
Understanding Intersectionality through Tequila Leila's Experience in *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World* (2019)

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ABSTRACT

The article aims to explore intersectionality and its societal impact on the characters as portrayed in Elif Shafak's *10 Minutes 38 Seconds In This Strange World* (2019). This issue was extensively discussed to comprehend the representation of gender inequality and patriarchy in the story. Although the text has been the subject of discussion among a limited number of scholars, the novelty of this study lies in its adoption of a theoretical perspective that has not been utilized previously, specifically Kimberly Crenshaw's framework of intersectionality. Methodologically, this qualitative study identified and collected the primary data from the text by selecting direct and indirect quotations relevant to the issue discussed. This approach was complemented by secondary sources from previous and related studies which were drawn from books and journal articles. Having analyzed the text by applying Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality, the authors found that Shafak represented gender inequality and patriarchy in Turkey as a hegemonic and systematic belief. The text also discovered that the perpetuation of the patriarchal system, rooted in the practices frequently justified by religious rhetoric, is effectively prolonged by the continued male dominance in shaping public policies. It also indicates that the main character, Tequila Leila, and the other characters in the story possess overlapping identities, leading to numerous unfortunate experiences. Tequila Leila's oppressed experiences unveiled the structural and representational intersectionalities.

Keywords: *female oppression, gender inequalities, intersectionality, Kimberlé Crenshaw, patriarchy*

INTRODUCTION

Living in a society where females are the primary target of social marginalization ultimately produces a generational mental capacity in believing the existence of gender inequality (McCall, 2005). In 1989, an American civil rights advocate and critical race scholar, Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, coined the term "intersectionality" to respond to the injustice she witnessed in the American courtroom against women of color (International Women's Development Agency, 2018). Paradoxically, in the 21st century, where the discourse itself has gained enormous recognition academically and publicly, the existence of oppression

against these subordinate communities is persistently vigorous. Subsequently, the term developed as one of the leading theories in feminist studies to further probe the issue.

This omnipresent phenomenon is represented through Shafak's *10 Minutes 38 Seconds In This Strange World* (2019) which centers on the life of a female main character named Tequila Leila. The novel portrays her life struggle to pursue a decent life as well as to rescue herself from the existing predicament. The story highlights the hardships she endures due to her gender and profession as a

prostitute. The narrative emphasizes the coexistence of two “colliding” aspects, namely “gender” and “class”, which stand out within the character, Tequila Leila. Consequently, the portrayal of the issues in the story made the novel worth discussing. In addition, the discussion is to highlight how such situations can determine a character’s social position. In relation to the theoretical approach used in this study, the “colliding” aspects are later known as “intersecting” identities.

The study examined the issues of the intersection of identities simultaneously inherent within a character, specifically gendered and occupational-based oppressions, employing Kimberlé W. Crenshaw’s intersectionality. The study of intersectionality encompasses multiple layers of social identities of oneself which generate a fundamental motive for the marginalization of an individual. Although the notion decentralizes gender as the identity category, it challenges multi-dimensional issues of unequal treatment in society, such as race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, and other forms of intersecting social identities (Perlman, 2018). Thus, these social categories may create distinctive oppressive experiences in one’s life. Unfortunately, many people are unaware of the interconnected nature of social identities and one’s life condition. This lack of unawareness also creates substantial privileges and disparities within the system. Therefore, it is essential to understand intersectionality as both a pressing issue and a concept.

Although intersectionality has been in the discourse of feminism for decades, studies on intersectionality remains underrepresented in literary research. In 1989, Crenshaw wrote *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics* to address the unequal treatment experienced by Black women. Simply put, “intersectionality” is a concept of an intersecting system of social identities in our society (Crenshaw, 1989). In her other publication entitled *On Intersectionality: Essential Writings* (2017), Crenshaw stated that the concept serves as a political framework to address social injustices within the U.S. legal system. However, the concept can be linked to various distinctive discriminations faced by women in certain intersectional groups and minorities.

Crenshaw (1989) metaphorically explained

intersectionality as a structural concept. She described the term as the intersection of roads where discrimination or oppression happens intersectionally. She explained that structural intersectionality is analogous to what occurs when vehicles from different directions collide and overlap at an intersection point. People who live within specific social intersections or categorizations in our society have a higher chance of experiencing discrimination, marginalization, and oppression. In other words, structural intersectionality refers to the distinctive experiences of someone based on their specific social intersecting identities.

In her book, Crenshaw (1989) elaborated that intersectionality is divided into three forms, namely structural, representational, and political intersectionality. Structural intersectionality pertains to the distinctive experiences of women based on their particular intersecting identities. On the other hand, representational intersectionality concerns how the image of women is represented, misrepresented, underrepresented, or not represented in the discourse of popular culture shaping the public’s perception of them. Finally, political intersectionality pertains to two opposing agendas of two groups of movements or communities from which someone draws their identity, such as anti-racism and feminism (Crenshaw, 1991). However, it is important to note that no political intersectionality is discussed in this article due to the absence of relevant findings in the novel.

Ultimately, this article attempts to answer the question: How is intersectionality presented in Shafak’s story through its main character? This study employed Crenshaw’s perspective as a framework for the analysis. The main focus of this study is on Tequila Leila’s experiences of discrimination and oppression due to her gender. Growing up in a small city of Van, Turkey, to a family that adhered to patriarchal values, Tequila Leila faced daily challenges. By understanding the concept of intersectionality, Tequila Leila’s experiences can be analyzed within a spectrum of intersectionality issues.

The authors applied the qualitative methodology in this study, treating the novel as the primary source of data. Through a close reading of the novel, the authors identified and selected relevant evidence from the novel related to the issues of intersectionality. The data collected was mostly in the form of dialogues and narratives. In the analysis stage, the authors

emphasized on two main areas: 1) the discussion of the identities and cultural contexts constructed in the story, and 2) the discussion of how such identities and contexts legitimized discrimination and oppression as described in the novel, particularly against the main character. The analysis was supported by citations from secondary sources such as journal articles, books, and other related works.

In 2022, a study titled *Abjection and Marginalization of Women: A Critical Assessment of Leila's Character in Elif Shafak's Novel 10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* delved into the mistreatment and marginalization experienced by Tequila Leila, a sex worker in Istanbul (Mehdi et al., 2022). The study framed its analysis using Kristeva's theory of abjection. The findings of the study indicate that Tequila Leila was a victim of unforeseen circumstances, leading to mistreatment, oppression, and various injustices within society.

Similarly, in the same year, a critical essay titled *Boundaries and Taboos of Women: A Detailed Examination of Elif Shafak's 10 Minutes And 38 Seconds in This Strange World*, revealed women's oppression and marginalization within the context of religious and patriarchal beliefs (Zacharia & Senthamarai, n.d.). The investigation employed Islamic Feminism theory. Also, a study exploring *Intersectionality of Race and Gender in Harry Potter: The Deathly Hallows* employed Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality framework to portray intersectionality and its relation to both human and non-human entities (Utami, 2021).

Additionally, an article titled *Gender and Power: A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Elif Shafak's 10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World* revealed how the novel portrays the reality in which women are assigned stereotypical and subordinate roles by a patriarchal society. The authors argued that women face obstacles and torment due to male actions, while unjust blame is apportioned to them, compelling women to bear the consequences (Attaullah et al., 2021). Furthermore, the article highlighted the novel's depiction of societal expectations of traditional gender roles for women and the presence of gender-biased behaviors. The authors applied Fairclough's three-dimensional model, and feminist and social role theories from Simon de Beauvoir in their analysis.

This study acknowledges the limited existing research on Shafak's novel *10 Minutes and 38 Seconds in this Strange World* regarding the application of

Crenshaw's theoretical framework for analysis. Therefore, the authors aim to address this gap by examining the novel using Crenshaw's framework. As previously mentioned, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how intersectionality is represented in a literary text. Therefore, the novelty of this study is to shed light on the intricate ways in which power dynamics, social identities, and systemic oppressions intersect and influence the characters' experiences using a theoretical perspective that has not been utilized previously.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In everyday life, female oppression manifests in various forms, such as systemic abuse, labor exploitation, domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment, among others. These oppressive acts are also influenced by hidden intricacies that arise from external and internal intersecting systems. However, most people are unaware that oppression can occur based on various variables, other than race and gender contrary to common assumptions. These variables may include other social or cultural aspects often associated and intertwined with their social identities or conditions. To understand this phenomenon, intersectionality is introduced to elucidate the discourse on the issue.

Structural Intersectionality: Identities Defined

One's identity plays a significant role in the existence of privilege, struggle, and experiences in one's circumstances. Crenshaw (1991) argued that women's experiences are not subsumed only within race and gender discrimination issues and that the discourse of racism and sexist intersection cannot be understood fully by only considering the experiences of each factor separately. Therefore, it is crucial to include and consider the overlapping system in the discussion of one's experiences of discrimination and oppression.

One way to recognize and identify intersectionality is by examining the structural aspects of identity. According to Crenshaw, this concern belongs to "structural intersectionality". For example, a person could be a Black woman, a housewife living in a homogeneous area that is different from her race which places her intersecting identity based on race, gender, marital status, occupation, and location.

Referring to these aspects, her experiences can differ from those of a Black single woman who lives in an area where the majority are also Black and works in an office. To provide further understanding, Tequila Leila's biological mother, Binnaz, experienced unfair treatment from the people around her illustrating "structural intersectionality".

Binnaz who came from poverty and was illiterate, was compelled to marry Haroun as a means of supporting her poor family. For Haroun and his family, the marriage happened because Haroun could not bear a child with his first wife, Suzan. This revealed how Binnaz was only regarded as a breeding apparatus to Haroun and his family. Furthermore, Binnaz and Haroun's marriage was not official and it was conducted solely in accordance with Islamic rules.

After weeks of negotiations between the families, Haroun and Binnaz had married in a religious ceremony. It was unofficial, and if anything were to go wrong in the future it would not be recognized by the secular courts, but that was a detail no one had cared to mention."

(Shafak, 2019: 6-7)

This is a disadvantage for Binnaz because if the marriage was not legally registered, there would be no legal protection from the court if something happened to their marriage. Regardless of the existence of children, the court will not see Binnaz and Haroun as a wife and a husband, but only as co-living partners. If they were not considered a married couple, they would not have the rights and privileges a registered married couple would have. Due to the absence of legal documentation, Haroun could leave Binnaz and neglect his responsibilities as a husband to her without needing legal action to proceed with the divorce. In another part of the story, Binnaz was portrayed as a submissive and resigned wife to Haroun. It can be seen in the excerpts below.

"You are young. Suzan is getting old. She will never have a child of her own. Give her a gift." Binnaz started to cry. These were not tears of rage or resentment. They were tears of resignation.

(Shafak, 2019: 14)

It is shown how Haroun forcefully demanded Binnaz to give up her newborn, Leila, to his first wife, Suzan. He also victimized her by saying, "Don't be

ungrateful" (Shafak, 2019: 14). It reveals that Binnaz had no power against Haroun. By examining these excerpts and drawing interpretations on them, it becomes apparent that Binnaz's background and her current position as a second wife who was fertile to Haroun generate unfair treatment and disadvantages. From an intersectionality perspective, Binnaz's intersecting identity is based on her gender as a woman, her lower-class status, her illiteracy, her marital status as a wife, and her fertility.

In addition to Binnaz, intersectionality is also evident in the character, Nalan. Before her name was Nalan, she was called Osman. Growing up, she never identified herself with the name Osman. It never resonated with her.

In his mind, he was always a girl, never a boy. He had always known he was a female inside.

(Shafak, 2019: 43)

Acknowledging that fact, Nalan embraced her true self despite everything else. This caused unpleasant memories from her childhood. She was considered an outcast and different because she did not fit into their narrative of a "man" or "boy".

The unpleasant memories of hers consist of torments and cruel remarks from her classmates. Her classmates called her names and subjected her to constant bullying because she did not behave or act as she was "supposed to".

But he did mind the constant teasing and bullying that he received every day. It had all started when one of the boys, catching him barefoot, noticed he had painted his toenails. Osman is a sissy pants!

(Shafak, 2019: 43)

As a "boy", who never felt like one, Nalan acted and behaved against society's expectations, particularly in a religious environment. She received bad treatment from people around her during that time. Although everything seemed impossible at first, she chose to protect and embrace her true self. When Nalan saw a hope to change her life, she took it. She moved to Istanbul and worked hard to pay for her surgery. However, life after the transformation was less than perfect. As a transgender in Istanbul, her life was filled with challenges.

The law was clear about it: transvestites could

not be employed in brothels—and since they could not get a job anywhere else either, they had to work on the streets.

(Shafak, 2019: 123)

The excerpt depicts the life of a transgender in Istanbul. She did not only face terrible treatment from society, but she also faced legal obstacles, that prevented her as a transgender woman, from being employed. These circumstances made it difficult for her to provide for herself to merely survive. According to the interpretation, Nalan's intersecting identity is based on her gender expression when she was still known as Osman and her identity as a transgender woman.

Lastly, the portrayal of structural intersectionality can also be found in the character D/Ali. After spending years in Germany, D/Ali returned to Istanbul, Turkey, to be with his sisters. However, upon his arrival in Istanbul, he experienced the same feeling of alienation as he had experienced in Germany. Because he had lived indifferent countries, he felt that he did not belong anywhere, and he never felt at home wherever he went. When he arrived in Istanbul, he felt that he did not belong there either. D/Ali found himself to be "the different one" again.

It wasn't only his accent and the way he involuntarily sprinkled a ja or an ach so! at the end of his sentences that made him stand out. It was the expression on his face, as if he were perpetually dissatisfied or disenchanted with what he saw, what he heard, what he couldn't bring himself to be part of.

(Shafak, 2019: 117)

D/Ali's experiences may be analyzed through his overlapping social identities, as indicated in the excerpt. As a Turkish-German, he was subjected to prejudice on many occasions. When his peers found out about his interest in arts, they made derogatory remarks about him. It can be inferred from the excerpt that D/Ali's structural intersectionality experience is shaped by his personal interest in art, and his multicultural experiences living and being exposed to different cultures.

Representational Intersectionality: Culture Constructed

The depiction of "representational intersectionality"

can be identified in the embodiment of Shafak's characters. Representational intersectionality refers to how culture constructs the imagery of a woman's life and experiences. According to Crenshaw (1991), this concept can be examined in two ways. First, how the imagery of women of color is constructed through pervasive narratives in the universal discourse. Second, how the marginalization of women of color arises from contemporary critiques based on the representation of race and gender. For instance, women in the Middle East are often stereotyped as more oppressed than women in the West. This narrative might exist because of contemporary critique or the narrative that the media had constructed. To have a better understanding, the representational intersectionality can be observed in Tequila Leila's and Jameelah's experiences.

Leila grew up in a conservative environment. Her family, particularly her father, was religious and conservative. As a teenager, Leila was interested in many things. One day, she was caught hiding a hula hoop that her friend had given her as a gift. Her father was furious about it because he disapproved of Western culture believing that "music was haram and Western music even more so" (Shafak, 2019: 69). This phrase indicates his negative perception of Western culture.

In an old issue of Hayat magazine [...], she had seen a blonde woman clad in a black swimsuit and black stilettos, happily swirling a plastic ring. A caption underneath the picture read, 'In Denver, American model Fay Shott spins a hula hoop around her slender waist.'

(Shafak, 2019: 80)

In the story, hula hoops were perceived to be a symbol of the West as indicated in the passage. Leila's father viewed this perception as negative. His disapproval of the Western culture influenced how he treated Leila as she seemed to be immersed in Western culture.

"Really? Look at yourself, are you my daughter? I cannot recognize you any more. We worked so hard to give you a decent upbringing. I can't believe you behave like a ... whore! Is that what you want to become in the end? A damned whore?"

(Shafak, 2019: 82)

By analyzing the excerpts, it is evident that the stigma in society and media representation play a critical role in shaping and controlling the public's perception of certain things. This can affect one's experience and may generate a certain level of marginalization and discrimination against individuals. As a young girl living in the small city of Van, Leila was criticized and mistreated since her interest was viewed to be inappropriate. As Crenshaw (1991) stated, representational intersectionality may be examined in how prevalent narratives construct the imagery of women.

Another character who appears to portray representational intersectionality is Jameelah. She left her home country Somalia to pursue a better opportunity in Istanbul. Before she left Somalia, she was promised a new job and a new life in Istanbul. However, it did not turn out as promised. As soon as she arrived in Istanbul, she was forced into prostitution.

But the only Africans mentioned in the newspapers were those who, like her, had been trafficked.

(Shafak, 2019: 99)

As a Black woman working as a sex worker, Jameelah faced the stigma from the general public. This perception was shaped by how the media constructs narratives about women in the same profession. The media was not entirely inaccurate, as it only presented a partial perspective.

The Africans in Istanbul came from all sides of the old continent—Tanganyika, Sudan, Uganda, Nigeria, Kenya, Upper Volta, Ethiopia—escaping civil war, religious violence, political insurgency. The number of asylum seekers had increased daily over the years. Among them were students, professionals, artists, journalists, scholars.

(Shafak, 2019: 99)

Referring to this passage, it is clear that the media has propagated a narrative about African people and it has created a certain belief that African people, who sought refuge and better life opportunities are those who have been trafficked. The way the newspaper informed the public, suggests that the media only focused on particular facts or half-truths that they considered was “better” or

“appealing” to present to the public. However, in the last passage, which was not covered by the media, the complete truth about African people who came to Turkey is clearly stated. Therefore, it is shown that Leila and Jameelah's experiences can be seen as representational intersectionality. Both their marginalization and oppression were products of the prevalent narratives that circulated in the public and media.

The Death of the Main Character: Discrimination against the Lifeless

In the context of intersectionality, the issue of homogeneity was a significant concern for the community during the early stages of the feminist movement. Initially, the movement focused on white, non-religious, middle-class women, which sparked a crucial discussion about including women from other socioeconomic groups in the conversation (Nehorai, 2018). Similar to several other characters in the novel, as previously discussed, Tequila's miserable life exemplifies the inevitable intersectionality. This is reflected in the discrimination and oppression she experienced due to her identity as both a woman and a prostitute. Furthermore, Shafak emphasizes that the misfortune endured by Turkish women persists even after their deaths. This highlights the enduring nature of intersectionality.

Leila was murdered and her body was thrown in a garbage bin on the side road. It is stated that the report of her death on November 29, 1990, barely made the news. The following was written in the news after she was found.

Towards the end of the programme, a bright yellow band scrolled along the bottom of the screen: Prostitute Found Slain in City Waste Bin: Fourth in a Month. Panic Spreads Among Istanbul's Sex Workers.

(Shafak, 2019: 17)

The statement, “Towards the end of the programme, a bright yellow band scrolled along the bottom of the screen” illustrates that the news was placed at the very end of the programme and it was only displayed on the scrolling news ticker. This line conveys that the news of the murder of a prostitute was not important. People barely read anything that is written in the news ticker scroll because it is small, located at the bottom of the screen and it moved

quickly. People usually focus more on the news that is reported by a reporter. This can be interpreted that the broadcast of her death was considered insignificant and of little concern to anyone.

Furthermore, the excerpt can be further analyzed based on the line, *Prostitute Found Slain in City Waste Bin: Fourth in a Month. Panic Spreads Among Istanbul's Sex Workers*. Leila's name was not mentioned in the news, instead, it was replaced by the labels "prostitute" and "sex worker". This suggests that the media only focused on the fact that she was a prostitute rather than recognizing her as a human being. Additionally, the following line, *Panic Spreads Among Istanbul's Sex Workers*, indicates that the media specifically targeted the news towards the sex workers. It showed how the report about panic and the murder itself was tailored exclusively to this group. Additionally, the news appeared to convey how prostitutes were viewed by the general public and how the perception of society was constructed by these narratives. People were aware of the issue, but they appear to view it as "irrelevant".

The inclusion of the "city waste bin" where she was discovered suggests that this was where she was supposed to be. They could have omitted the information on the location, but they opted to include it. In another sense, the snippets of the news appeared to illustrate how the media constructs the narrative about prostitutes by associating them with something as dreadful as murder. Furthermore, it appears that the authorities, in this case, the police, also released a statement to the media conveying a certain opinion or attitude about sex workers or "streetwalkers". In their message to the media, they declared unequivocally.

The Deputy Police Chief told the press, 'Rest assured we will find the perpetrator in no time. We have employed a special unit to deal with this case. At this stage, we ask the public to share with law enforcement any suspicious activity they may have seen or heard. However, citizens, especially women, do not need to be alarmed. These murders were not randomly committed. One particular group, without exception, was targeted. All the victims were streetwalkers. Normal female citizens have no need to worry about their safety.'

(Shafak, 2019: 182)

Referring to the passage, it clearly indicates

the police's attitude towards streetwalkers or prostitutes. The phrase employed in this media item will undoubtedly have an impression on its reader, "however, citizens, particularly women, do not need to be alarmed" (Shafak, 2019: 182). It stated "citizens, especially women," implying that "streetwalkers," or sex workers in this context, were not considered citizens or women in society. They also claim, "all of the victims were streetwalkers. Normal female citizens have no need to be concerned about their safety" (Shafak, 2019: 182), emphasizing that prostitutes are not regarded as "normal female citizens". It highlights that they are perceived as "different" and alienated from society.

The concept of "othering" involves the categorization of the self or in-group and the other or out-group in a mutual but unequal antagonistic relationship, achieved by ascribing varying degrees of inferiority and/or conspicuous unfamiliarity to the out-group (Brons, 2015). According to the perspective above, Leila experienced marginalization, which ultimately turned into oppression, as demonstrated by "representational intersectionality".

As a female sex worker in Istanbul, oppression and violence were constant companions for her. On the day her body was inspected for an autopsy, the forensic pathologist discovered "marks on the woman's neck" (Shafak, 2019: 158) and "imprints of the murderer's fingers" (Shafak, 2019: 158). However, he seemed hesitant to include the information in the report. This is evident in the phrase "he paused his typing" (Shafak, 2019: 158). The reason for his hesitancy is that he believed that Leila's remains would be laid to rest at the "Cemetery of the Companionless". According to the narrative, the "Cemetery of the Companionless" is a burial ground for the unwanted and despised.

Not that it mattered anymore. Like all the unclaimed dead, she, too, would be consigned to the Cemetery of the Companionless.

(Shafak, 2019: 158)

Almost everyone interred in the Cemetery of the Companionless was, in some way or another, an outcast. Many had been shunned by their family or village or society at large. Crack addicts, alcoholics, gamblers, small-time criminals, rough sleepers, runaways, throwaways, missing citizens, the mentally ill, derelicts, unwed mothers, prostitutes, pimps,

transvestites, AIDS patients ... The undesirables. Social pariahs. Cultural lepers.

(Shafak, 2019: 216)

It is possible to interpret the medical examiner's judgment that Leila, a sex worker, was the "unwanted" or "outcast" soul who belonged to the "Cemetery of the Companionless". As a forensic pathologist, his role is to assist the deceased in uncovering the truth and obtaining justice. However, he opted to overlook and conceal the fact that Leila was murdered because she was a prostitute. He assumed that individuals like Leila would be buried at the infamous cemetery.

Afterwards, she would probably have no visitors. Perhaps an old neighbour or a niece—one distant enough not to mind the shame brought upon the family—would show up a few times, but eventually the visits would cease. In just a few months' time, with no marker or stone, the woman's grave would fully blend in with its surroundings. In less than a decade, no one would be able to locate her whereabouts. She would become yet another number in the Cemetery of the Companionless, yet another pitiable soul whose life echoed the opening of every Anatolian tale: Once there was, once there wasn't ...

(Shafak, 2019: 159)

By examining this passage, it can be interpreted that even after her death, Leila was still treated unfairly. Although prostitution was not a prevalent topic in Istanbul, it was nonetheless regarded as an ignominy to society. Prostitution was a forbidden subject to discuss, and sex workers were considered a disgrace to anybody who tried to approach or be affiliated with them. Such themes and narratives are found throughout the novel. It can be argued that Leila's condition and experiences as depicted in the passages and excerpts above revealed how her status as a sex worker generated unfair treatment and oppression, even after her death. The mistreatment that she received portrayed the concept of structural intersectionality. It is also evident that even after her death, she was regarded as a disposable and worthless object.

Capturing Intersectionality in Turkey through Fiction

Historically, women-related cultural and social

issues in Turkey are nothing new. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century marked a transformative phase ushered in under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. He introduced significant changes by promoting secularism and introducing contemporary education systems as well as the provision of equal educational opportunities for both genders and the establishment of equal rights for women (Sumer, 2013; Zambrana, 2021). However, the impact of long-standing traditional gender roles and entrenched patriarchal ideologies inherited from the Ottoman era has been in fact persistent. It only reveals a prolonged struggle among women in certain geographical regions in the country. This battle is most pronounced in rural areas and centers on the fundamental objectives of securing economic independence and confronting deeply ingrained traditional gender role practices (Messina, 2021).

Examining the contexts presented in Elif Shafak's *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* is highly eligible by applying Crenshaw's concepts of intersectionality. As revealed in the findings, oppression and discrimination are the points of discussion. The authors argue that the existence of intersectionality persists in Turkey due to the interplay of historical and religious factors.

Firstly, the role of religion is a significant variable, which is strongly reflected in the existence of social and cultural constructions based on Islam. As previously discussed, the legacy of the patriarchal ideology of the Ottoman Empire still continues to influence the contemporary Turkish society. This means that the patriarchal paradigm in this country is still alive and has the power to construct justifications for discrimination and oppression against women in the name of religion. Thus, the existence of religion, which should uphold nobility, morality and humanity, is reduced when its presence actually causes misery to particular genders, notably, women. From an intersectionality perspective, it is evident that not only Turkish women, who are disadvantaged, but within this group, those who come from certain social classes as well. In this case, women from the lower middle class, including sex workers are among the most marginalized.

Secondly, religion is often leveraged to support the binary opposition view which emphasize that Western culture is the opposite of Islamic culture. The term *haram* which is popular as an Islamic terminology

is explicitly used as a tool to oppose elements that are believed to be Western products, such as music. The Islamic paradigm juxtaposed with the West shows that all aspects of life in Turkey should adhere to Islamic principles. Instead of being a deterrent, religion is presented as a determinant of individual identity which is intended to differentiate non-Islamic identities and non-halal entities. This perception aligns with views that perpetuate traditional gender roles, such as a belief that women should only be in the private sphere (dealing with domestic affairs), while the public sphere is men's domain.

Therefore, the concept of intersectionality in Turkey, as described by Shafak, cannot be separated from how Islam is "constructed" within the country. In other words, intersectionality, both structural and representational, is not inherent in Islam itself. There are historical and cultural factors in Turkey that cause Islam to be interpreted in such a way through quasi-relationships that are legitimized by the patriarchal system.

CONCLUSION

The current study reveals that individuals possess multiple and overlapping identities. As a result, these overlapping identities confer distinct advantages and disadvantages on each individual. Different upbringings and living environments can offer someone a wide range of experiences, especially if they have identities that can be categorized as adhering to specific groups, where one identity is superior to another. These advantages and disadvantages contribute to the level of treatment someone receives. Looking at each of the characters' life experiences, it becomes evident that their complicated social identities overlap with one another.

Regarding Crenshaw's theoretical perspective, Shafak's characters portray the concept of intersectionality. Several of her characters receive different treatment, mostly discrimination and oppression, based on their intersecting social identities which are categorized as structural and representational intersectionality. The frequently intersecting social categories that produce unfair treatment towards the characters are based on genders, occupations, and personal interests.

According to the analysis, more than two characters are found to have experienced the impact

of structural intersectionality. Meanwhile, two of the characters appear to portray representational intersectionality, with two of them being women who are stigmatized in society because of their social identities. Lastly, although intersectionality exists to respond to the unfair treatment towards women of color based on their overlapping social identity, it revealed that it was not only women who experienced discrimination based on their social categories. Men can also face mistreatment based on their identity.

In the case of Tequila Leila, it can be stated that as a woman born into a traditional and religious (Islamic) household with intense patriarchal beliefs, she is subjected to a variety of unfair treatment from those around her, including her family. Leila was subjected to different forms of discrimination and oppression despite having no other choice but to become a sex worker in Istanbul. Furthermore, Leila's situation is exacerbated by societal shame. Her occupation as a prostitute condemned her to oppression to the extent of murder at the hands of a murderer who harbored a particular prejudice against sex workers. Many people believed that prostitutes and everything associated with them were worthless, immoral, undesired, and ultimately had no value in society. Not only that, the system continued to mistreat and marginalize individuals like Leila, or what they referred to as streetwalkers.

COMPETING INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors of this study declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to this work. This study was conducted in the absence of any financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest. No funding or support from any organization or entity with a financial interest in the subject matter has influenced the study. Moreover, the research findings and conclusions presented in this article are solely based on the data collected and the analysis conducted by the authors.

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