

A Psychoanalysis of Trauma in the Animated Movie “Encanto”

Habiba Farisa Asfahani¹⁾, Teguh Sulistyo^{2)*}, Maria Purnawati³⁾

^{1) 2) 3)} Universitas PGRI Kanjuruhan Malang, Indonesia

SUBMISSION TRACK

Submitted : 23 March 2025
Accepted : 22 June 2025
Published : 26 June 2025

KEYWORDS

psychological, trauma,
family dynamic, Encanto,
movie analysis

CORRESPONDENCE

E-mail:
sulistotyteguh@unikama.ac.id

A B S T R A C T

Trauma is a psychological disorder that can impact the dynamics of connections between generations and is emotionally inherited in generations. Individual and intergenerational trauma is the primary themes that drive conflict within the Madrigal family in the animated film “Encanto”. This study examines the recovery processes portrayed in the movie and determines the psychological effects of trauma on individuals and their families using Caruth's trauma theory and Hirsch's intergenerational trauma theory. The method used is descriptive in which the researchers collect data through film observation, theoretical studies, and analysis of scenes and dialog that depict trauma and the recovery process. The findings demonstrated how Abuela's character's trauma from her husband's death led to psychological distress and heightened standards within the Madrigal family, which in turn affected other family members. This dynamic serves as an example of the trauma cycle that does not only causes people to become isolated but also prevents their ability to develop personally within the family context. The movie portrays a process of recovery that enables family members to go from feeling alienated to feeling united through admissions and shared memories.

Copyright © 2025 All right reserved

This is an open-access article under the [CC-BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) 

Introduction

Psychoanalysis has long been a fascinating field of study (Tarzian et al., 2023) offering deep insight into the human psyche and its response to experiences of tragedy and mortise including film analysis. Apart from functioning as a form of self-reflection, films often engagingly present real themes or events, offering branded entertainment to the audience (van Loggerenberg et al., 2021). There are many interesting films to explore further regarding psychological aspects, including the animated movie "Encanto" produced by Disney and released in 2021. This film explores complex psychological themes such as self-discovery and trauma.

Trauma can be expressed in a significant manner via literary works, as initially proposed by Caruth (1991) in the concept of trauma in literature and psychoanalysis. Trauma itself is any experience—a single episode, recurrent event, sequence of events, or collection of circumstances—that surpasses a person's capacity for dealing and can be seen by the individual as physically or emotionally damaging or life-threatening (to oneself or others) (Enlow et al., 2013). Trauma also causes long-term impacts for the individual who experiences it. Trauma is not only an individual psychological phenomenon but also a social or political phenomenon that affects communities and nations (Arnold, 2020). Traumas develop and are passed from person to person, both intentionally and unintentionally (Isobel, Goodyear, & Foster, 2019). Trauma is usually characterized by disconnection, both physically and emotionally (Basso et al., 2023). These traumatic events cannot be integrated into conscious thought at the time they occur, leaving traces that return in the form of flashbacks, nightmares, or memories.

Traumatic experiences are deeply intertwined with the recovery process (Slade et al., 2019). Caruth (1991) explains that one of the key aspects of the recovery process in the literature is narrative reconstruction. Narrative reconstruction is a process in which

individuals attempt to talk about and understand their traumatic experiences (Tully, 2017). This process involves the steps of recognition, storytelling, meaning, integration, validation or support, as well as transformation and recovery. The first step in narrative reconstruction is recognition of the trauma experienced and recall of the event. Storytelling occurs when individuals try to express their traumatic experiences while giving meaning to the experiences. After going through telling and making meaning, individuals try to integrate the traumatic experience into their broader life narrative. In addition, the recovery process often involves validation and support from other people who can provide a sense of relief and empowerment for them. After going through various processes, they can finally experience an emotional and psychological transformation which causes individuals to move forward with a new perspective.

Psychology and social science increasingly recognize the need of studying the generational cycle of psychological trauma, especially in family interactions. Family dynamics contribute to the persistence of trauma and have a significant impact on how people behave and respond. According to Bowen's Family Systems Theory, family members are interconnected, meaning that unresolved emotional issues within one member can affect the entire family system and perhaps affect an individual's psychological health across generations (Isobel et al., 2019). Unresolved psychological issues of this situation, particularly those driven by toxic or inefficient communication styles, may manifest in dysfunctional interactions that are rooted in family narratives over several generations (Fraser et al., 2024; Isobel, Goodyear, Furness, et al., 2019). In cases of trauma, these dynamics can manifest as intergenerational trauma, where unresolved trauma is passed down through generations via stories, behaviors, or emotional responses (Hirsch, 2008). In this context, the next generation develops 'memories' that appear to be their own, although they are shaped by the narratives and experiences of their parents. This process creates challenges for the next generation, where they can feel suppressed by the dominating trauma narrative, thus interfering with the development of their identity and experience. As such, intergenerational trauma demonstrates the importance of understanding the emotional and psychological legacy left by collective trauma in shaping family dynamics and individual identity.

Some studies have explored how characters deal with trauma. For example, Setiawan and Puspita (2022) used a qualitative method to analyze trauma theory and its effect on the main character in the movie "Get Out". This study revealed the psychological trauma experienced by Chris Washington that started as a child when his mother died in an accident and continued to affect him into adulthood, causing fear, sadness, and uncontrollable emotions. Then, Hidayat and Indarujati (2020) used a descriptive qualitative method to examine some types of traumas and the symptoms of trauma in the movie "Room". There are two main key findings of this study. First, there are two types of traumas found in this movie: stranger physical assault and torture. The second is the symptoms of trauma experienced by Joy/Ma, which are physical, emotional, and cognitive. Then, Sasikumar (2021) used a descriptive qualitative method to evaluate the protagonist Zain El Hajj's experiences in the movie "Capernaum" and how they contribute to trauma. This study has shown that children who experience trauma from an early age often appear older than their age like Zain, obscuring the reality that they are struggling to survive. Then, Novitasari (2024) used a descriptive qualitative method to describe the causes and effects of trauma and how to recover from trauma. This study unveiled the causes and impacts of situational trauma experienced by Kyle in the movie "See You on Venus". Kyle begins to recover with the support of his best friend, Mia. Umer and Aziz (2022) used a descriptive qualitative method and carried out a qualitative

analysis to explore the workings of trauma and recovery from traumatic experiences in the “Ordinary People” movie. This research reveals awareness about trauma and recovery steps and emphasizes the importance of help from professional, institutional, therapeutic, and social support.

On the other hand, Lamichhane (2021) used a descriptive qualitative method to describe 2 strategies for recovering from cultural trauma that the characters in the film “Partition” experience. On the one hand, sharing pain seems to help victims get over their trauma, while on the other, it specifically links the British to the trauma of the Indian partition, which has been blurred as being unimportant in the one-on-one battle between two giants. Kohut (2020) used a descriptive qualitative method to describe the deep psychological effects that history has on individuals and their families, especially when it comes to historical trauma like the Holocaust. Additionally, this study explores how trauma experienced by one generation influences the next generations. Peter (2022) used a descriptive qualitative method to explore the function of dreams concerning trauma and memory in the novel “Beloved” by Toni Morrison. The dreams experienced by the characters, especially Denver and Beloved, influence how they interact with their trauma. It states that characters who are able to engage with their dreams have the potential to break the cycle of trauma, while characters who avoid it tend to continue the cycle of trauma. Oliveira (2021) used a descriptive qualitative method to analyze two slasher films, “A Nightmare on Elm Street” and “Final Girls,” as allegories for the therapeutic process of trauma, in which slasher killers are interpreted as representing unresolved trauma. In a psychoanalytic context, the dynamic between the “Final Girl” and the killer reflects a battle against the unconscious, in line with the slasher film structure defined by Carol Clover. This research also supports the connection between trauma and fictional narratives, drawing on the work of Caruth which shows how stories can help individuals process their trauma.

The above findings indicate that further research is required to fully understand trauma from a psychoanalytical perspective. The previous study highlighted the impact of individual trauma without specifically exploring how this affects family dynamics as a whole. The research conducted by Setiawan & Puspita (2022) and Novitasari (2024) places greater emphasis on individual experiences, yet fails to investigate the impact of trauma on familial interaction and relationships. Meanwhile, research by Hidayat & Indarujati (2020), Oliveira (2021), Peter (2022), and Umer & Aziz (2022) analyzed the process of recovering from trauma, yet failed to consider how this process is illustrated in family dynamics. This research has the potential to address this issue by examining how the personal trauma impacts the family dynamics as a whole, while also examining the recovery process depicted in the film's narrative. In addition, studies by Kohut (2020) and Lamichhane (2021) analyzed cultural and historical trauma by using a rather traditional psychoanalytic perspective, focusing on Freud, Alexander, and Caruth's ideas about culture and history. This research can be beneficial because it offers a modern perspective on trauma such as that provided by Hirsch's theory of intergenerational trauma.

While numerous films portray the experiences of trauma and the stages of recovery, “Encanto” stands out for its portrayal of individual trauma and the dynamics of family systems. This film tells the story of a madrigal family who lives in a magical house, Casita, where every family member has magical abilities except Mirabel. Abuela's past trauma of tragically losing her husband affected her parenting style towards her children and grandchildren, giving rise to expectations and pressure on family members which had an impact on their relationships. “Encanto” also describes the journey of recovery from trauma through various processes. This research uses a multidisciplinary approach that

combines psychoanalytic trauma theory, Bowen's family systems theory, and Caruth's theoretical framework of literary trauma. This approach allows the research to examine trauma not only as an individual psychological experience, but also as a systemic and intergenerational issue that shapes family roles, emotional attachments, and identity formation. Furthermore, “Encanto” is an animated movie utilizing symbolic visual components as metaphors for trauma and its healing process, including cracked houses, magical powers that represent psychological loads, and compelling music. By combining these components, this study offers an enhanced understanding of how trauma is portrayed, absorbed, and eventually processed by the individual while also the family collectively.

Millions of people have shared their experiences of trauma so that through analyzing this film we can better understand trauma and how to deal with it, moreover its impact on social life. This study provides an in-depth psychoanalytic analysis of how trauma is depicted in literary works, especially films. Additionally, this research offers insight into the complex correlation between trauma and family dynamics. In doing so, it is hoped that this research contributes new insights into how individual trauma in the film “Encanto” affects the family dynamics as a whole and further explores how the process of recovery from trauma is portrayed in the film's narrative. Furthermore, this research aims to offer a better perspective on understanding trauma, by combining traditional theories such as those from Freud and Caruth with more contemporary perspectives such as intergenerational trauma theory by Hirsch. Therefore, the problems of the study are as follows: The causes of trauma experienced by the character in the film, the influence of individual trauma on family dynamics, and how the recovery process from the trauma is portrayed in the film's narrative.

Research Method

This research employed a descriptive-qualitative method, in which the researchers used descriptive analysis to present the findings rather than statistical representation. It is used to gain insight into the portrayal of trauma and family dynamics as well as the recovery process in the movie “Encanto”. Qualitative methods were selected for this study because they facilitate a comprehensive examination of emotional and social experiences, while descriptive approaches enable researchers to provide detailed accounts of phenomena (Creswell, 2014).

In the process of conducting research, descriptive-qualitative research methods are employed to articulate data related to the problem of the study that has been previously formulated (Rohmawati et al., 2022). The data of this study consists of qualitative data derived from the narrative elements such as dialogues and character interaction. The present methodology was utilized to examine the portrayal of trauma and its impact on family dynamics, as well as the portrayal of the recovery process.

The primary data source employed in the present study is the animated movie “Encanto”, which emerged in 2021. The film was accessed through Disney's platform with a duration of an hour and 42 minutes. Secondary data was obtained from academic literature including trauma theory and prior research such as Caruth's (1991) perspective on trauma theory, Bowen's (1978) family system theory and Hirsch's (2008) theory of intergenerational trauma. From Caruth's perspective, attention is focused on traumatic experiences that are difficult to fully realize at the time of the event, the psychological symptoms that emerge such as flashbacks and compulsive behaviors, and the healing process that takes place through recognition of trauma, storytelling, meaning making, integration in personal life, social support, and emotional transformation. In Bowen's

framework, the aspects studied include the dynamics of family relationships that are influenced by non-open communication patterns, the tendency of individuals to lose the boundaries of personal identity in the emotional stress of the family, and the emotional legacy that transfers between generations. Meanwhile, Hirsch highlights how the next generation can inherit emotional wounds through stories, attitudes and behaviors from previous generations, which often lead to identity conflicts and trauma reproduction in everyday life.

The data collection process in this study employed a variety of techniques, including observation of selected scenes from “Encanto”. The scope of the study includes the exploration of how individual trauma influences family dynamics. It focuses on analyzing specific character’s experiences of trauma, Abuela and Mirabel, and characters who highlight the effects of family dynamics, Isabela and Luisa. Additionally, the study examines the portrayal of the recovery process within the film’s narrative, through textual analysis. Textual analysis was conducted on the dialogue and character interaction within the film aiming at highlighting their relevance to the research objectives.

In this research, the instruments used are documentation and observation of narrative elements in the “Encanto” animated film. The researchers act as a key instrument who makes direct observations of important scenes, dialog between characters, and visual symbols related to trauma, family dynamics, and the recovery process. In addition, other instruments such as observation notes and dialog quotes were also used to support the data analysis process. All data was then analyzed using a qualitative approach to explore the meaning contained in the representation of trauma in the film.

The researchers adapted the phase of qualitative research from Veal & Darcy (2014). These phases are illustrated in **Figure 1**. The analysis process involved data reduction, where the researchers categorized and simplified the data to focus on essential aspects related to trauma and family dynamics. Then, relevant data were presented in a systematic manner to highlight key findings.



Figure 1. Chart of phases of qualitative research adapted from Veal & Darcy (2014).

Triangulation was employed in this study to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. As Denzin (2017) observes, the process of triangulation in qualitative research involves the usage of multiple methods or data sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena within the study. This research employed methodological triangulation, combining observations of the movie and textual

analysis to analyze the portrayal of trauma and its impact on family dynamics in “Encanto”. The triangulation process also included cross-referencing the findings from the primary data (the movie) with secondary data, such as trauma theories and previous studies, to enhance the credibility of the analysis.

Result and Discussion

The researchers present and discuss the data collected from the animated film “Encanto” in this section. The findings are classified into three primary aspects: the cause of the trauma experienced by the characters, its effect on the family dynamic, and the recovery process from trauma. Each finding is analyzed in appropriate ideas to clarify the complex representation of trauma in the film. This discussion explores the individual and intergenerational trauma experienced by the characters, specifically by focusing on narrative elements such as dialogue and interactions between family members.

1. Cause of Trauma Experienced by Character

The loss of a relative, especially in a violent or stressful situation, can cause profound psychological trauma. As shown in **Figure 2**, Abuela Alma's trauma stems



from the tragic loss of her husband who was trying to protect his family. This moment became the basis for intergenerational trauma in the Madrigal family, shaping Abuela's assertive approach to family leadership and her insistence on preserving their magical heritage.

Figure 2. Abuela lost her husband for trying to protect her and their children (01:36)

Trauma theory is used to clarify the type of trauma in this research. Her trauma is classified as situational trauma because it was triggered by the circumstances that led to the loss of her husband's life. This incident occurred when they were forced to migrate, which deeply affected their sense of security and stability. This loss creates a persistent fear of losing her family and leads her to place high expectations and pressure on her children and grandchildren to preserve the family's magical legacy.

The film also emphasizes the intergenerational transmission of trauma, in which the following generation acquires both narrative and emotional burden from their parents (Hirsch, 2008). It activates a traumatic cycle that has an impact on their identities and relationships. Mirabel, as the only family member without a magical gift, represents the struggle for identity within family expectations. Her journey reflects the concept of disconnection, where individuals grapple with feelings of inadequacy and alienation due to family pressure (Uy & Okubo, 2018). The film highlights how her perceived worthlessness leads to feelings of alienation and a search for belonging. This dynamic illustrates the wider implications of trauma, where individual experiences are inextricably linked to family narratives (Bryce et al., 2022).

2. The Impact of Individual Trauma on Family Dynamics

Bowen's family systems theory (1978) suggests that the Madrigal family's dynamics are significantly impacted by Abuela's trauma. Bowen (1978) distinguishes three types of family systems theory: 1) Triangulation; 2) Fusion; and 3) Differentiation. The following concepts are most clearly seen in the interactions between the Madrigal family members, especially those involving Abuela, Mirabel, and her siblings, Isabela and Luisa.

1) Differentiation of self

Bowen (1978) defines differentiation of self as an individual's ability to have a different personal identity while still feeling connected to their family. High differentiation individuals are capable to think independently and manage their emotions without being overly affected by pressure from their families (Kerr & Bowen, 1989).

A sense of belonging is crucial in shaping one's identity and emotional well-being. **Figure 3** illustrates Mirabel's struggle with isolation as she feels disconnected from her family due to her lack of magical talent. This moment reflects her internal conflict and highlights the emotional distance created by Abuela's high expectations and the pressure placed on each member of the Madrigal family.



Figure 3. Mirabel feels isolated from her family (22:38)

Mirabel struggles differentiation of self as she attempts to find her identity in a family where each individual's magic defines them. Unlike the other family members, she does not grant a magical gift, which causes her to feel disconnected from the family's standards. This struggle is an example of low differentiation, where Mirabel experiences identity confusion and emotional distress due to the pressure to conform to the family's high standards. The pressure from Abuela makes the family roles very strict, which prevents Mirabel from being able to find her own identity.

According to Peleg (2008), low differentiation of self is related to family issues, as individuals often struggle to balance being themselves and feeling part of the family. This is demonstrated by Mirabel's struggle to preserve an emotional connection with the Madrigal family while figuring out her identity within the family. The ability to maintain a sense of familial connection while maintaining a personal identity is known as differentiation of self. In “Encanto”, Mirabel attempts to find her place within the Madrigal family, whose members are under constant pressure to fulfill expectations and follow traditions. Her absence of the ‘magic’ that the rest of her family possesses reflects the challenge of achieving differentiation of self.

2) Triangulation

Bowen (1978) described triangulation as the process by which two parties involved in a conflict engage a third party to help them deal with the tension. Although

this tactic is frequently used to avoid direct controversy it may actually worsen familial conflict and emotional entanglement (Titelman, 2014).

Denial is a common response to trauma, especially when facing a painful reality that threatens one's sense of control. **Figure 4** illustrates the moment when Abuela ignores Mirabel's concerns and refuses to admit the emerging rift in the Casita. This scene illustrates how trauma can manifest through denial, as Abuela's fear of losing the magic of family makes her ignore Mirabel's observations.



Figure 4. Abuela ignores Mirabel's explanation (27:07-27:20)

Abuela and Mirabel's connection in “Encanto” presents an illustration of this idea. By ignoring Mirabel's worries and diverting the family's attention from possible issues, Abuela engages in triangulation. Abuela refuses to confirm Mirabel's claims when she first notices cracks appearing in Casita, instead, she dismisses the problem and assures everyone that the family and their magical abilities are functioning perfectly. This behavior enables Abuela to maintain a sense of control over the family narrative, and subtly blames Mirabel for causing unnecessary worry. Julieta, Mirabel's mother, then steps in as a third person, attempting to soothe Mirabel and manage the emotional tension created by Abuela. Furthermore, Triangulation can be a contributing factor to intergenerational trauma by reinforcing hierarchical family structures that suppress open emotional expression (Fitzgerald et al., 2020). This phenomenon is illustrated by the dismissal of Mirabel's feelings, which perpetuates the cycle of emotional suppression within the Madrigal family.

3) Fusion

Fusion is when a family becomes emotionally dependent on each other and loses individual autonomy (Kerr & Bowen, 1989) High fusion families often prioritize collective emotional needs over individual desires, which leads to the suppression of personal identity and growth (Cao & Tam, 2021; Moral et al., 2021). In “Encanto”, the Madrigal family shows signs of fusion, where the Madrigal family members depend on each other in unhealthy ways, especially in their expectations of each other to fulfil certain roles based on their magical abilities.

Luisa, the strongest member of the Madrigal family, was under enormous pressure to provide constant support. Her extraordinary abilities trap her in the role of caretaker, where she feels responsible for carrying all the burdens without showing weakness. The song Surface Pressure reveals Luisa's inner struggle, where she expresses feelings of exhaustion and anxiety, but is unable to express them openly because the family is counting on her so much, as seen in **Figure 5**. This is supported by research that shows people in such families often make decisions based on feelings, putting the needs of the family before their own (Cao & Tam, 2021; Moral et al., 2021).



Figure 5. Luisa expressed the burden she bears through the song “Surface Pressure” (34:45)

Similarly, Isabela is expected to be the perfect madrigal, to represent elegance and perfection to preserve the family's reputation. These expectations prevent her from exploring her own identity, as she is afraid that any deviation from perfection will cause Abuela and the family to be disappointed. Isabela's battle to uphold a flawless appearance is seen in **Figure 6**. Her struggle demonstrates how fusion can hinder personal growth and self-expression (Narayanan & Sriram, 2023; Peleg et al., 2020), as she initially suppresses her desires to maintain family harmony.



Figure 6. Isabel expressed her frustration at meeting her family's expectations

Mirabel's struggles are poignant given her failure to display any magical talents, yet she feels compelled to maintain the family unit. Her efforts to prove herself highlight the emotional dependency characteristic of fused families, where the absence of clearly defined roles can lead to feelings of isolation and inadequacy (Buser et al., 2019). This dynamic reinforces the notion that emotional fusion can create a cycle of dependency, where family members feel compelled to solve each other's problems, further enhancing their emotional bonds (Lee & Johnson, 2017; Ram, 2017).

3. The Trauma Recovery Process

Caruth's notion of trauma in literature is reflected in the film Encanto's narrative structure, which is intimately related to the healing process from trauma. Caruth (1991) argues that narrative reconstruction is essential to trauma recovery and includes several important processes, including recognition, storytelling, meaning, integration, validation or support, and transformation and recovery.

The beginning of the recognition stage occurs when Mirabel notices the Casita's fractures, which represent the Madrigal family's fragility is shown in **Figure 7**. She

understands that their family's issues are driven by deeper emotional wounds similarly as external threats.



Figure 7. Mirabel noticed the cracks in Casita for the first time (25:05-26:15)

The storytelling stage occurs when Abuela Alma finally shares her traumatic past with Mirabel in **Figure 8**. She talks about her husband's passing and how it shaped her anxieties and high standards for her family. This assists Mirabel in realizing that Abuela's authoritarian conduct is a result of unresolved trauma rather than merely a means of control. Meaning is created through this storytelling act, as Mirabel starts to see that Abuela's strict monitoring and high standards are not just the result of authoritarianism but rather of her past suffering. In **Figure 9**, Mirabel absorbs Abuela's suffering and at last comprehends the reason for her behavior. This supports the view that open conversations about trauma can be a positive step in recovery after traumatic events (McGuire et al., 2019).



Figure 8. Abuela told Mirabel about her past. (01:18:20-01:21:15)



Figure 9. Mirabel gets Abuela's point. (01:21:48-01:22:34)

The integration stage occurs when the entire family accepts their past and realizes that their value is not defined by their magical gifts. This pivotal moment is seen when Abuela understands that Mirabel, despite not having a gift, has an important role in the family as a unifier. It is depicted in **Figure 10**. This realization led Abuela to give her

control up and start trusting each family member to define their own identity. By accepting their imperfections, the Madrigal family began to rebuild healthier relationships and make space for emotional growth.



Figure 10. Families realize their worth is not defined by a gift. (01:25:46-01:25:57)

The validation and support stage were evident as the Madrigal family reunited, embraced each other, and expressed their affection, regardless of enchanted gifts. **Figure 11** represents the reestablishment of emotional ties after years of conflict and miscommunication. Each family member began to share their personal struggles, which helped break the cycle of silent suffering that had previously occurred due to trauma. As an instance, Bruno returns to his family after years of exile, Isabela accepts her flaws, and Luisa admits her exhaustion. In the process of recovering from trauma, social support, including that of the family, is essential (Crespo et al., 2022).



Figure 11. The Madrigal family reunited (01:25:58)

In its final stages, the Casita's reconstruction came to symbolize transformation and recovery as well as familial unity and emotional recovery. **Figure 12** shows the Madrigal family's reconstruction of Casita together. By accepting their imperfections, encouraging open communication, and moving forward together, the Madrigal family managed to overcome past trauma and become a stronger family. This process of emotional reconstruction and family recovery is in line with Caruth's idea that recovery is not about eliminating trauma, but about integrating it into a narrative that helps individuals grow and become more resilient (Williams et al., 2024).



Figure 12. The family rebuilt the Casita together (01:26:47)

Conclusion

Examining the trauma suffered by Abuela's character in the film “Encanto” from the perspective of intergenerational trauma has demonstrated the way trauma affects family dynamics. Understanding individual trauma and how it impacts family dynamics is crucial since many people experience trauma in their social lives. The methodology used was a descriptive qualitative approach, relying on the analysis of 11 key scenes and 6 dialogues that highlight Abuela's emotional experience and its impact on other family members, and underpinned by relevant trauma theories, particularly those of Caruth (1991), Hirsch (2008) and Bowen (1978).

The analysis revealed that the trauma experienced by Abuela's character for losing her husband had an impact on Madrigal's family dynamics. This trauma is indirectly passed on to the next generation, creating emotional pressures and high expectations within the family. Some characters experience identity conflict and psychological pressure to fulfill the family's expectations. Mirabel, as the main character, tries to break the cycle of trauma by finding recognition and understanding the wounds that have affected her family. The film illustrates the recovery process through the characters' emotional journey, as they recognize, reveal, and reconstruct their traumatic events to find a path to recovery. Madrigal's family dynamics show a pattern of conflicting interactions with profound attachments that worsen the trauma cycle initially but can eventually be reduced by family members' understanding and transparency.

This study emphasizes the significance to understand how trauma is portrayed in the media, especially in movies, and how it affects how the general public views family relationships and emotional recovery. Encanto's examination of trauma dynamics and the process of recovery emphasizes the necessity to promote communication and understanding within family members. Thus, more research is expected to examine the amount to which Encanto's portrayal of trauma mirrors real life, clarifying the relationship between the narrative of the movie and the realities experienced by people or families who experience comparable trauma in real life. Future studies could additionally examine closer at how visual and symbolic components in films affect how trauma and recovery stories are portrayed, which would help to comprehend how cinematic factors influence the viewer's interpretation of trauma and the journey to recovery

References

- Arnold, L. (2020). Psychoanalysis. In *Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory* (Vol. 28, Issue 1, pp. 231–251). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ywcct/mbaa002>
- Basso, J. C., Satyal, M. K., McKee, K. L., Lynn, S., Gyamfi, D., & Bickel, W. K. (2023). Dissociation and other trauma symptomatology are linked to imbalance in the competing neurobehavioral decision systems. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1317088>
- Bowen, M. (1978). *Family therapy in clinical practice*. J. Aronson.
- Bryce, I., Beccaria, G., McIlveen, P., & Du Preez, J. (2022). Reauthoring: The lived experience of cumulative harm and its influence on career choice. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 31(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/10384162221101958>
- Buser, T. J., Pertuit, T. L., & Muller, D. L. (2019). Nonsuicidal self-injury, stress, and self-differentiation. *Adulthood Journal*, 18(1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/adsp.12065>
- Cao, G., & Tam, V. C. (2021). Using an interactional perspective to examine patterns of conflict resolution among Chinese adolescents and parents involved in schoolwork conflicts. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/22125868211005859>
- Caruth, C. (1991). Unclaimed experience: trauma and the possibility of history. *Yale French Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2930251>
- Crespo, M., Miguel-Alvaro, A., Hornillos, C., Sánchez-Ferrer, S., & Antón, A. A. (2022). Effect of adding a positive memories' module in a trauma-focused cognitive-behavioural treatment for female survivors of intimate partner violence: trial protocol. *Trials*, 23(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13063-022-06540-1>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research design qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches 4th edition. In *SAGE Publication* (4th ed., Vol. 59). SAGE.
- Denzin, N. K. (2017). The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods. In *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315134543>
- Enlow, M. B., Blood, E., & Egeland, B. (2013). Sociodemographic risk, developmental competence, and PTSD symptoms in young children exposed to interpersonal trauma in early life. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 26(6). <https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.21866>
- Fitzgerald, M., London-Johnson, A., & Gallus, K. L. (2020). Intergenerational transmission of trauma and family systems theory: an empirical investigation. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 42(3). <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6427.12303>
- Fraser, J. J., Gonzalez, L. V., & Morton, D. (2024). How the Church Can Heal: Healing Intergenerational Trauma Through Trauma-Informed Discipleship. *Christian Education Journal*, 21(1), 60–75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07398913241261388>
- Hidayat, A., & Indarujati, I. (2020). An analysis of trauma of the main character in Room movie. *Jurnal Bahasa Asing*, 20, pp. x-y.
- Hirsch, M. (2008). The generation of postmemory. In *Poetics Today* (Vol. 29, Issue 1). <https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-2007-019>
- Isobel, S., Goodyear, M., & Foster, K. (2019). Psychological trauma in the context of familial relationships: a concept analysis. In *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse* (Vol. 20, Issue 4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838017726424>
- Isobel, S., Goodyear, M., Furness, T., & Foster, K. (2019). Preventing intergenerational trauma transmission: A critical interpretive synthesis. In *Journal of Clinical Nursing* (Vol. 28, Issues 7–8). <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.14735>
- Kerr, M. E., & Bowen, M. (1989). Family evaluation: An approach based on Bowen theory. *US: W W Norton & Co.*
- Kohut, T. A. (2020). History flows through us: Psychoanalysis, historical trauma, and the shaping of experience. *Psychoanalysis, Self and Context*, 15(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/24720038.2019.1688330>

- Lamichhane, Y. R. (2021). No more “us” versus “others”: Critique of cultural trauma in the movie *Partition* by Vic Sarin. *Literary Studies*, 34(01). <https://doi.org/10.3126/litstud.v34i01.39541>
- Lee, H. H., & Johnson, R. W. (2017). Differentiation of self as a predictor of Asian-American immigrants’ perceptions of cultural harmony. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 39(2). <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6427.12154>
- McGuire, R., Hiller, R. M., Cobham, V., Haag, K., & Halligan, S. L. (2019). A mixed-methods investigation of parent-child posttrauma discussion and the effects of encouraging engagement. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/20008198.2019.1644127>
- Moral, M. A., Chimpén-López, C. A., Richelle Lyon, T., & Adsuar, J. C. (2021). The relationship between differentiation of self and psychological adjustment to separation. *Healthcare (Switzerland)*, 9(6). <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare9060738>
- Narayanan, M., & Sriram, S. (2023). An exploration of differentiation of self in Indian youth. *Human Arenas*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42087-023-00335-9>
- Novitasari, U. (2024). The recovery on trauma of the main character in *See You on Venus* movie. *English Education Journal*, 2(1), 1–10.
- Oliveira, A. de. (2021). Slasher therapy: The slasher movie as an allegory for uncovering trauma. *Literartes*, 1(15). <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2316-9826.literartes.2021.187620>
- Peleg, O. (2008). The relation between differentiation of self and marital satisfaction: What can be learned from married people over the course of life? *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 36(5). <https://doi.org/10.1080/01926180701804634>
- Peleg, O., Hadar, E., & Cohen, A. (2020). Individuals with type 2 diabetes: An exploratory study of their experience of family relationships and coping with the illness. *Diabetes Educator*, 46(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0145721719888625>
- Peter, R. M. (2022). *Psychoanalysis and dreams in Toni Morrison’s beloved: Exploring continuities and ruptures of trauma cycles*. Florida Atlantic University.
- Ram, D. (2017). Family dynamics may influence an individual’s substance use abstinence self-efficacy. *Journal of Addiction and Preventive Medicine*, 02(01). <https://doi.org/10.19104/japm.2016.106>
- Rohmawati, I. A., Junining, E., & Suwarso, N. (2022). The idioms and culture-specific items translation strategy for a classic novel. *Journey: Journal of English Language and Pedagogy*, 5(2), 169–181.
- Sasikumar, A., Nanda, N., & Vijayalakshmi, P. P. (2021). Childhood trauma: An analysis of the movie *Capernaum*. *Annals of R.S.C.B.*, 25(4), 17687–17691. <http://annalsofrscb.ro>
- Setiawan, A. G., & Puspita, D. (2022). Trauma on the main character in *get out* movie by Jordan Peele: Psychological approach. *Linguistics and Literature Journal*, 3(1), 67–78. http://jim.teknokrat.ac.id/index.php/linguistics_and_literature/index
- Slade, M., Rennick-Egglestone, S., Blackie, L., Llewellyn-Beardsley, J., Franklin, D., Hui, A., Thornicroft, G., McGranahan, R., Pollock, K., Priebe, S., Ramsay, A., Roe, D., & Deakin, E. (2019). Post-traumatic growth in mental health recovery: qualitative study of narratives. *BMJ Open*, 9(6). <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2019-029342>
- Tarzian, M., Ndrio, M., & Fakoya, A. O. (2023). An introduction and brief overview of psychoanalysis. *Cureus*. <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.45171>
- Titelman, P. (2014). Differentiation of self: Bowen family systems theory perspectives. In *Differentiation of Self: Bowen Family Systems Theory Perspectives*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203121627>
- Tully, T. (2017). Epistemologies of trauma. *Bulletin for the Study of Religion*, 46(3–4), 48–56. <https://doi.org/10.1558/bsor.32590>
- Umer, H., & Aziz, S. (2022). Trauma in the movie *Ordinary People* (1980): an investigation of psychological trauma and recovery from a traumatic experience. *International Journal of Linguistics and Culture*, 3(2), 151–163. <https://doi.org/10.52700/ijlc.v3i2.118>

- Uy, K. K., & Okubo, Y. (2018). Reassembling a shattered life: A study of posttraumatic growth in displaced Cambodian community leaders. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.1037/aap0000111>
- van Loggerenberg, M. J. C., Enslin, C., & Terblanche-Smit, M. (2021). Towards a definition for branded entertainment: an exploratory study. In *Journal of Marketing Communications* (Vol. 27, Issue 3). <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2019.1643395>
- Veal, A. J., & Darcy, S. (2014). *Research methods in sport studies and sport management* (1st edition). Routledge. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315776668>
- Williams, K., Harb, M., Satyen, L., & Davies, M. (2024). s-CAPE trauma recovery program: the need for a holistic, trauma- and violence-informed domestic violence framework. In *Frontiers in Global Women's Health* (Vol. 5). Frontiers Media SA. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fgwh.2024.1404599>