

Sunrise on the Reaping (2025) by Suzanne Collins: Structural Violence Shapes the Protagonist's Trauma

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100800403>

Received: 20 August 2026; Accepted: 25 August 2026; Published: 07 September 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examines the structural violence shapes the psychological trauma experienced by the protagonist, Haymitch Abernathy, in Suzanne Collins' *Sunrise in the Reaping* (2025). The Hunger Games franchise has primarily focused on authoritarianism, resistance, and political oppression, limited attention has been given to the ways structural violence functions as the underlying mechanism that produces trauma in dystopian fiction. Engaging a qualitative research approach through textual analysis, this study applies Johan Galtung's Theory of Structural Violence, particularly the mechanisms of exploitation penetration, and fragmentation, to investigate the institutional power systematically constructs traumatic experiences beyond direct physical violence. The analysis demonstrates that the Capitol's domination over the districts is sustained through unequal social structures, ideological manipulation, and the deliberate fragmentation of individual and collective identities. Rather than depicting trauma solely as the consequences of violent encounters in the Hunger Games arena, the novel reveals trauma as an enduring condition produced by institutionalised oppression and the absence of genuine social justice, reflecting Galtung's concept of negative peace. Haymitch's psychological deterioration, identity fragmentation, and prolonged emotional suffering illustrate the systematic violence that continues to affect survivors long after the spectacle of violence has ended. The findings contribute to Trauma Studies by highlighting the significance of invisible and institutional forms of violence in the construction of psychological trauma within dystopian narratives. Furthermore, this study expands literary criticism of Collin's work by integrating structural violence theory with trauma analysis, offering comprehensive understanding of oppressive political system that shape individual subjectivity and psychological resilience. Finally, the research argues that *Sunrise on the Reaping* presents trauma not merely as a personal psychological response but as a social consequence of enduring structural inequality and authoritarian governance.

Keywords: Structural Violence, Trauma Studies, Dystopian Fiction, *Sunrise on the Reaping*, Johan Galtung.

INTRODUCTION

This research is about a study of structural violence as shown in Suzanne Collins's novel *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025). The focus is on understanding the unfair systems in the story affect the mental health and emotional state of the main protagonist, Haymitch Abernathy. The research explores growing up and living in a society controlled by fear, poverty, and strict rules can lead to deep emotional trauma even when there is no physical violence happening. This study uses a qualitative method which means it looks closely at the text to understand deeper meanings, messages, and patterns as well as analyzes the storyline and characters. This paper is focused on research background, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, significance of the research, scope and limitations of the research and conclusion based on the novel *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025).

Sunrise on the Reaping (2025) by Suzanne Collins was released on March 18 this year marks a return to the dystopian fiction world of Panem and takes readers back to 24 years before the first book in the Hunger Games series happens. The definition of dystopian starts with a dystopia is a place where life is very hard and unpleasant. People may suffer because of strict rules, poverty, fear or all of them. In a dystopian world or society, there is often a lot of pain and struggle caused by things like unfair treatments, war, pollution, sickness

or overcrowded people (Azizah Putri Regina Sofiana, & Ambar Andayani, 2025). And for this novel, it is set in a dystopian fictional world. The novel starts on the morning of the reaping for the 50th Hunger Games which is also called, the Second Quarter Quell. In this special and more brutal version of the Hunger Games, each district had to send twice as many tributes as usual. This fifth book is about a young Haymitch Abernathy who is chosen to compete on his birthday. Through his journey, readers get to learn more about the early days of the Hunger Games and the events that helped shape Panem (Perez, 2025). In this novel, Suzanne Collins tells a powerful story about the world where people are controlled by a system. Just like the rest of the Hunger Games series, in a country named Panem when the Capitol uses strict rules, threats and punishment to keep the districts poor and powerless. Panem is a country made up of the Capitol and has 13 districts around it. According to Johnson (n.d), Capitol is the richest and most powerful place and it is where the Hunger Games are held. In general, the districts that are closer to the Capitol have more money and power while the ones farther away are poorer and being neglected. The main protagonist comes from District 12 which is one of the poorer districts. Due to that, Haymitch Abernathy does not only suffer from the Hunger Games or reaping system but also from living in a place where people are always scared, hungry, neglected with no basic needs, poor healthcare and mistreated. This is called structural violence.

Structural violence, a concept introduced by Johan Galtung, a Norwegian political scientist refers to the harm caused by unfair and oppressive social systems that prevent human beings from meeting their basic needs. Galtung (1969, as cited in Jeya Sankar Sangeetha et al., 2022) defines structural violence as harm caused by unequal and unfair social systems. According to Galtung (1990), he believed that the structure of society, especially its status or class hierarchy, was a key source of violence that held back human progress. In this kind of system, people with privilege have easier access to important resources while those who are less privileged often have little to no access because of structural violence. Unlike direct violence which involves visible acts of harm, structural violence is implanted in social, political, and economic institutions or societal causes that is causing long-term psychological and emotional damage through mechanisms such as poverty, inequality, discrimination, social isolation and lack of access to essential service.

As mentioned by Galtung (1969, as cited in Jeya Sankar Sangeetha et al., 2022), these forms of violence often go unnoticed because they are normalized within the structures of daily life. This research explores Suzanne Collins represents structural violence in the narrative and this manages to shape the main protagonist's trauma later in the novel. Reading and analysing the novel through Johan Galtung's framework, this study shows literature can help us see the hidden emotional pain people feel when they live under unfair and controlling systems. This research shows structural violence through literature especially in dystopian fiction to help readers understand unfair systems can cause emotional and psychological harm to certain characters.

Ishrat Bashir (2024) had done research on a collective short story named *Scattered Souls* (2016) by Shahnaz Bashir and he applied structural violence's framework by Johan Galtung to analyze the collective short story. This past research analyzed the structural violence depicted in *Scattered Souls* (2016) and showed the trauma from military oppression and colonial system in Kashmir. On the other hand, research done by Mustafa Wshyar (2018) also applied structural violence's framework by Galtung's to analyze a novel named *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) by Khaled Houseini and showing the trauma came from social stigma, gender inequality and legal oppression that failed to protect women in Afghanistan.

From these two past researches concluded that structural violence in literature is understudied with not many past researches use or apply the structural violence in literature especially in dystopian fiction. Most literature research focused on visible physical violence or emotional violence and not the hidden harm that was caused by unfair systems. Trauma is not only personal but it represents the emotional burden carried by an entire generation that lives under the same system. The novel, *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025) provides a powerful example of deep implanted violence within a society that can shape a person's identity, thoughts, and mental health over the years in a dystopian fictional world. This research argues to identify and analyze the connection between the structural violence that shapes the main protagonist's trauma in *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025) using Johan Galtung's framework.

The objectives of this research have two objectives. First, the study is to identify the structural violence that shapes the protagonist's trauma in the novel *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025) by Suzanne Collins. Second, to

analyze the connection between structural violence and the trauma demonstrated by the protagonist using Johan Galtung's framework for the analysis. This research has two research questions. The first question asks what forms of structural violence shape the protagonist's trauma in the novel *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025) by Suzanne Collins. The second question is how the connection between structural violence and the trauma demonstrated by the main protagonist can be analyzed using Johan Galtung's framework.

This significance of the research shows that trauma can come not only from war and physical violence but also from unfair systems happens within society. It offers a new perspective of trauma as portrayed in literature which focuses not just on specific events but there are real life people are forced to live under oppressive conditions. By analyzing the novel *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025), this research also helps to better understand Johan Galtung's framework of structural violence which explains that indirect violence actually can harm individuals by preventing them from meeting their basic needs.

The scope and limitations of the research are to clarify its focus and boundaries. The scope of the research is focused on the protagonist's trauma in the novel *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025) that was caused by structural violence. The study uses Johan Galtung's framework of structural violence (1969) as the main theory to help explain the conditions and situations that affect the protagonist throughout the novel. The limitation of the study is limited to one novel which is the *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025) and does not include an analysis of other books from The Hunger Games trilogy or its related works like the upcoming adaptation of the movie. Furthermore, this research focuses mainly on the character of Haymitch Abernathy, the protagonist and does not include to other characters in the novel.

This research aims at the protagonist in the novel *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025) is affected by structural violence. This type of violence does not involve direct physical harm but instead, it comes from unfair systems within society like inequality, poverty and oppression that slowly harm people over the years. The research also shows that in dystopian stories literature that trauma does not always come from war or physical attacks. It can also come from being forced to live in a system that takes away freedom, choices, and basic needs. In case of Haymitch Abernathy, his trauma is caused not just by what he went through physically but by the cruel system he was trapped in Panem and was created by the Capitol. This research helps us understand trauma experienced by him and it shapes his trauma throughout the novel. It shows that even in fictional world, characters can be deeply affected by hidden violence that happens in their society and not just by fighting or war. It adds to trauma research by focusing on this kind of invisible harm.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The paper focuses on the novel *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025) by Suzanne Collins. To help explain the ideas in the novel more clearly and to support the findings, the researcher also looks at work done by other researchers. These previous studies provide useful information and help make this research more detailed, significant and reliable.

Structural Violence

The first study is a journal article written by Ishrat Bashir (2024), entitled, *Structural Violence and Colonial Oppression in Shahnaz Bashir's Scattered Souls* (2016). The main objective is to analyze the concept of structural violence and its implications for people as depicted in *Scattered Souls* (2016), a collective short story by Shahnaz Bashir. This paper examines *Scattered Souls* (2016) emphasizes visible and physical and the way this book focuses unintentionally hides deeper forms of harm such as emotions, social and structural violence making them less visible or even overlooked.

According to Ishrat Bashir, in *Scattered Souls* (2016), the characters' lives are filled with loss and hardship. In "Psychosis", one of the short stories in *Scattered Souls* (2016), Sakeena's husband disappears during the Kashmir conflict leaving her in poverty with her children. She becomes a 'half widow' which is a term for a wife whose husband is nowhere to be found, dead or alive. This pain is caused by the Indian military presence which creates deeper and long-term harm. Sakeena's family is not only grieving but also denied a life of dignity and the chance for a normal life and good future. In this paper, there is a strong focus on visible, direct

violence especially in political conflicts like Kashmir. It makes it harder to challenge and resist the deeper, ongoing harm caused by structural violence. It also gives those in power a way to justify the violence they commit. Both stories show the risks to ignore structural violence and the way media can be used to keep it going. In *Scattered Souls* (2016), society within the story does not fully recognize the everyday oppression in Kashmir which makes it harder to fight back and easier for those in power to excuse their harmful actions. In *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025), the Capitol controls the people's thoughts and actions so the districts do not completely realize the way it badly affects the people being treated which makes it harder for them to rise up and resist.

Next, an article written by Tayyaba Khalid and Sofia Hussain (2025), *Structural Violence and Societies of Fear in Hamid's 'The Prisoner' and Tanweer's 'The Scatter Here is Too Great'*. It studies the presence of structural violence and societies of fear in both texts using Johan Galtung's theory of structural violence as a framework. The authors argue that in both novels show violence is not always direct or physical but is planted in social and institutional systems that marginalize and oppress. In *The Prisoner* (2013), the corrupt police and military systems of Karachi reflect the loyalty to power structures overrides ethical responsibility creating an environment of constant surveillance and paranoia. Similarly, Tanweer's fragmented narrative in *The Scatter Here is Too Great* (2013) reflects the psychological impact of urban violence coordinates personal identities and memories are shaped and shattered by bombings, politics, and fear. The authors demonstrate that in both novels fear is not incidental but systematically produced which reflects a larger system in society that controls the way people act and stops them from speaking out. The study contributes by showing literature documents structural oppression and critiques the normalization of violence in urban postcolonial settings.

Furthermore, the article also shows that fiction can reveal hidden truths and stand up against silence helping us better understand life is like for people living in fear and under strict control. The article is convincing especially in *The Prisoner* (2013) shows the mental stress of living under corrupt and controlling systems. The fear is not always loud but it can quietly shape people's lives. Bilal Tanweer's novel was also powerful. It reflects the confusion and fear in a city like Karachi where life is always unstable. The research paper helps to understand the fear that can become part of daily life and it affects the way people think and act. This argument aligns with *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025) which also depicts a society shaped by structural violence. In *Panem*, fear is cultivated through surveillance, propaganda and systemic control shaping the way people think and act similarly in *The Prisoner* (2013) and *The Scatter Here is Too Great* (2013).

Another research study done by Jeya Sankar Sangeetha, Sengottaian Mohan, Anandhan Hariharasudan, and Anandhan Antony Athithan (2022) titled, *'Invisible Yet Static': An Analysis of Structural Violence with Reference to Kilvenmani Massacre, India*. The study is about a documentary text titled, *The Gypsy Goddess* by Meena Kandasamy which is written about the 1968 Kilvenmani massacre in Tamil Nadu, India, where 44 Dalit farmworkers were burned alive by local landlords. The authors argue that this tragedy was not just an isolated violent event but the result of long-standing systems of oppression especially related to caste, gender, and economic inequality. They show the Dalits who were already poor and socially excluded became targets because of unfair land ownership, discrimination and the dominance of landlords.

The research highlights women in these communities face a double burden, caste and gender-based violence. This tragedy reflects the "invisible" injustices still implanted into society until today which authors define as structural violence which harm caused by unfair system rather than direct physical force. Through a feminist lens, they argue that we must understand the inequality like caste and gender that can intersect to keep people under oppressed. (Harisudan, 2020, as cited in Jeya Sankar Sangeetha et al., 2022).

The authors explain that the Kilvenmani massacre is a powerful example of structural violence operates. It happened silently and through everyday injustice. Galtung's theory helps the authors move the focus from just the physical attack to the long-standing conditions like poverty, discrimination and lack of access to resources that made such violence possible. The paper is similar to the research because it connects to *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025) because structural violence shapes life in *Panem*. Like the Dalit community in Kandasamy's work, the districts face poverty, political oppression and exploitation. The Capitol's control over resources and information reflects the power of landlords in Kilvenmani where dominance comes through systems not just violence.

Characters' Trauma in Literature

The article, *Overlapping Traumas: Revisiting Trauma in the Post-apocalyptic World of Anna Kavan's Ice* by Mehtap Tunahan and Ismail Avcu (2024) looks at the way trauma is shown in the novel *Ice* (1967) by Anna Kavan. The authors explain that the story mixes two kinds of trauma, which is personal trauma, the pain of the main character losing someone he loves and the bigger trauma of the world ending in a freezing disaster. The main character is obsessed with finding a girl he lost and this obsession shows the way it badly affected and hurt him emotionally. At the same time, the world around him is falling apart and people are acting in violent, cruel ways because of the disaster. This shows both the mind and society are affected by trauma.

The article also compares *Ice* (1967) to other books like *Lord of the Flies* (1954) where characters also lose their sense of morality once order disappears. In *Ice* (1967), people start to form dangerous groups and act out of fear, pain, and survival instincts. The frozen world becomes symbolic of the cold and broken the characters feel inside. The study says *Ice* (1967) is not just a story about a breakup or a disaster but also the personal pain and global disaster can blend together. The book uses dreams, hallucinations, and strange scenes to show struggles of people to recover from trauma when both their inner and outer worlds are collapsing. This analysis draws a clear parallel to *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025) by Suzanne Collins showing the structural violence shapes the personal trauma. In both stories, trauma is not just a single event but a result of oppressive environments that slowly create the characters' identity.

In the article, *Trauma and Narrative in Toni Morrison's Beloved* (2004) by İsmet Toksöz (2024) explores the novel published in 2004, the effects of trauma especially through the character Sethe. The article explains that trauma is not just something that happens in the past and it often returns in confusing and painful ways. Toksöz shows the way Morrison uses storytelling techniques and strong images to show trauma affects memory and identity. The character, *Beloved*, represents Sethe's pain and her presence forces the characters and the readers to feel the emotions and face the memories. Toksöz also discusses the way the novel shows not just personal trauma but shared or collective trauma from slavery. The novel becomes a space for emotional healing showing that literature can help us understand deep pain and connect with who have suffered. This study strengthens the argument in *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025) by Suzanne Collins where structural violence shapes the protagonist's trauma. Like Morrison's *Beloved* (2014) which explores the lasting wounds of slavery similar to shows the oppression, propaganda and inequality cause deep psychological harm in the paper.

Dystopian Fiction

In their article *The Genre Merge of Fiction and Dystopian Science Fiction: Suzanne Collins' The Hunger Games and Catching Fire* by Khadija Al Moghrabi and Esma Tezcan (2023) focuses on the dystopian themes in Suzanne Collins' novels. They argue that although the series includes elements of science fiction, its main purpose is to critique real world problems through a dystopian perspective. The books describe a harsh world ruled by the Capitol which uses fear, strict control and the deadly Hunger Games to keep the poorer districts powerless. The authors explain that dystopian fiction is not just about imagining another world and it reflects real issues such as social injustice, political manipulation and the loss of human dignity under oppressive systems. The authors also explore the way characters support this dystopian setting. Katniss Everdeen, the main character in the book, for example, represents resistance in a society designed to break people's spirits. Her journey from struggling to survive in District 12 to fighting against the Capitol shows the dystopian stories deal with power, control, and rebellion. The electric fence separating districts from nature and the use of televised violence as entertainment highlight the cruelty that becomes normalized in dystopian societies. The paper shows that dystopian fiction reflects real world power structures with trauma revealing the domination is felt and understood similar to the research on the *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025).

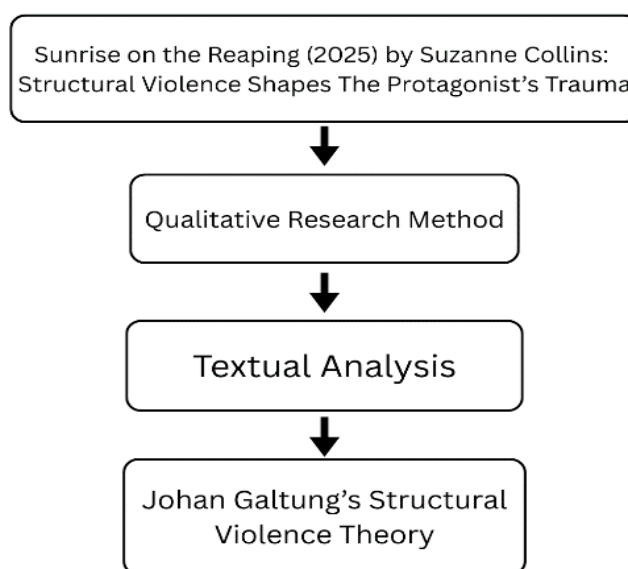
Next, the journal by Azizah Putri Regina Sofiana and Ambar Andayani (2025), *Dystopian Society in Adam Silvera's They Both Die at the End* discusses *They Both Die at the End* by Adam Silvera that shows a dystopian world where people are controlled by a system called Death-Cast which tells them when they will die without giving them a choice. This creates fear, takes away freedom and makes people feel like they are just labels and not individuals. A similar kind of control is seen in Suzanne Collins's *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025) where the Capitol forces children to take part in the Hunger Games to keep people scared and obedient.

While Adam Silvera’s novel uses quiet, emotional control and Suzanne Collins’s novel shows a more violent system. Both highlight the unfair systems that can look normal on the outside but still hurt people deeply. These stories teach us to look more closely at the rules and systems around us and to speak up when something feels wrong even if it has been accepted by everyone else.

The next study, *Oppression and Control in Utopian and Dystopian Fiction* by Emrah Atasoy (2021) talks about the way authors use fiction to show that the societies can become controlling and unfair. He looks at three famous books. There is *A Modern Utopia* by H.G. Wells, *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell. Each book shows a different kind of world where people lose their freedom. In H.G Wells’ book, people are divided into mental classes and those in charge use education and strict rules to control them quietly. Aldous Huxley’s book shows a world where people are happy because they are given pleasure, drugs, and freedom in ways that stop them from thinking for themselves. Even though there is no violence, people are still being controlled. In George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the government uses fear, spying, and torture to control everyone. People are not allowed to think freely or fall in love. The government even changes language so people cannot express rebellion. Atasoy (2024) explains that even though each book shows different methods of control. There are some soft, some harsh methods they all warn us about incidents that can happen when those in power take away individual rights. These stories help readers think about real life problems like government control or misuse of technology that can take our freedom. The research mirrors Atasoy’s examples by showing fear, propaganda and inequality that create trauma and suppress identity. Like classic dystopias, *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025) warns that normalized control destroys both freedom and the human mind.

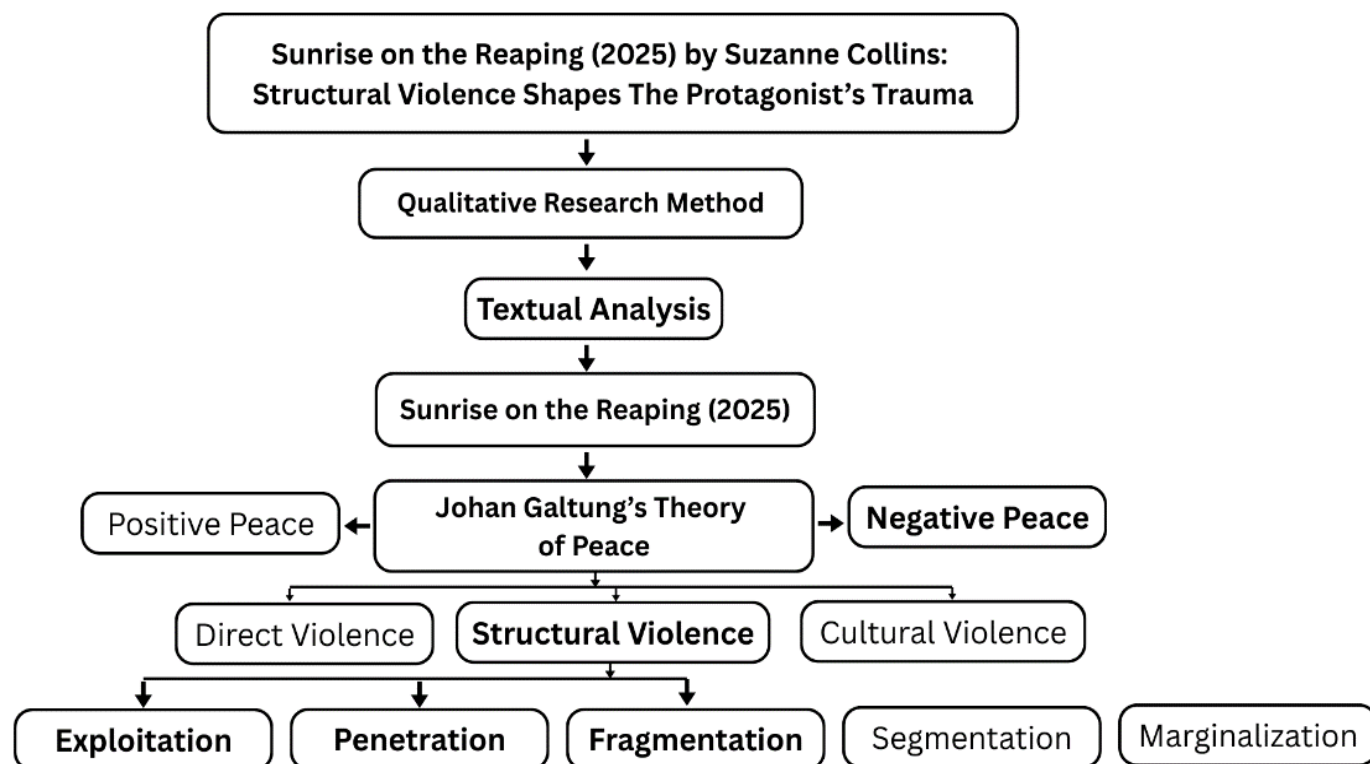
RESEARCH DESIGN

To achieve the objectives of this study, it is important to establish a clear and structured research design. The research design provides a way for the study is conducted to ensure that the chosen methods to align with the research questions and objectives.



Graph. 1 Research Design

The research design for this study aims to identify the methods applied throughout the research process and to outline the research framework. Qualitative research typically involves techniques such as interviews, observations, and document or text analysis (Lim, 2024). This study uses textual analysis to examine selected texts and uncover the underlying messages in the novel. By using a qualitative approach together with textual analysis, this research allows the researcher to explore new ideas from the texts while also examining existing theories like structural violence. In this way, this paper can reveal deeper meanings in the stories and explain the issues like trauma and structural violence are shown in the narratives.



Graph. 2 Theoretical Framework

Johan Galtung (1969) as cited in Syams Shobahizzaman Alma'shum (2022) describes negative peace as indirect violence without involving war or physical fights. This kind of peace is usually happened through temporary solutions such as ceasefires or military control, that temporarily stops the fighting. However, Galtung argues that negative peace is weak and incomplete. It does not address deeper problems such as inequality, oppression, or injustice that often cause conflict in the first place. These issues remain unresolved and the risk of violence is still present. Negative peace is only the most basic level of peace where fighting has stopped but true peace has not yet been achieved. However, positive peace is to stopping violence. Instead, it focuses on creating conditions that prevent violence from happening in the first place.

According to Uwa and Iloh (2023), positive peace exists when structural violence is removed meaning that social, economic or political systems no longer harm people or stop them from meeting their basic needs. In Galtung's peace theory, negative peace and positive peace represent two very different goals. Negative peace is simply about stopping visible violence such as wars, fights, or direct physical harm and preventing overt conflict from erupting again. It focuses on ending aggressive actions, but it does not change the deeper problems that cause conflict in the first place. By contrast, positive peace goes much further. It is defined not just by the end of visible violence, but by the elimination of structural violence the hidden harms built into social, economic and political systems that systematically prevent people from meeting their basic needs. Structural violence includes things like poverty, inequality, discrimination, and unequal access to resources.

These kinds of harm do not show up as direct attacks but still restrict people's life chances and dignity. In positive peace, those structural barriers are removed and societies build justice, fairness and equity into their institutions and relationships. In the context of *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025), the trauma experienced by Haymitch Abernathy is not an accidental byproduct of war but a deliberate manifestation of the Capitol's systemic control, which Galtung defines as structural violence. While the Capitol maintains a state of negative peace, the mere absence of open rebellion, it does so through a framework of injustice that prevents the realization of positive peace. According to Uwa and Iloh (2023), positive peace can only exist when structural violence is eradicated and social, economic or political systems no longer obstruct individuals from meeting their basic needs. In Panem, however, these systems are designed to harm. The connection between the state's structure and Haymitch's psychological erosion is best analyzed through Galtung's four mechanisms:

exploitation, penetration, fragmentation and marginalization.

According to Syams Shobahizzaman Alma'shum (2022), these are the three forms of structural violence. The first one, exploitation. It means people in power make social, economic, and legal rules that help themselves most of the time, which is similar to exploitation works. At the same time, workers or people from disadvantaged groups do most of the hard work but do not get a fair return. There is more than one conflict going on here because exploitation is built into the way society is set up and kept up by rules and institutions. So, money, jobs, and chances keep going up to the rich and powerful leaving those at the bottom with inequality and long-term suffering. The second one is, penetration. The idea of penetration by Galtung describes that stronger countries indirectly affect weaker ones. Leaders from the stronger country make close ties with leaders from the weaker country. This is how superverse penetration works. Because of these ties, the elite of the weaker country accept the ideas, ways of life, and economic practices of the stronger country. It is easy for this process to work because it takes advantage of existing imbalances, especially the big gap between the rich and the rest of society in weaker countries. This lets power spread without using direct force.

Finally, fragmentation. Fragmentation is a means for strong organisations to keep others apart so they cannot work together or fight back, just like the principle of "divide and rule." Galtung thinks that this works in three ways: smaller countries cannot cooperate together, they have to deal with the strong country on their own and they cannot talk to other countries openly. The central power keeps in charge by controlling the people talk to and interact with each other. This separation makes it difficult to fight against exploitation because individuals can't work together or plan to resist. Suzanne Collins illustrates Galtung's three forms of structural violence within the political and social framework of Panem in *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025), particularly during Haymitch Abernathy's Games. The Capitol exploits the residents of the districts by gaining wealth and entertainment from the Hunger Games, while they endure poverty and suffering. The Capitol infiltrates districts by teaching its values, fear, and compliance in local leaders and champions to sustain control without resorting to violence. Isolating districts hinders unity and collective resistance, resulting in disintegration, since each district contends independently and perceives others as competitors rather than allies. These systems normalise injustice, rendering the Capitol's rule appear inevitable while sustaining enduring inequity, suffering, and silence. Thus, they exemplify the systemic violence that Galtung criticised.

Analysis

Research analysis is an important part of any study because it helps answer the research questions and support the objectives. In *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025) by Suzanne Collins, structural violence is reflected in the social, economy and political systems of Panem. Collins highlights inequality and oppression shape the protagonist's experiences and trauma. This kind of violence is not always visible but it still happens through unfair systems such as social hierarchies, economic gaps and political manipulation that allow the Capitol to stay in power while the districts continue to suffer. According to Johan Galtung (1969), structural violence refers to the indirect harm caused by social institutions that restrict people's access to basic needs like safety, equality, and freedom. In the novel, this can be seen through the Capitol's control over the districts using fear, deprivation, and propaganda to maintain obedience.

Through Galtung's framework, it becomes clear that the main character's trauma is not only caused by direct violence but also implanted in the social structures that create inequality. The Capitol's manipulation of the Hunger Games show power and resources are unequally divided forcing the lower classes to live in fear and suffering. The protagonist's pain reflects both personal and collective trauma as it represents the struggles of those living under systemic oppression. By analyzing the novel from this perspective, the research reveals *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025) portrays structural violence as a hidden yet powerful force that shapes human lives and sustains injustice within Panem's society.

Exploitation

In the book, the Capitol sets up a system that benefits it, where the districts do all the work. Mining, farming, and manufacturing while the Capitol enjoys the benefits. In this context, The Reaping works as The Labour. The Games are a way to take advantage of people. The Capitol turns the "work" of kids fighting for their lives

into entertainment and political currency, making sure that only the rich and safe get the benefits. For example, the 50th Hunger Games in the book is also called Second Quarter Quell, where the games doubled the number of tributes. For each year, the tributes should be 24 tributes representing 12 districts in Panem. However, for the Second Quarter Quell doubled the number of tributes to celebrate the Capitol's jubilee. These are the dialogues from the book,

"..Joining Loulla will be..." Drusilla's hand stirs the slips in the ball and fishes out another name.
"Maysilee Donner."

(pg. 21)

Another example,

"Get the first boy... What was his name?"

"Wyatt Callow," says Plutarch.

"Get Wyatt Callow back in the pen."

"What's your name?" My name sounds alien as it leaves my lips. "Haymitch Abernathy."

"Haymitch Abernanny," she repeats.

"Haymitch Abernathy." I correct her.

(pg. 26)

The pain Haymitch Abernathy feels comes from having a lot of survivor's guilt. By giving him the win, the Capitol makes him feel like he did more than just hurt their system. He couldn't just stay living; he had to kill, act, and entertain the Capitol. That's why Haymitch thinks that his life is unfair; he feels like he's being saved because 47 other children died. He thinks that each day is a reflection of what they lost because of this. Throughout the Hunger Games trilogy, he can't get away from the guilt that keeps playing over and over in his head, and he drinks to forget about it. Instead of giving you freedom, winning the Games makes you feel bad about yourself and hurts you for the rest of your life. For example,

I don't know who that is on screen, so brutally killing those Careers from District 4. I guess it's me, but I can't own it. I stop thinking of myself as the jackass because it seems too complimentary for the creature I've developed into.

(pg. 344)

It was through the sacrifice of the blood of 47 other children that Haymitch was able to survive. Every time he made a cunning move or sacrificed himself in order to stay alive, a citizen of the Capitol rejoiced. This was because the Capitol turned his battle into a television show. Haymitch is of the opinion that the only reason his life might be considered valuable is because it gave his adversaries a "good season" of television.

Penetration

Galtung's idea of penetration explains stronger countries can gently change weaker ones. Leaders from the stronger country become close with leaders from the weaker country. This is how penetration works. Because of these ties, the powerful people in the weaker country agree with the stronger country. This approach works well because it uses existing inequalities like the difference between the wealthiest and the rest of society in the poorer countries. This allows power spread without using violence. The Capitol's handling of Louella McCoy's death is a scary example of the way they got into the superverse. The Capitol switches her dead body with a drugged one after she dies during the parade to keep the perfect story of the Games going. The Capitol makes Haymitch become a traitor by forcing him to tell this lie in front of everyone. Galtung adds that when

the Capitol controls what people see, dominance becomes "normal." This makes opposition it feels risky, unattainable, or invisible. For example,

I look down as the spiked wheels of the District 6 chariot close in on ours, and I have my answer. I see the sparks, feel the axles shredding, and lunge for Louella, hoping to brace her. She's reaching for me just as the wheel collapses and we're catapulted into the air. Next thing I know, I'm lying on the ground, my hand in a puddle of blood as the lights of the Capitol flash like fireflies above me.

This is better, I tell myself. Better than dying in the arena. Better than weasels and starvation and swords.

I'm embracing that when I realize the blood isn't mine. That fate isn't mine. And the tribute who's escaped the arena is Louella.

(pg. 75)

Haymitch's pain comes from the Capitol's control over the body of his late friend and neighbour Louella McCoy, who was known as "Lou Lou." President Snow shows a "medically induced" District 11 girl who looks like Louella after she dies in a chariot accident because of carelessness on the part of the Capitol. Haymitch went through the psychological effect when he had to make friends with this "puppet" for the cameras. He has to lie about Louella's death because the Capitol gets into his private life. As an example,

"...She's a good body double. We were lucky," says Snow...

"...Right," I say, "Who is she?"

"Best guess... child of traitors. Could be neither district or Capitol. She might not even know herself. No question they've programmed her. Probably drugged her as well."

Fake Louella chimes in. "Hello, Plutarch. My name is Louella McCoy. I'm from District Twelve."

(pg.136)

Another example,

"Tell us about yourself."

I cock my head, look her dead in the eye, and say I'm Haymitch Abernathy from District Twelve. I shouldn't be here. I was reaped illegally, but no one cares. My neighbor, Louella McCoy, was the only person here I gave a hang about, but you killed her and brought in a body double. So, that kind of frees me up to win these Games."

(pg. 158)

In this scene, the protagonist is being caught between the Capitol and the districts where he feels trapped which intensifies a long-term trauma but have no choice and be nice to the fake Louella McCoy. According to Majdandzic and Du Plooy (2025), Post Trauma Growth or PTG is the idea that people can experience positive mental and emotional growth after going through a very difficult or traumatic event. Even though someone has suffered, they might find a new sense of purpose, stronger relationships, or a deeper appreciation for life. In this scene, Haymitch is going through Post Trauma Growth because instead of him backed away from the fake Louella McCoy, he forced himself and having normal interaction with her although he witnessed the real Louella McCoy death in front of his eyes.

Fragmentation

Similar to the idea of "divide and rule," fragmentation is a way for strong groups to keep others apart so they cannot work together or fight back. According to Galtung (1969) as cited in Syams Shobahizzaman

Alma'shum, (2022), this works in three ways; weaker countries cannot work together, they have to deal with the powerful country on their own, and they cannot easily talk to other countries. By controlling the way people talk to each other and interact, the central power stays in charge. This divides people, which makes it harder to fight exploitation because it is hard to work together and organize opposition.

Galtung says that the Capitol stays strong by making sure that the districts only talk to the Capitol through the peripherals. According to the book, this division is directly threatened by the "Newcomers" Alliance, which is made up of Ampert from District 3 and Haymitch from District 12 and gifts from several other non-Career districts. Responding to Beetee's attempt to break into systems that would let the districts talk to each other outside of the Games, the Capitol punishes him by taking his son, Ampert. Although the Capitol does not mind tributes killing each other, it would not stand for them to work together to get around the Capitol's contact blockade. For example,

I am losing, I am losing the fight, I am losing him. I know this, but there's nothing to do but keep swinging. I never even get a glimpse of Ampert, just writhing furry bodies fighting for a piece of him. Finally, as if someone blew a whistle, audible only to them, hundreds of heads pop up and turn in unison toward an unseen master...

Then I turn back to what I am meant to witness. A small white skeleton, stripped clean to the bone. No flesh or clothing remains, only an ax at its right side, my knife at its left.

(pg.251)

Haymitch Abernathy learns that being together is a death sentence. He thinks that any relationship he has would be used as a target for the Capitol's violence since he destroyed the Game. Because of that, Capitol targeted him and let him being alone during the Hunger Game. Everyone who became his allies will end up died by the end of the game. While this leaves him with deep psychological scars, his "lone wolf" persona can actually be seen as a form of Post-Traumatic Growth. Instead of just being broken, Haymitch chooses emotional detachment as a way to protect others and survive a system that wants to own his identity.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the significant correlation between the inequitable systems of Panem and the persistent trauma of Haymitch Abernathy in Sunrise on the Reaping (2025) by Suzanne Collins. Galtung's theory says that the Capitol uses exploitation as its main way to control people's minds. The Capitol turns the "work" of children, which is the desperate act of survival, into a TV show that people may watch. This way, the Capitol gets the lives of the districts for the pleasure of the center. Haymitch will always have a psychic scar since he survived only to learn that his trauma had been turned into a product. He will always feel guilty for being part of a system that rewarded his survival with the deaths of 47 other people.

Superverse penetration is another way that the Capitol makes this trauma worse. In this case, the state invades the most private parts of a victor's life to make sure they are completely submissive. The "replacement" of Louella McCoy is the scariest example of this. The Capitol takes away Haymitch's right to mourn by making him hide his sadness behind a surgically altered duplicate. This tactic makes him a partner in his own tyranny by making it hard for him to tell the difference between who he really is and the "rascal" character the Capitol wants him to be. This penetration makes sure that Haymitch is never really free, even when the Games are over, because his identity is still a weapon of the state.

Finally, the Capitol uses fragmentation to keep Haymitch from joining forces with others and fighting back. The Capitol has a "divide and rule" approach to break down horizontal relationships between the districts. This makes tributes like Haymitch see their peers as rivals than of comrades in the same fight. The Capitol punishes any sign of cooperation between districts, including the "Newcomers" coalition, which causes Haymitch to live as a "lone wolf." Haymitch learns that emotional detachment is the best way to protect himself and others from more state-sanctioned violence. This isolation becomes a method to survive. This

disintegration leaves him mentally and emotionally stranded, which is the way we see him as a cynical, aloof mentor in the first three films of *Hunger Games*.

In summary, this research explores people can find strength in struggles. The trauma that is being experienced by Haymitch Abernathy throughout the novel is Post Traumatic Growth or PTG. It navigates deep pain can actually lead to positive psychological changes over time. It is a slow process that often happens while a person is still feeling distressed. Then, the way people handle their suffering determines the way it reshapes them. For Haymitch Abernathy, this helps explain the way he survives the structural violence of Panem even though the experience leaves him with permanent scars.

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