege that Erikson focused on personality development over the whole life. His theory covers all the life through eight stages that begin from birth and last until death (p. 157).

Erikson (1994) considers identity as a collection of distinguishing features result in social interactions (p. 109). After all, he comes up with the concept "ego identity" which is referred to as a "constant sense of sameness within oneself selfsameness and the ability to communicate with and give meaning to others in one's immediate community in a genuine way" (p. 94). In other words, and simply put, ego identity is a self-image of how an individual thinks of him/herself and how he/she sees him/herself in the eyes of



others. It might involve maintaining the rules, principles, and morals learned as a child throughout the life without being broken or conflicted with new rules or principles at any period of time.

In his psychosocial theory, Erikson (1993) explained the eight psychosocial stages of personality growth which are in turns, "Basic trust vs. Basic mistrust, Autonomy vs. Shame, Initiative vs. Guilt, Industry vs. Inferiority, Identity vs. Role Confusion, Intimacy vs. Isolation, Generativity vs. stagnation and Ego Integrity vs. Despair" (pp. 247-269). Saul McLeod (2018) assures that each stage involves a dual outcome that might be positive or negative and the outcome depend on dealing with each period either positively or negatively (p. 1). The main focus of this paper is on stage five, identity versus role confusion for the reason that this stage occurs during adolescence at the age between twelve and eighteen. Thereupon, the character to be analyzed in the novel, the duwydar is between the age of twelve and eighteen.

As stated before, this stage takes place during the age of adolescence between twelve and eighteen years old. Saul McLeod (2018) describes this period as the most significant period of development when the child should learn the roles he will perform later as an adult (p. 7). Erikson (1993) states that "adolescents in their search for a new sense of continuity and sameness have to re-fight many of their battles of earlier years" (p. 261). That means at this stage adolescents filter what they learned earlier and what they are learning at present to come to a solid and meaningful self-image. In the same context, McLeod (2018) explains that during this stage the adolescent does new explorations and re-examines his identity in order to find out exactly who he is. The re-examination includes many quests for a sense of self and personal identity by a deep exploration of personal morals, beliefs, principles and goals (pp. 6-7). In addition to McLeod, Cindy Octavia (2021) elucidates that young people who fail to find answers to questions of who they are might face identity crisis and will experience role confusion which may result in their inability to settle on one identity and will be greatly confused. In addition, they will not be able to adapt well in their society (p.15). Adolescence period is the time of age that witnesses the shift from childhood to adulthood. This shift is crucial and decisive. Children at this period start to be independent and begin to look at the future in consideration of career, relationships, peers, and families. Admittedly, anyone needs to fit in a society and feels that he is appreciated, estimated and considered as an important part in it. Nur Aulia Saftiri (2021) assures that the fifth stage is the time of age when a person raises many questions about himself such as, "Who am I?" or "What do I like about it?" in order to come up with a common identity, a consciousness of distinctive features, and what is really of fundamental significance to him. If someone is uncertain about who he is and what he does in life, he then is said to have an identity crisis (p. 13). Erikson (1993) further adds that to some extent "adolescent love is an attempt to arrive at a definition of one's identity by posing one's diffused ego image on the other" (p. 262). Apparently, adolescents just in need to examine being attractive or to have a true reflection of their images by finding the one to speak to openly and thereupon Erikson describes adolescence love as conversation. Erikson (1993) notes that adolescents are clannish and cruel as they exclude those who are different in color of skin, cultural background, tastes, and clothes (p. 262).

In their journal article, Andi Silitonga and Ismaniar Ambarita (2020) explain the characteristics of identity crisis which are role confusion, feeling isolated, and doubtful (p. 31). Role confusion is previously clarified and feeling isolated, according to Silitonga and Ambarita (2020), occurs as a result of being afraid of rejections such as being turned down, breaking up or ending relationships. Being doubtful involves a kind of uncertainty about one's self and then the inability to create a comfortable life inside and outside the one's life (p. 31). Additionally, Saftiri (2021) puts more specific characteristics for those who experience identity crisis such as irritability, self-hatred, self-harm, feeling of uselessness and powerlessness (p. 15). Silitonga and Ambarita (2020) attribute identity crisis to individual's psychology, adolescence, parental values and treatment of their children, and bad experience in life such as divorce and breaking up relationships (p. 32). Within the same context, Silitonga and Ambarita (2020) people who experience identity crisis always feel and think they are useless in this world and do not deserve any opportunities. They have less confident having no more trust in themselves and confused. They do not know the next step in their life. They become alienated because of the bad treatment of the society or people around them (p. 32).

5. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The Hostage revolves around a boy who is taken as a hostage to the castle, where hostages are kept, and later he is taken to work in Vice-Imam's palace as a duwydar – a local word derived originally from Turkish and it mean. Hostage-taking was common during Imamate Rule to guarantee loyalty of tribes. The boy is nameless and is frequently addressed as the duwydar. In the Vice-Imam's palace, the duwydar is made to work as a machine and treated badly. As a result, he often thinks of running away.

Role confusion is the frequent feature of identity crisis. Erikson (1993) states that role confusion, in most cases, is the failure to keep doing a career (p.262). During the stage of role confusion, it becomes difficult to make choices. Throughout the novel, the duwydar appears professionally confused and he is not fully aware of his decisions. Starting from the hostages' castle, he does not seem to know the meaning of duwydar and his tasks. This can be seen in the novel when he confesses that: "The thing that I did not know was the meaning of duwydar and his work. I was not aware of any explanations about it. That might be because of my younger age" (Dammaj, 1984, p. 4). this coincides with another scene in which the duwydar appears unaware of his place of residence as



well as his familial position or social standing (Dammaj, 1984, p. 26). Therefore, he has even no answers to the soldiers' questions (Dammaj, 1984, p. 26). This means that he undergoes the stage of role confusion. According to Safitiri (2021), when someone is unsure about who he is and what he does in life, he is passing through an identity crisis (p. 13).

Likewise, the Vice-Imam asked the duwydar about his age and to his surprise that the latter did not really know. Realizing that fathers sometimes write down birth dates of their sons in the *Quran*, the Vice-Imam asked whether the duwydar's father did so, but the duwydar replied that *Fagiah*s (i.e. the Sheik of the mosque) only did that for their sons and his family only cares for the date or time for agriculture (Dammaj, 1984, p. 28). Furthermore, in a couple of dialogues with duwydar Obadi, the duwydar seems to look at himself disrespectfully through the eyes of others in the palace. For instance, when they visit the stable of animals and they do not see many animals, the duwydar is surprised and Obadi said that the horses are taken to Imam's and crown prince's palaces and only mules and donkeys left. The duwydar wonders that he cannot see any donkeys. Obadi unexpectedly answers that they are the donkeys meaning himself i.e. the duwydar and other members who share the same profession or who are submissive (Dammaj, 1984, pp.9-10). Based on the above discussions, it can be concluded that the duwydar passes through role confusion. He does not realize the meaning of duwydar and the duties that duwydars do. Moreover, he has no idea about his date of birth, his place of residence and has no clue of his relatives. He keeps looking at himself in the eyes of others considering himself with no value.

Feeling isolated is another feature of identity crisis and it is mirrored in the novel. According to Silitonga and Ambarita (2020), isolation feeling occurs as a result of being frightened of refusals such as being refused to initiate a relationship, breaking up or ending relationships (p. 31). In the novel, there are occasions where the duwydar appears suffering from isolation. For example, he has only one friend, duwydar Obadi, with whom he shares the room as well as the bad moments and the good ones. He also avoids sitting with the soldiers at the gate since they mock at him once they ask him about his family and he does not give a good reply. This has been reflected in the story when he said: "I headed as usual, with caution, to the frequent place of the soldiers at the main gate ... and I sat in a bit far corner distant from their irony and cynical chant" (Dammaj, 1984, p. 35). Besides, he feels sick and tired of staying all the time in the palace so he requests his friend, duwydar Obadi, for coming out to the market and streets of the city to smell fresh air and see people (Dammaj, 1984, p. 39).

Silitonga and Ambarita (2020) claim that feeling isolated arises as an outcome of being afraid of rejections such as being refused to make a relationship, breaking up or ending relationships (p. 31). The duwydar is unable to admit his love to Sharifah Hafsa, though he is fascinated and completely obsessed by her. Seemingly, this inability comes out from an inner belief that he would be rejected (Dammaj, 1984, p. 125). Silitonga and Ambarita (2020) consider being doubtful as a feature of identity crisis. It involves being uncertain and unable to make a comfortable feeling inside and outside one's life (p. 31). Throughout the novel, the duwydar appears unsure and hesitant. He seems to have a doubt when Sharifah Hafsa chooses him to be her duwydar. He has a doubt and is thinking about reasons behind choosing him. This kind of doubt is said to be a symptom of identity crisis (Dammaj, 1984, p. 30).

Feeling irritable is a trait of identity crisis. Defined by Fernanda Krieger et al. (2013), irritability means a low outset to face anger as a result of frustration and it is a frequent feature of adolescents (p. 1). The duwydar, in the novel, looks irritable when conversing with his companion, Obadi, and with Sharifah Hafsa as well. When he wants to go out to the market to smell fresh air and perhaps meet a relative of a person from his village to ask about his family, the conversation ends with a tension that makes them both stop talking to each other for a couple of days. Obadi's words unintentionally irritate the duwydar and makes him mock his friend, Obadi, using the same words which the guards and soldiers at the gate always use to harsh him with. Obadi seems to be offended to hear them addressing him as the "sweet duwydar" (Dammaj, 1984, p. 40). Even with Sharifah Hafsa, the duwydar speaks sharply from the first conversation between them to get acquainted to each other. He gives inadequate and ambiguous answers (Dammaj, 1984, p. 36).

Safitiri (2021) adds that self-hatred, self-harm, and feeling powerless are also a features of identity crisis (p. 15). In addition to that, self-hatred involves people comparing each other with a main focus on the negatives and thinking that they will never be as good as those compared ones (Safitiri, 2021, p. 15). For instance, in the novel, the duwydar does not hate his look but he is teased with some descriptions. He does not hate it when people call him duwydar but he does not like it when people call him "handsome or sweet duwydar" (Dammaj, 1984, p. 40).

According to Lesley Maunder and Lorna Cameron (2023), the self-harm is when a person harms his or her body but with no intention to die and those who self-harm might feel distressed a lot and they are very sensitive and do not accept rejections (p. 6). In the novel, the duwydar is chained because he does not follow what Sharifah Hafsa orders him to do. He does not protect his legs from the friction of the iron shackle by putting a cloth to isolate his legs from the friction of iron with his legs in order not to make wounds. Instead, he leaves his legs to the friction of the shackle which makes both deep wounds in the legs and a lot of noise. Sharifah Hafsa blames him for doing so and he indifferently listens but seems not to care (Dammaj, 1984, p. 56).



Safitiri (2021) argues that powerlessness means the absence of strength or power (p. 16). It can involve the feeling of lack of influence and hence the person finds no meaning or significance in his life. For instance, the in the novel, duwydars are more likely to have this feeling since their duty requires being puppets that just listen and obey. Opposed to Obadi, who is more obedient, the duwydar looks somewhat a rebel. However, in many occasions, he appears to be powerlessly subjective as quoted below:

In the yard, when we stood, I tried to ask her ... to ask her about the reason behind imprisoning and tying me ... to ask her about the reason of my love to her ... about her affection and interest in me ... and her adventure to take me with my shackle to this yard? But I did not have the nerve ... I just followed her steps after that as a dog obedient to his owner ... or maybe as an astray dog ... (Dammaj, 1984, p. 56).

In his complete obedience, he describes himself as a dog that willingly and blindly follows his owner or as a lost dog that follows anyone keenly just to find the way.

To conclude, there are many characteristics of identity crisis the duwydar is figured out with. He looks role confused, isolated, doubtful, and irritable. He also hates himself and intends to harm himself directly or indirectly. Furthermore, he appears with the feeling of powerlessness. Accordingly, these features are direct signs of identity loss.

Silitonga and Ambarita (2020) consider adolescence as a cause of identity crisis (p. 32). Naturally, an adolescent is between twelve and eighteen years old. Accordingly, the duwydar reaches puberty since he is within this age range. This can be assured by his answer to vice-Imam's question. After hitting the pampered boy at the palace of the crown prince and his unsuccessful attempt to escape, the duwydar comes back to the palace late with Sharifah Hafsa and vice-Imam beckons him to ask him what exactly happened. The duwydar admits that he is an adolescent, however, vice-Imam does not believe that thinking that the duwydar is only pretending (Dammaj, 1984, p. 111). Again, the duwydar confesses that he reaches puberty describing the situation when he prefers staying in Obadi's room to staying in Sharifah Hafsa's palace. This has been embodied in this quotation: "I took my decision to return to my companion's room in order to save my face and to show my pride and self- dignity that Sharifah Hafsa received with a sense of thoroughly knowing the self of adolescence" (Dammaj, 1984, p. 58).

Silitonga and Ambarita (2020) attribute identity crisis to individual's psychology. That is to say, whether the person is perfect or imperfect, with a value or not (p. 32). In the novel, the duwydar is seen as a valueless person who just does what they tell him to do. Being valueless or useless is reflected clearly through Obadi's answer when the duwydar surprisingly at the stable said that he could not see any donkeys. Obadi's reply was that the duwydar, he and others are the donkeys (Dammaj, 1984, p. 10). Obadi's answer connotes that both the duwydar and he are just like animals who are without a value and they just should perform tasks without waiting to hear any words of appreciation or gratitude.

Another cause of identity crisis according to Silitonga and Ambarita (2020) is mistreatment (p. 32). Mistreatment can be committed by parents or maybe the society. The duwydar is mercilessly taken by force as a child from the arms of his mother to the castle as seen in the following quotation: "The guards of Imam with the blue clothes took me by force from the arms of my mother and the remaining members of my family" (Dammaj, 1984, p. 3). Building on the way the duwydar is taken unmasks the later expected treatment. He lives a part of his life in the castle and a great part in vice-Imam's palace. Though the palace of vice-Imam is large and has many clean rooms, the room in which Obadi and the duwydar sleep show the bad treatment and the disrespect they are faced with. This is reflected in the story when the narrator says that: "He had nothing to light with except a small rusty lantern lying in a corner of the room covered with dust, dirt, and dead insects" (Dammaj, 1984, p. 15).

To sum the causes up, the duwydar delves into identity crisis for some reasons. First, reaching puberty since adolescence is the expected time to have a crisis. Second, being considered as a machine or an animal that performs tasks without negotiations or objection and more importantly, with no appreciation. Third, the bad treatment of Imam's family towards the duwydar which, according to Silitonga and Ambarita (2020) leads to less belief, less confidence, more carelessness and consequently, and more raised questions about his life (p. 32).

6. CONCLUSION

Dammaj's *The Hostage* is one of the best narratives in the twentieth century. Apart from being a historical and political record during a particular time in the past, it is a multi-thematic novel that reveals many dilemmas such as dictatorship, injustice, subjugation, poverty, illiteracy and corruption. Such practices in any society are more likely to have psychological consequences. Based on the analysis in the previous section about identity crisis in *The Hostage*, it can be concluded that identity crisis is depicted in the mentioned novel via the character of the protagonist. The protagonist suffers from identity crisis that is featured by role confusion, isolation and irritation feelings, self-hatred and feeling of powerlessness. Three reasons are figured out as causes of identity crisis. They are, for the protagonist, reaching puberty, being degraded or humiliated and being treated badly. It is also worth mentioning



that the protagonist in the novel is just an example or a representation of the Yemenis during that time when he suffered from alienation and lack of belonging as a consequence of the backward and dictatorial regime.

REFERENCES

1. Al Areqi, R. (2015). *Yemeni narrative in postcolonial world. Research journal in organizational psychology & educational studies* 4(3): 102-111.
2. Al-Magalah, A. (n.d.). *Mogharbat Awaliyah An Waga Al-Rywayah Fi Alyaman. Dirasat.*
3. Al-Subari, A. (2017). AM "Despairing era and harsh suffering of Yemeni people in pre independence depicting in Dammaj's novel 'The Hostage'". *European Academic Research*, 12, 10262-10270.
4. Altwaiji, M., & Telha, M. (2020). *Yemeni Narrative and Society: Socio-political Issues in Dammaj's The Hostage. Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 9(3), 317-324.
5. Al-Wadhaf, Y., & Omar, N. (2007). *Identity, nationhood and body Politics: Pathways into the Yemeni world of they die strangers. 3L Journal of Language Teaching, Linguistics and Literature*, 13.
6. Ananda, M.D. (2022). *Adolescence Crises of Charlie in Chbosky's The Perks of Being a Wallflower (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim).*
7. Bishop, C. L. (2013). *Psychosocial stages of development. The Encyclopedia of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 3, 1055-1061.
8. Dammaj, Z.M. (1984). *Al-Rahinah, Dar Al-Adab, Beirut.*
9. Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity youth and crisis (No. 7). WW Norton & company.*
10. Erikson, E. H. (1993). *Childhood and society. WW Norton & Company.*
11. Erikson, E. H. (1994). *Identity and the life cycle. WW Norton & company.*
12. Hezam, A. M. M. (2018). *Zayd Mutee Dammaj's Approach to History in The Hostage. AWEJ for Translation & Literary Studies*, 2(2).
13. Krieger, F. V., Leibenluft, E., Stringaris, A., Polanczyk, G.V. (2013). *Irritability in children and adolescents: past concepts, current debates, and future opportunities. Brazilian Journal of Psychiatry*, 35, S32-S39.
14. Larissa, R. (2009). *An Identity Crisis in Hanrahan's Lost Girls and Love Hotels.*
15. Manqoush, R. A., Yusof, N. M., & Hashim R. S. (2011). *Amplifications of religious fundamentalism in Fiction: al-Saqqaf's Qissat Irhabi vs. Updike's Terrorist. Middle East Studies Online Journal*, 6(3), 297-317.
16. Manqoush, R. A., Yusof, N. M., & Hashim R. S. (2011). *Modes of intertextuality: hypertextuality and metatextuality of history in early twenty-first century American and Arab fiction. Germany: Lambert for Academic Publishing.*
17. Manqoush, R. A., Yusof, N. M., & Hashim R. S. (2013). *Interpretations of history in early twenty-first century Arabic fiction: a critical analysis of al-Saqqaf's Qissat Irhabi. Pertanika: Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 20(2), 407-420. ISSN: 2231-8534.
18. Manqoush, R. A., Yusof, N. M., & Hashim R. S. (2011). *Depictions of Arabs in recent American fiction: a critical analysis of Adams' Harbor. In Raihanah M. M., Hashim R. S., Yusof, N. M., & Lazim, Z. (eds.). Gender, multiculturalism and re-visioning, pp.43-58. Serdang: Universiti Putra Malaysia Press.*
19. Manqoush, R. A. (2015). *The cultural dilemma of the Yemeni and Chinese migrants: Mohammad Abdulwali's They Die Strangers vs. Amy Tan's The Joy Luck Club. Asian Journal of Humanities & Social Studies (AJHSS)*, 3(6), 461-471. ISSN: 2231-8534.
20. Manqoush, R. A. & Al-Hossaini, A. S. (2020). *Silent love in Irish and Yemeni selected short stories. Research Journal of English and Language and Literature (RJELAL)*, 8(2), 52-59. ISSN 2321-3108.
21. Manqoush, R. A. (2020). *National identity and multiculturalism: a critical analysis of Lloyd Fernando's Scorpion Orchid. International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences (IJELS)*, 5(2): 520-527.
22. Marcia, J. E. (1980). *Identity in adolescence, [w:] Handbook of adolescent psychology, red. J. Andelson.*
23. Maunder, L., & Cameron, L., (2023). *Self-harm, Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust.*
24. McLeod, S. (2018). *Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development. Simply psychology*, 3.
25. Octavia, Cindy. (2021). *Frank Li's Identity Crisis Portrayed in David Yoon's Frankly in Love.*
26. Rashed, R. Q. G. (2021). *The Fictional World of Ali Al-Muqri as Seen in The Handsome Jew. Contemporary Review of the Middle East*, 8(1), 36-55.
27. Safitri, N. A. (2021). *Identity Crisis Experienced by Ben Day in Dark Places Novel.*
28. Schultz, D. P., & Schultz, S. E. (2017). *Theories of personality. Cengage Learning.*
29. Silitonga, A. J., & Ambarita, I. (2020). *Self-Identity Crisis in Trisha Ashley's Every Woman for Herself. Jurnal Littera: Fakultas Sastra Darma Agung*, 1(1), 28-45.