

**التحليل الاجتماعي والعائلي لحارس أختي (٢٠٠٤) بواسطة جودي بيكولت:
استناداً إلى فكرة جورج موردوك التنشئة الاجتماعية والوظيفية**

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**The Social and Familial Analysis of My Sister's Keeper
(2004) by Jodi Picoult: Based on George Murdock's Notion
of Socialization and Functionalism**

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المستخلص Abstract

الصحة هي حالة من الرفاهية أو نقص المرض ، وهي في الواقع امتياز إنساني ، لأن المرض والعجز يخلقان عقبات في طريق القيام بأشياء معينة. مفهوم الصحة له أهمية كبيرة في الممارسات الإسلامية. تبحث الدراسة الحالية عن حلول قرآنية تضمن الصحة النفسية والأمن. أيضاً ، هذا بحث نظري تم إجراؤه بطريقة وصفية تحليلية وبحث متعدد التخصصات لتطوير العلوم الإنسانية. بشكل عام ، يقسم القرآن الكريم صحة الإنسان إلى قسمين: الجسدية والعقلية. يقدم أربع استراتيجيات عامة من أجل تعزيز الصحة النفسية: ١. استراتيجيات البصيرة: الإيمان القوي ، والخضوع لله ، والقيام ، وفهم رزق الله ، وما إلى ذلك. ٢. استراتيجيات الحالة المزاجية: الإلمام بالقرآن ، والصلاة ، والدعاء ، والامتنان ، إلخ. ٣. الاستراتيجيات التحفيزية: الأمل ، والهدف ، والثقة ، والتفكير الإيجابي ، ٤. استراتيجيات العمل: الإحسان ، الصدقة ، الصفح ، الأمر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر ، إلخ. ونتيجة لذلك ، يقدم القرآن الكريم هذه الاستراتيجيات لضمان الأمن النفسي والصحة العقلية ، والتي ترتبط ارتباطاً مباشراً ببعضها البعض.

الكلمات المفتاحية : الأبعاد ، الإستراتيجيات ، الصحة النفسية ، تعزيز الصحة النفسية ، الأمن الروحي ، القرآن الكريم .

My Sister's Keeper (2004) by Picoult is a story about how a family, as an institution, may sometimes be extremely injurious to the kids, both physically and psychologically. My Sister's Keeper relates a story about a sick girl whose illness affects the entire family dynamics. By applying Murdock's social account of family to this novel and investigating the functions of the family, namely sexual, reproductive, educational, and economic, this study investigated family relations and functions and developed the argument by discussing the potential reasons for their problems. The characters were analyzed based on their roles and functions in the family, as well as their interactions with each other. In addition, the conflicts the family faces due to family dysfunction have been discussed. The results of the study show that members of a family often develop associations and interactions which occasionally can even get ferocious and hurt some of the members. Picoult's portrayal of a young girl's suffering from leukemia can be traced back to her intention to depict the various challenges and conflicts which influence her whole family. For Anna and Jesse as Kate's siblings, the challenges can be also traumatic because they often go through fluctuations in their lives. The family's role in dealing with the manifold causes of trauma and insecurity which is linked to Kate's illness and her treatment has affected her quality of life.

Key Words : Family Functions, Murdock's Family Framework , Reproduction , Education , Economic , Anna , Picoult , My Sister's Keeper , Dysfunctional Family .

1. Introduction

Jodi Lynn Picoult (born 1966) is a prolific writer who has published many short stories and novels. She has also written for the journal of *Wonder Woman*. As the author of twenty three bestselling novels, including *Small Great Things* (2016), *Off the Page* (2015), *Leaving Time* (2014), and *The Storyteller* (2013), Picoult is a productive and high-profile American writer with a unique style of storytelling. Her books often deal with ethical and familial issues and are mostly told from various points of view. She writes well-known fiction that can be characterized as a family saga as a genre of literature which shows the lives and goings-on of a family over a period of time.

Family and society are amongst the issues which play an important role in literature. This importance has been shown by different writers such as Jodi Picoult in her novel, *My Sister's Keeper*. In this popular work of fiction, she examines the true meaning behind being a good parent, sister, an individual. The readers may ask themselves about the moral implications of saving their child's lives at all costs, even if that means to infringe upon the rights of another person. The family in this novel faces the dilemma whether to follow their own heart, or let others lead them. Throughout a story of pathos, humor, and love, Picoult copes with a provocative realistic topic with elegance, insight, and sympathy in *My Sister's Keeper*.

The psychosocial development has been used as a theoretical framework to study Picoult's novel before; however, there remains a gap regarding the analysis of the role of family and society which is mainly about familial conflicts. In order to fill the mentioned gap, this paper seeks to analyze *My Sister's Keeper* and explain the role of the family in society. The functionalists have acknowledged that families are a significant social institution and play a key role in stabilizing communities.

By applying Murdock's social account of family to this novel and investigating the family functions, namely sexual, reproductive, educational, and economic, this study hopes to fill the gap that exists in this research field. In *Social Structure* (1949), Murdock describes the family as a kinship organization that exists as a main social structure in all cultures. The present study begins by a close reading of the novel and cataloguing the different familial concepts that indicate the characters' relation and function; then it develops the argument by

discussing the potential reasons for their problem through George Murdock's theory. Thus, considering Murdock's family concepts, this paper provides a new insight to the attitude towards modern crisis of identity, ignorance, and family crisis held by the characters, namely Kate, Anna, and their mother in this novel.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: In Section 2, we review the previous work. In Section 3, we present the Murdock's Theories. Section 4 discusses the Concept of Family in *My Sister's Keeper*, Section 5 discusses Family Relationships, Section 6 discusses Murdock's family framework, Section 7 discusses Characters' Analysis, Section 8 discusses Analysis of Important Scenes and the final section presents the conclusions of the paper.

2. Review of Related Literature

A preliminary literature review reveals that several studies have been done on the notion of social and familial studies. The text of *My Sister's Keeper* is considered as the primary source which is used in discussing Murdock's theories. In the following sections, the sources will be presented in two categories; the first one includes the general theoretical bases of the present paper regarding Murdock's theories, and the second section consists of more specific works which have been done on *My Sister's Keeper*.

2.1. Works Related to George Murdock and Social and Familial Theory

George Peter Murdock analyzed the system of kinship in preliterate societies in his book, *Social Structure* (1949). He believed that the social structure is a taxonomic way of categorization, classification, comparison, and relation of different facets of kinship systems. In this book, Murdock has depicted a combination of five different products of social science based on four theories. The products of social science are actually a conscious attempt of focusing on several disciplines such as a social life of humans, the kinship and family system, and their link to the regulation of marriage and sex. The whole book is a contribution not only to anthropology, sociology, and psychology, but also to a united and scientific study of human behavior.

"Correlations of Matrilineal and Patrilineal Institutions" is regarded as Murdock's (1937) inspection of the innumerable socioeconomic variables which are linked to the matrilineal and patrilineal establishments. Numerous variables were suggested by him to associate

significantly with matrilineal and patrilineal organizations. There is also a review on a book entitled *Explorations in Cultural Anthropology: Essays in Honor of George Peter Murdock* (1964) by Ralph L. Beals, in which he puts Murdock's main contributions in a beneficial framework.

All the twenty four writers of these collections of essays were previously students of Murdock. The essays focus on various aspects with the high levels of analysis, such as dealing with the particular problems of cultures or other matters in ethnography. There are also descriptive papers which have analytical features and discuss many fundamental problems of social structure and human rights. The emphasis of those essays is mostly on the correlation between the kinship structures and the relevance of psychological survey to the realization of society.

In his article entitled "George Peter Murdock", Spoehr (1985) provides a brief and at the same time complete biography of George Murdock; then he refers to his objectives such as founding of *Ethnology* (1962) as an anthropological journal. In addition to his editorial role, Murdock (1949) initiated and was personally responsible for the preparation of a special feature of the new journal, *Ethnographic Atlas* (1968). Spoehr (1985) asserts that closely related to *Ethnographic Atlas* was another important project that Murdock began in 1968 and directed until 1972. This was the Cross-Cultural Cumulative Coding Center, funded by the National Science Foundation. A main objective of this project was to extend and refine cross-cultural codes in order to arrive at stratified world and regional samples, amenable to statistical comparison and inference.

Family Studies: An Introduction by Bernardes (1997) offers a complete perception of the contemporary family living. According to this book, the concept of family is the most substantial matter; however, there are many families who suffer from abuse, disability, poverty, and divorce. Nowadays there are quick changes in families of Western communities, some of which receive a remarkably little support. This book discusses one should ignore the traditional concept of the family and listen to what others, such as fathers and mothers, children, husbands, and wives tell about their experiences. The chapters are designed to work as individual units of study in courses on family living.

The author argues for the foundation of family studies in schools, colleges, and universities in order to help all members of society

understand and be better prepared for the many roles like partnering and parenting and challenges in childhood. Real sexual equality may be achieved by encouraging men to participate more in the unpaid work roles of parenting, especially housework and child care. The government has a key role here in creating equality in both paid and unpaid work, particularly by giving men legal rights to parental leave. Fundamental changes in paid and unpaid work, family relationships, and human services are essential for us to generate a society in which families, in all forms, are *put first.

The article entitled "The Concept of Family in the Selected Novels from the Emerging Countries: A Sociological Analysis" by Juanito O. Cabanias (2006) analyzes the concept of family from a sociological point of view that is depicted in six novels. In this article, the sociological factors such as political, cultural, and economic are considered based on the perspective of authors of those novels on concept of family. Although those selected novels are written by a number of authors from differing periods, religions, races, and countries of origin, the most usual concept of family is the prevalence of social relationships. The most influential sociological factors in these novels are the cultural, economic and political facets that are desirably interlinked with the concept of family.

Another useful study is carried out by Hawes and Nybakken (2001) which discusses the many changes in the American family from the eighteenth century to the twentieth century. It also provides some of the theories which have been utilized in order to study American families. By establishing a link between the inconsistent social circumstances, this book presents helpful information regarding husband-wife and parent-child associations.

Social Class and Changing Families in an Unequal America by Carlson and England (2011) is the other instance of a novel and up-to-date assessment of the state of the family. This book has underscored some particular facets of family behavior and has also investigated to what extent the families' experiences are molded by social class. This book offers a detailed and precise appraisal of modern family life between the wild financial fluxes in America. As another inclusive analysis of the contemporary American family, *Families in America: A Reference Handbook* (2002) has provided a substantial indication of family life in America through discussing some issues like the multicultural family, families of divorce, and blended families.

2.2. Works Related to *My Sister's Keeper* (2004)

Citra Pantow (2013) in a paper entitled "Anna Fitzgerald's Conflicts in The Novel *My Sister's Keeper* by Picoult," in focuses on recognizing the main character's internal conflict within the novel. Anna Fitzgerald's personality along with her physical and mental conflicts is investigated in this study through an intrinsic as well as extrinsic approach.

Artemis Michailidou (2019) explores the idea of the designer baby. This article provides the review of feminist journals on the matter of IVF (in-vitro fertilization). Analyzing this controversial subject, Michailidou investigates Picoult's perspective on the recent IVF technologies. He focuses on re-configuration of determining gender with IVF examination. At the end, he states that *My Sister's Keeper* calls into questions many crucial Matters such as the morality, ethics, and biology in the 21st century of America.

In her thesis, Reni Puspitasari (2011) analyzes the parents' attempts to solve the internal family problems. Puspitasari emphasizes the parents' role in the development of their children mental order, and concludes that parents play important roles in structuring the children's psychology. Besides, various viewpoints and disagreements on the special matter within the family members cause conflicts among them.

At the end, those struggles in Anna's family actually have an undesirable influence on behavior as well as personality of the children. For example, they are unable to communicate well with each other. This thesis stresses the role of the parents in solving the problems which each member of the family may undergo. If the parents make an inappropriate decision, it will cause another difficult problem as well.

Dewi (2011) also analyzes Picoult's *My Sister's Keeper* in his thesis and investigates the main character's personality. Anna's decision not to go through with her organ donation to Kate as her older sister has an internal psychological reason. Through a psychological approach, it is found out that the reason behind Anna's decision is that she desires to gain the affection and attention of her family. Intrinsically, this thesis suggests that she actually aims to help Kate to end her sufferings.

In their article, AtikahRidwan and Sahri (2020) aimed to show the damaging effects of the mother's attitude toward her children, Anna and Kate. Sara Fitzgerald as their mother has an over-protective view to her sick daughter. Consequently, her overprotective role causes some problems among family members and their relationship. However, the

reason behind Sara's over-protectiveness toward Kate is her sickness. She over-protects Kate in order to survive her without paying attention to suffering of her other child, i.e. Anna.

Child Rights Reflected in Jodi Picoult's My Sister's Keeper: A Sociological Perspective by Susila, Thoyibi, and Hikmat (2014) is, as suggested by the title, about child rights in *My Sister's Keeper*. It is declared that this novel is mainly about a child who wishes to get her freedom in "medical emancipation". This study which has benefitted from a sociological methodology shows that there is a strong relationship between the novel and the reality of the social life as existing in the late twentieth century and the early twenty-first century. Picoult has chiefly desired to demonstrate a child who wants to sue her mother since she is looking for her rights and individuality.

"The Analysis of the Main Character in Jodi Picoult's Novel *My Sister's Keeper*" by Uspiano, Saida and Rahayuni (2016) means to analyze the physiological, sociological and the psychological aspects of the main character in Picoult's *My Sister's Keeper*. Through the physiological facet, it is concluded that Anna as a thirteen-year-old girl with a skinny preteen body is an allogeneic contributor for her sister. Next, based on the sociological aspect, Anna is described as a child from an archetypal American family who has to cope with the court due to her attempts to get medical emancipation. Third, psychologically, Anna is described as a clever, strong-minded, peaceful, steady, thoughtful, and compliant girl who is also suffering from insecurity and depression.

Internal Conflicts Faced by the Main Characters of My Sister's Keeper by Jodi Picoult by Hidayah (2018) is the title of a dissertation in which the researcher aims at answering two main questions: 1) What kinds of internal conflict are faced by Anna? 2) How do the main characters resolve the conflict? The findings show there are three types of internal struggles that Anna undergoes and also there are five ways to resolve these clashes. These clashes are categorized according to Lewin's approaches, and include "avoidance-avoidance.

In *The Meanings of a Mother's Love to Her Dying Daughter as Seen in Jodi Picoult's My Sister's Keeper* by Kristiani (2010), it is attempted to investigate the implications of a mother's affection toward her sick daughter. Thus, the theories of character have been used in order to describe the chief and inconsequential characters. In the meantime, theories of motherhood, mother-daughter relationship, theories of love

and the manifestation of love have been employed to know how their associations are. The psychological approach is also employed in this study since the mother's love and mother-children bond are related to psychological aspect. conflict, approach-avoidance conflict, and multi approach-avoidance conflict”.

“Communication Ethics and My Sister's Keeper” by Hart, Waler and Gregg (2007) is another research which aims at finding about the ethical quandaries in communication presented in *My Sister's Keeper*, and exploring how the characters' viewpoint establishes how they understand and assess their circumstances. Sarumaha's article (2017) discusses the relationship between a family's members who are in a complex dilemma. Problems that happen in the family are instigated by the preference of the parents to their children and the sickness that one of the family members suffers from.

In the last study, Ana Susianti, Thoyibi and Hikmat (2014) utilize the psychoanalytic criticism to present the clear image of this novel's characters. She analyzes the novel based on the structural elements and psychoanalytic criticism proposed by Sigmund Freud. The article concludes that a person can experience both external and internal struggles between his/her altruistic and selfish desires. The result of this research depicts that Picoult provides the psychological phenomenon that a person experiences his/her internal conflict between his/her positive and negative desires.

3. Murdock's Theories

George Peter Murdock (1897-1985) was an American anthropologist and mostly known for his comparative ethnological studies of family, kinship, and cultural relationships. Murdock was in fact a central anthropologist who was extremely inspired by the work of Spencer and Morgan. He received his undergraduate and graduate degrees at Yale University and taught there for thirty-two years. He also disapproved of the Boasian attitude toward anthropology because he was attracted by the statistical challenging of cross-cultural assumptions which was in contrast with Boas' evasion of cross-cultural generalities (McGee, 2007, p. 226).

Murdock's influence in reviving “large scale cross-cultural comparisons” that had been the source of the studies of the 19th century anthropologists like Lewis Henry Morgan and E. B. Tylor is another significant point about him (McGee, 2007, p. 227). Murdock's first

important job after taking his Ph.D. was writing *Our Primitive Contemporaries* (1934), a book of ethnographic reviews for which Keller specified there was a need and one that was extensively referred to for many years (Goodenough, 1988, p. 3).

Yet, he is primarily recognized for *Social Structure* (1949) in which he assumed that a universal range of values control the association between family structure, kinship, and marriage practices. In *Social Structure* (1949) Murdock endeavored to define these values in a quantitative study and through the comparative data from 250 societies. By doing so, Murdock managed to improve social sciences to a great extent.

Murdock mostly regarded his research as stemming from the “positivist approach of Spencer”, but he acknowledged that Morgan’s (1871) study of kinship was contributory in determining the quantitative comparative approach that he had in *Social Structure*. Murdock (1971, p. 21) wrote, “The scientific significance of kinship systems was first appreciated by Morgan in what is perhaps the most original and brilliant single achievement in the history of anthropology”.

Murdock believed that a systematic comparative and cross-cultural approach is required in order to have a proper analysis of society and its cultures. In a cross-cultural approach, data is gathered from many societies in order to observe human behavior. Before Murdock’s major accomplishments, many anthropologists would use information from individual societies so that they could make general statements about evolution and cultures.

Murdock spent years studying various kinds of societies, from animals and hunters to humans and industries, and represented all levels of sociological complexities. In *Our Primitive Contemporaries*, he included an investigation of eighteen different societies from around the world. Murdock describes societies as families with significant functions. According to him, the four significant functions of sexual regulation, reproduction, economy and education are essential and are met in all societies; in other words, functionality in families helps them survive.

Murdock (1949) assumed that the family is distinguished from marriage. In fact, marriage signifies a range of traditions which revolve around the correlation among a sexually relating pair of grownups in the family. It determines the mode of inaugurating and ending this affiliation, the “normative behavior” and mutual responsibilities within it, and the

acknowledged limitations upon its members (Murdock, 1949, p. 1). On the other hand, the concept of family, when used alone, seems to be vague. The social scientists often use it to refer to numerous social clusters which, in spite of functional resemblances, display imperative points of variance.

After carrying out a survey of about 250 typical human societies as mentioned earlier, this American anthropologist found that families can be divided into three different classifications. The first and the basic classification is called the nuclear family, which normally involves a married man and woman with their children, although in some especial cases one or more further people may live with them. The nuclear family stands for that sort of family that is known to the omission of all others by society (Murdock, 1949, p. 1). To him, the nuclear family consisted of a group of people that were linked socially and were living in the same place. In this unit, both genders are present, and at least two of them engage in a sexually appropriate relationship with each other. This family can have a number of children as well.

He found that in some societies, every nuclear family can by itself symbolize a kind of self-governing unit in the community which is completely distinct from all others of its form (Murdock, 1949, p. 23). The nuclear family is, according to Murdock, "a kin group" because each of its members has a chief relationship with the other members (Murdock, 1949, p. 41). Among the mainstream of the people of the earth, though, nuclear families are joint. This combination has caused the family to fall into two kinds, which are completely different regarding the doctrines by which the basic nuclear families are united. The first type is a "polygamous x family" that consists of two or more nuclear families associated by plural marriages. For example, under polygyny, one man can be the husband and father in numerous nuclear families and thus ties them into a bigger family group.

4. The Concept of Family in *My Sister's Keeper*

Family is a social institution and is referred to as the most valuable thing for an individual because not only is it the first context one grows up in, but it is also the most enduring (Whyte, 1987). Murdock's (1949) studies on family and family foundations and functions led to the design of a universal framework where it covers factors existent in a family such as sexual relations, reproduction, education and economic conditions. According to Murdock (1949), a family consists of two adults, mainly of

the opposite sex who have regular intercourse for the purpose of reproduction, and children which are to be raised and nurtured by the parents, usually with the same moral and ethics.

Here, we will take a closer look at the Fitzgerald's family function and reveal many problematic issues that may have risen in their lives as a family. These include the relationship between Brian and Sara (the father and mother), Jesse, Kate and Anna (the children) and parents with their children. Family dynamics and ethical issues regarding their never-seems-to-end problem, Kate's disease, as well as the children's socialization with the outside world will also be uncovered.

5. Family Relationships

5.1. Anna's Relationship with Her Family

Anna, the main and most complicated character. Her desperate desire to want to exist independent of Kate shows the extent of her parents' role in building a sense of existence for a reason, which is not a very positive one. She wants to be Kate's sister and be an independent being at the same. She knows that this cannot happen since her only purpose in life is to keep Kate alive.

As mentioned, Kate was diagnosed with acute promyelocytic leukemia when she was two years old, and the Fitzgeralds decided to purposefully bring Anna into this world as an *allogenic donor*. In Anna's world, everything revolves around Kate, even her existence. Functionalists describe a functioning family or a society as a system that its organisms are related to one another (Turner, 2017). Anna's existent is highly dependent on Kate and Kate's life is dependent of Anna.

Anna's mother Sarah, which Anna describes her being extremely beautiful, has obsessive behaviors such as obsessive shopping, and her brother, Jesse, has self-destructive behaviors which show their incapability in handling the inevitable fact that Kate will die soon. Her father, Brian, on the other hand, seems to be more aware and in control of the situation and contrary to Sara, looks at people individually and not only in relation to Kate. In functionalism theory, mental states are extremely important (Turner, 2002). The difference between Sara and Brian's mental state leads them to think and act differently.

This only gets harsher when her mother says "we loved you even more" (Picoult, 2004, p. 8) because she was created only to keep her sister alive. Based on Polger's (2008) theory, functionality of the brain can be seen as either what it is made of, or what it does. For Kate it a

matter of both. What she is made of are all the medical requirements and transplantable organs for leukemia. What she does is to save a human being. This is what makes Anna so unique. Perhaps too unique that her parents cannot see her as anything else but her unique structure.

5.2. Kate and Anna's Relationship

Kate sees Anna more than just a sibling; she is her friend and confidant. For Kate, friendship is more important than family, because the Fitzgerald's are only holding on to the label of family; "If you don't want to be my sister anymore, that's one thing. But I don't think I could stand to lose you as a friend" (Picoult, 2004, p. 67).

5.3. Sara's Relationship with Her Family

Sara, a mother with the instinct to protect her child is struggling herself and does not seem very capable of handling the situation well and leaves no room for Anna to make her own decisions. At one point where Anna was asked to go through bone marrow extraction to save her sister, Sara told her that she did not have to do this if she did not want to, but then tells her how the whole family is counting on her. How can a minor possibly think for herself when she is being guilted into going through both physically and mentally painful event? For Sara, the priority is to save Kate and have Anna struggle a little than to lose one child. Ridwan and Sahri (2020) also studied Sara's attitude towards Kate and Anna and found that, similar to our analysis, Sara is over-protective, which later on led to many problems among family members. Her over-protectiveness towards Kate made her survive but at the expense of losing one child, and neglecting the other.

We clearly see the extent that Anna is neglected by her parents. She is not even asked what she wants or thinks is best for her. Sara believes that since Anna was created to save Kate, then that is what she will do; "A major decision about me is being made, and no one's bothered to ask the one person who most deserves it to speak her opinion" (Picoult, 2004, p. 21).

5.4. Sara and Brian's Relationship

Sara and Brian's marriage is not without issues. They have different viewpoints and pay attention to different things. Brian notices Anna more and sees the effect Kate's disease has on her. While Sara's only concern is to save Kate.

Brian, being more realistic, shows fatherly emotions at one scene where he breaks into tears when lying in bed with Sara. Sara was

determined that she will not let Kate die no matter what. With Anna's lawsuit, Brian and Sara's marriage becomes clearer.

Brian and Sara consistently struggle with making the right decision and determining what is best for Kate (Fanthiyah, 2013). Going back to when Anna was conceived, according to Sara, having sex was by far more disgusting than conceiving a child in a petri dish. This also shows the very shaky relationship between Sara and Brian.

5.5. Jesse's Relationship with His Family

Jesse's character is more understanding of Anna as he, being the first child, was the first and only donor. When Sara and Brian learned that Jesse was not a match, their attention gradually shifted away from him. He was overwhelmed with feelings of neglect by his parents as well as worthlessness for not being able to save his sister's life (Sidauruk, 2018).

Jesse feels helpless as he was not able to save Kate and turns to destructible and uncontrollable forces such as arson for pain and stress relief. Fire symbolizes Kate's cancer and how Jesse feels towards it. At one point Brian says; "Maybe it's because Jesse isn't all that different from me, choosing fire as his medium, needing to know that he could command at least one uncontrollable thing" (Picoult, 2004, p. 397).

6. Murdock's family framework

Sociology is the study of human relations and interactions in a society such as in families (Blau & Meyer, 1971). According to Murdock (1949), a social group consists of members each assigned with certain roles. He came up with a universal framework where each member in a social group, or a family, have defined roles. However, this framework is rather strict and does not account for modern standards of life and ways of reproduction, such as using technology to reproduce. In his framework, a family consists of two adults engaged in regular sexual relations in order to reproduce. The Fitzgerlads, however, had other options in mind.

6.1. Issues with Sexual Relations and Reproduction

According to Murdock (1949), the first and most important function inside a society, or a family, is sexual regulation. Most societies hold certain rules, norms and culture with this regard; therefore, various sexual behaviors might not be welcomed in different societies. Murdock's view towards sexual relation and reproduction is restrictive or more natural, and technology-based and modern methods of reproduction are out of context.

The process of reproduction might evolve and change even more due to technological advancements, and the ways it is done must remain open; therefore, methods of reproduction and purposes behind creating human beings this way must be redefined especially when it comes to designing savior babies. This contrasts with Murdock's (1949) traditional idea of creating humans.

Children that are created scientifically might grow up with physiological issues and disturbing thoughts, such as Anna where she says this is the only reason her parents wanted her, and without this reason, she would not be here. This is inferred from Anna's quote in the very beginning pages of the book; "See, unlike the rest of the free world, I didn't get here by accident. And if your parents have you for a reason than that reason better exist. Because once it's gone, so are you" (Picoult, 2004, p. 8).

Anna feels that the only reason and purpose behind her existence in her parents' perspective is to serve Kate as a donor. It is not clear how long she must donate parts of her body but she believes that if something happened to Kate, Brian and Sara would no longer need her.

This information affects Anna deeply in her short life, as far as that she says Kate's death would be one of the greatest things that occur to her because she would be able to live and exist independently.

Ethics has a great role when it comes to scientifically creating a savior baby. This new technology is being used more recently and many ethical and moral issues arise that must be considered by the parents. Ethics commentators suggest that these parents should be committed to the idea of loving and caring for the savior child, and they can be educated in this regard (Bianchi, Schroskey, 2014). The story of *My sister's keeper* brings many social, relational, and familial issues into question.

Anna Fitzgerald, the savior baby in *my sister's keeper*, donated cord blood, white blood cells and bone marrow to her sick sister Kate who has leukemia. As she grew older, her parents asked her to donate her kidney to Kate, instead she files a lawsuit against them. Anna was well aware of why she was created and what was expected of her. However, she came to see that going through all this medical treatment was not bringing her any benefits and is only distancing her from a normal teen life. She wanted to be an individual being without any relation to her dying sister, something the parents were not able to give her. Sara failed at every

attempt and opportunity to see Anna as anything other than a donor. It seems as if her love for Anna is only contingent (Bianchi, Schroskey, 2014).

Brian and Sara try to take control of reproduction and redefine it as something that makes sexual relations and reproduction something out of its natural context. Sara and Brian decided to have another baby by implanting an embryo with desired traits for the purpose of matching with Kate's. This behavior was not very welcomed by people as the Fitzgeralds received many hate mails saying they were literally designing their baby. The reflection of their choices only added to their struggles.

Sara only tried to have Anna to benefit Kate. As soon as Anna was born, Sara asked the nurses to be extra careful with the umbilical cord which indicate her thinking of Anna as a medical kit for Kate rather than a human being with a soul and emotions. Being a donor becomes a part of Anna's identity that can never depart her (Richardson, 2018).

6.2. Economic Issues

Economics is another issue with the Fitzgerlads. When Sara finds Kate with blood streaming down her legs, she immediately calls more medical aid and learns that her daughter has relapsed and is need of a bone marrow transplant. Unfortunately, the family insurance company refused to cover the costs of the procedure which adds to the family's struggle. However, money was raised for the transplant with the help of Brian's colleagues at the fire station and the transplant took place anyhow. The father, who according to Murdock (1949), is responsible to provide for the family, was not able to provide for medical procedures himself, but through his work environment by raising money. When the transplant took place, we see that emotional issues were more existent than financial problems. Anna was only seven at the time and was in desperate need of her mother's love, but Sara wanted to be besides Kate rather than Anna.

In addition, in one section Sara's sister, Suzzanne, offered to pay for Kate's treatment in and Sara was happy to accept it. However, this brought conflict between her and Brian, because according to Murdock (1949), the father should provide for the family, and this exchange of rolls, and Sara taking charge of the payment puts Brian's masculinity at risk. He is distasteful towards Suzzanne's offer and pulls the money out of Kate's college fund since he believed she would not live that long to

go to college anyway. His hasty reaction to the situation seriously questions his character as the father and provider.

6.3. Socialization/Education

What does it feel like to be the doner in a family? Anna was deprived of normal teen dramas and dreams because her life and everything related to her were all dependent on Kate's health and life. A family is the first place one socializes in. Anna wants to help her sister and have an ordinary life inside her family and out at the same time which seems to be impossible in her situation. This makes education and socialization extremely difficult (Foley, 1990; Heath, 1983; LaDousa, 2005).

At one occasion, Sara asks Anna to leave her friend's birthday party so they take Kate to the hospital. Even Kate believes that her death might be a good event for Anna because she would be able to do everything she has always desired to do but couldn't because of her; normal teen activities such as going to hockey camp (Magalhães & Carvalho, 2010).

Brian and Sara treated Kate differently, even though she strived to be treated like a normal child without cancer. She was not afraid of death since she had been confronted with the thought from early childhood. Other family members however could not deal with this issue as calmly as Kate had. Inevitably, Kate's disease takes a toll not only on Anna, but also on Jesse. Both were deprived and grown up without a normal childhood. Jesse hurts himself and has self-destructive behaviors and Anna gets a lawsuit because she didn't want to be the donor anymore.

Kate revealed to Julia that at a point in time she was always sick on holidays and it greatly affected her siblings. She says that one time Jesse chopped down a tree, brought it inside the house, decorated it, and still, Brian and Sara did not notice anything because their main attention was Kate and Kate only. Also, Christmas presents were all bought from the hospital gift shop according to Kate, which refers to the parents' lack of care and attention in putting time to make their children happy on such a joyful occasion (Fanthiyah, 2013).

Anna was desperately in search of a normal family. She thought that her family is just a temporary phase which will lead her to her real family. She even ran away one Christmas because Kate was always sick on holidays and she was only trying to find a family that she could finally fit in to and be respected for being herself. In a family, where children are supposed to learn the culture and values, the Fitzgerald's children

learned that serving and saving Kate is the most important subject they must ever encounter (Magalhães & Carvalho, 2010).

In addition, they learned that sexual norms in their family are different from society as a whole, reproduction has not been natural, and therefore, their family's cultural norms differ from what they learn in school.

6.4. Assigning Roles to Family Members

Sara who feared Kate's death for many years and did everything in her power to prevent it, lost Anna. Kate was saved after Anna died in the car accident by receiving her kidney. She was saved at the expense of her sister's life. It seems as if Sara was in charge of keeping only Kate alive, and Anna was the tool for this purpose. Kate did manage to live and Anna did save her, but it did not happen according to Sara's plans.

In one section, it has been mentioned that studies how savior babies or children who serve as donors, grow up with high self-esteem and believe they are extremely important to the family because they act as superheroes. However, this is definitely not the case with Anna (Mills, 2013). Brian and Sara's neglect and their incapability of showing Anna their love for her not only shatters any kind of heroic feeling for Anna, but led her to question her existence and value and worth as an individual human being.

In addition, we can see that nothing is in its right place and family relations, for instance instrumental and expressive functions (Bales & Slater, 1955), are not as they should be. Everyone loves and hates one another at the same time. Anna is the family constant, a donator, a sacrifice; Jesse is the troubling brother which of no use because of his unlatching genes; Brian and Sara are incapable of treating their children equally and seem to lack common sense.

The assigned roles suggested by Murdock are present but to a very small extent. For example, the mother loves and cares for one child as she should (McIntyre, 1966) but neglects the others and fails to prevent any lack of equilibrium resulting from emotional dissatisfaction (McIntyre, 1966); the father is able to provide as assigned (Pitts, 1964; Williams, 1961) but not in a critical condition; children have a very hard time socializing and concentrating on education, rather they are educated with their parents' value system, which in this case is Kate and nothing but Kate. According to Parson (1965), when men and women do not submit to their assigned roles, the family will inevitably face

disorganization and finally result in functional issues in the children, as is evidential in Anna and Jesse.

In addition, proper family roles help children socialize (Parson & Bales, 1956), and if children are deprived of maternal care, they will struggle with serious psychological and social disorders later in life (Bowlby, 1953). Anna questions her identity and existence throughout the entire book and does not see herself of any worth expect when it comes to helping Kate which she was assigned to do before conception. Such responsibility led to Metal deprivation (Bowlby, 1953) and self-doubt in both Anna and Jesse. Even Kate struggles from the extent of disorganization in the family and wishes she was dead so her siblings can lead a normal life.

7. Characters' Analysis

Anna as the main character and the voice of the book plays the central role in My Sister's Keeper. Anna was not a normal teenager who struggled with issues such as homework overload or other basic teen problems. She was responsible for her sister's life and would constantly worry that she might let her family down. Her parents did not see her as anything either than her responsibility and put her under extreme pressure. The lawsuit seemed like an independent and self-centered act on behalf of Anna at first, but later we understand that even her wish to sue her parents was in fact Kate's wish and not her own. Anna won the case at court but finally died in a car crash. Her kidney was donated to Kate who lived for a few more years.

Kate, the dying sister, was diagnosed with leukemia when she was two, and is constantly on the death pole throughout the book. She goes through many painful medical procedures to stay alive, but gets tired and sick of being sick all the time. Kate strives to be treated like a child with no illness, even for a second. When she gets tired of her sickness, she begs Anna to sue their parents so she would not get a new kidney. She simply wants to die.

The reason is that during her sickness, her mother is so afraid of her daughter's death that she becomes over defensive. She controls every aspect of Kate's life and asks her to observe all the conducts that the doctor advises. For Kate, Sara's behavior is like a controlling mother. The whole book talks about how Kate would die, but in the end, Kate survives and Anna is the one put in the grave.

Jesse, the first child of Fitzgerald family, is a troubled teenage boy who turns to destructive behaviors to seek attention. He is the most neglected and invisible member of the family. His feeling of worthlessness regarding his biological incapability to help Kate makes him helpless and frustrated. Thus, he burns things down due to his desperate need for attention. During time he calms and finds inner peace when Brian gives him a loving hug.

Sara as the mother of the family seemed to have a good life before Kate's illnesses. Sara, being desperate to save Kate, scientifically created a genetically-matched child for the sole purpose of saving Kate. Sara starts to neglect Jesse and Anna and devotes her entire time to Kate. She barely talks about anything other than Kate's condition with her husband, Brian. Soon her marriage starts to get rocky. Her devotion to Kate leads to deprivation of love from her husband and other children.

Brian, the father, is the more rational member in the family. He works as a firefighter and heroically saves people and buildings. However, he does not embrace all the conflict and drama going on at home. He understands Anna and her decision of not donating her kidney much better than Sara, which adds to his strain with her.

8. Analysis of Important Scenes

8.1. Meeting a Lawyer

Anna meets with a lawyer to file a lawsuit and sue her parents when they asked her to donate her kidney to Kate. At the lawyer's office, Anna took out some newspaper clippings, faced the lawyer and said: "Did you really sue God?" (Picoult, 2004, p. 20).

Her innocence in this sentence is overwhelming. She is just a child yet she is standing in a lawyer's office, wanting to gain her rights as a human, and be a part of the grown-up world, while childishly asking if she can sue God (Rahayu, 2017).

Picoult (2004), Anna explains the situation and the lawyer tells her that she does not have to donate anything of hers if she does not wish to. Anna tries to explain to the lawyer that this has been going on ever since she was born and that nobody ever asked her if she was willing to sacrifice her body for the sake of another, even if that other is her sister.

She continues that her parents are indifferent towards her or her needs except when they need her blood or something of the like. She even goes as far as questioning her whole existence; "I wouldn't even be alive, if it wasn't for Kate being sick" (Picoult, 2004, p. 24). When a child begins to

question herself as a being, we know that something traumatic has happened to them. The extent of the parents' neglect is felt in every word Anna utters in the mentioned quote.

8.2. The Lawsuit

Anna decides to file a complaint against her parents because of their abusive attitude towards her, or in her own words, "to sue God" (Picoult, 2004, p. 20). Sara however, has an aggressive and angry reaction to the situation and shocked that her daughter had done such thing (Rahayu, 2017).

After Sara learns about the lawsuit she rages with anger and disappointment and tells Anna they will go to the court and solve the silly problem. She tells Campbell that this is all just a misunderstanding and Anna has decided to drop the case, however, when Campbell asks Anna if this is true, she replies that she has not changed her mind and still wants to go through with the case.

We can see that capability in proper communication among family members caused conflict. This is in accordance to Puspitasari's (2011) study where it was found that parents should take action to solve the problems that arise in the family and avoid conflict. If they make improper decisions, others will suffer. His study also emphasized on parental roles in the development of children's mental order, which we yearn to see in this specific family.

Each family member deals with Anna's decision differently. Sara rages in anger and berates Anna for the lawsuit, while Brian asks Anna to explain the reason behind this sudden action. Kate is also upset with all the drama.

It is important to note that Anna had never been independent and was used for medical examination since the day she was born and filing a lawsuit was a huge step in her character, making her a little independent, while still relying on Sara to solve things and take control of the situation.

The vocabulary used in this book and the big words Anna elicits shows the both concrete information and the complex and difficult situation the whole family faced since Kate's diagnosis. They are overwhelmed by the situation and it is not any more delightful for a young child who has been taught Kate's life and death is in her hands.

Anna confesses that she usually does whatever she is told and that she starts having other thoughts about the lawsuit. She thinks it is best for

everyone if she would just go back to where she was, and to the person they expect her to be. Again, here we face a child who needs her family's support and love and is willing to sacrifice herself to make her family happy, as she has been taught to do. It is quoted that: "In America—even if the consequences are tragic—you are not responsible for someone else's safety. You aren't obligated to help anyone in distress. Not if you're the one who started the fire, not if you're a passerby to car wreck, not if you're a perfectly matched donor" (Picoult, 2004, p. 352).

Here we see that on a legal level, no human being is obliged to sacrifice themselves for another no matter how tragic the situation may be. Brian and Sara never really asked Anna how she felt about the situation. They created her for the purpose of saving Kate and never asked permission if they could use her body parts. Even if Anna willingly sacrifices her body for her sister, it still does not justify the way her parents handled the situation.

Anna was asked what would happen if she did not give her sister a kidney? She replies that her sister will die. Obviously, Anna loves Kate and does not want her to die, but is it fair to put this heavy burden on a thirteen-year-old and make her responsible for another's life? That if she does not obey, she will lose a loved one? And why should a child be assigned such a role in the family and be held responsible if her sister dies? Even Kate is opposed to this. (Susila, Thoyibi, & Hikmat, 2014).

8.3. Internal Conflicts

Even though Anna says to Kate that she hates her, deep in her heart she loves her and wants to save her life, but wants to live as an individual being and be worthy of love without any relation to her sick sister at the same time. Her crave for attention can be seen in different sections of the book. For instance, she thinks about her and Kate's hypothetical death and feels jealous when thinking more people will attend Kate's funeral (Mahastuti, 2014) Perhaps her lawsuit was a desperate and internal reaction to her need of love and attention from her parents. Even though, despite Sara giving her more attention after the lawsuit, Anna still wanted to keep the case open.

Anna seeks the help of a professional, Campbell. He and Julia served Anna as her legal counsel and helped Anna in gaining her rights and determine what is best for her, her health and her interest, without worrying about Kate's situation as Brain and Sara did. These conflicts

are in alignment with Pantow's (2013) analysis of Anna's conflicts within the whole book.

9. Conclusion

This paper was a psychoanalytic reading of *My Sister's Keeper* by Jodi Lynn Picoult, using Murdock's universal framework of family functions. Through a comprehensive analysis of the novel, this paper studied the characters and their relationships with themselves as well as with each other in order to gain a thorough understanding of the story, and the many struggles the Fitzgerald family would undergo in their lives. Murdock's framework of family functions was employed to discuss each member's role in the family and how they fulfilled their functions. It was found that in *My Sister's Keeper*, all characters' attempts to do their job too well caused them to overlook others' needs.

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Adab Al-Kufa Journal
No. 54 / P2
First Jumadaa 1444 / Dec 1, 2022

ISSN Print 1994 – 8999
ISSN Online 2664-469X

مجلة آداب الكوفة
العدد: 54 / ج 2
جمادى الأولى 1444 هـ / كانون الأول 2022 م