# GSR

## GLOBAL SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW

### HEC-RECOGNIZED CATEGORY-Y

## VOL. X ISSUE II, SPRING (JUNE-2025)

**Double-blind Peer-review Research Journal**
www.gsrjournal.com
© Global Sociological Review

## Article title

Negation and Female Characterization in Ziauddin Yousafzai's Let Her Fly: A Pragmatic Approach

## Abstract

This paper analyses negation as a stylistic and pragmatic device in Ziauddin Yousafzai's Let Her Fly, used to construct female characters and foreground the marginalization of women within Pakistani society. By leaving out traits and roles, negation highlights identities that are ignored. Using Lisa Nahajec's theoretical model, which conceptualizes negation through presupposition, expectation, and implicature, the analysis reveals that meaning often resides not in what is explicitly stated but in what is denied. Negation in the memoir challenges gender roles by foregrounding the invisibility of women. Identifying and interpreting these linguistic absences uncovers ideological and cultural trends shaping the narrative and the reader's perception of gendered experience. The text compels readers to confront unspoken assumptions. Focus on what is unsaid transforms negation into a tool not only of literary characterization but also of cultural resistance. The study shows that negation questions power and contributes to meaning-making in stylistics and pragmatics.

Authors:

**Maria Noureen:** (Corresponding Author)
 MS, Department of Humanities, COMSATS University, Islamabad, Pakistan.
 (Email: marianoureen125@gmail.com)
**Iqra Maab:** MS, Department of Humanities, COMSATS University, Islamabad, Pakistan.
**Irum Musa:** Lecturer, Department of English, Rawalpindi Women University, Punjab, Pakistan.

Visit Us

## Citing this Article

| 1 | Negation and Female Characterization in Ziauddin Yousafzai's Let Her Fly: A Pragmatic Approach | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Authors | Maria Noureen<br>Iqra Maab<br>Irum Musa | DOI | 10.31703/gsr.2025(X–II).01 |
| | | Pages | 1-9 |
| | | Year | 2025 |
| | | Volume | X |
| | | Issue | II |
| Referencing & Citing Styles | | | |

| | |
|---|---|
| APA | Noureen, M., Maab, I., & Musa, I. (2025). Negation and Female Characterization in Ziauddin Yousafzai's Let Her Fly: A Pragmatic Approach. *Global Sociological Review*, *X*(II), 1-9. https://doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2025(X–II).01 |
| CHICAGO | Noureen, Maria, Iqra Maab, and Irum Musa. 2025. "Negation and Female Characterization in Ziauddin Yousafzai's Let Her Fly: A Pragmatic Approach." *Global Sociological Review* X (II):1-9. doi: 10.31703/gsr.2025(X-II).01. |
| HARVARD | NOUREEN, M., MAAB, I. & MUSA, I. 2025. Negation and Female Characterization in Ziauddin Yousafzai's Let Her Fly: A Pragmatic Approach. *Global Sociological Review,* **X,** 1-9. |
| MHRA | Noureen, Maria, Iqra Maab, and Irum Musa. 2025. 'Negation and Female Characterization in Ziauddin Yousafzai's Let Her Fly: A Pragmatic Approach', *Global Sociological Review*, X: 1-9. |
| MLA | Noureen, Maria, Iqra Maab, and Irum Musa. "Negation and Female Characterization in Ziauddin Yousafzai's Let Her Fly: A Pragmatic Approach." *Global Sociological Review* X.II (2025): 1-9. Print. |
| OXFORD | Noureen, Maria, Maab, Iqra, and Musa, Irum (2025), 'Negation and Female Characterization in Ziauddin Yousafzai's Let Her Fly: A Pragmatic Approach', *Global Sociological Review,* X (II), 1-9. |
| TURABIAN | Noureen, Maria, Iqra Maab, and Irum Musa. "Negation and Female Characterization in Ziauddin Yousafzai's Let Her Fly: A Pragmatic Approach." *Global Sociological Review* X, no. II (2025): 1-9. https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2025(X–II).01. |

## Title

Negation and Female Characterization in Ziauddin Yousafzai's Let Her Fly: A Pragmatic Approach

### Authors:

**Maria Noureen**(Corresponding Author)
MS, Department of Humanities, COMSATS University, Islamabad, Pakistan.
(Email: marianoureen125@gmail.com)
**Iqra Maab**
MS, Department of Humanities, COMSATS University, Islamabad, Pakistan.
**Irum Musa:**
Lecturer, Department of English, Rawalpindi Women University, Punjab, Pakistan.

## Contents

## Abstract

*This paper analyses negation as a stylistic and pragmatic device in Ziauddin Yousafzai's Let Her Fly, used to construct female characters and foreground the marginalization of women within Pakistani society. By leaving out traits and roles, negation highlights identities that are ignored. Using Lisa Nahajec's theoretical model, which conceptualizes negation through presupposition, expectation, and implicature, the analysis reveals that meaning often resides not in what is explicitly stated but in what is denied. Negation in the memoir challenges gender roles by foregrounding the invisibility of women. Identifying and interpreting these linguistic absences uncovers ideological and cultural trends shaping the narrative and the reader's perception of gendered experience. The text compels readers to confront unspoken assumptions. Focus on what is unsaid transforms negation into a tool not only of literary characterization but also of cultural resistance. The study shows that negation questions power and contributes to meaning-making in stylistics and pragmatics.*

## Introduction:

### The Function of Negation in Literary Discourse

Negation is a linguistic tool employed for shaping meanings, exposing ideologies, and constructing identities in literary work. It communicates what is absent, suppressed, or denied, offering ground for stylistic analysis. Negation in a Language is used for both formal and functional principles. The meaning of linguistic negation conveys the writers' ideologies in a language. This paper aims to analyze how negation contributes to producing a stylistic effect of

characterization in Ziauddin Yousafzai's memoir *Let Her Fly* (2018). Negation highlights the marginalization and invisibility of women in a Pakistani Society. It also shows how such utterances add to creating fictional characters. Let's take Norgaard's (2006) example, 'Ann is not a teacher'; here, the absence of the profession 'teaching' is more significant than its presence, but the sentence is less informative as compared to its positive version, 'Ann is a teacher'. The negation element 'not in a sentence thus creates multiple possibilities, such as Ann might be a doctor, an engineer, a pharmacist, or serve in any profession. This sentence does not inform about what Ann is but rather, what Ann is not. Such types of sentences or utterances raise multiple questions, mainly, how can meaning be generated from these kinds of negation-containing sentences, and how does the absence of attributes in characters give notable meaning to the text?

To address this question, the present study adopts a pragmatic stylistic approach, which synthesizes the analytical tools of pragmatics and literary stylistics to investigate the functional role of negation in meaning construction. This framework facilitates an in-depth exploration of how negated expressions contribute to character development, reflect ideological positions, and interact with reader expectations within the socio-cultural context of the narrative. Yule (1996) expands on the focus of pragmatics as he says, "It explores how listeners can make inferences about what is said in order to arrive at an interpretation of the speaker's intended meaning" (p. 3). The study rests on the idea that the world is created in a story by the integration of a writer, text, and reader, and thus can be explored effectively with tools based on pragmatics for language analysis. The analysis is based on Nahajec's (2012) model of negation. It falls into the premise of negation and sees negation as conceptual, presuppositional in nature, and it yields implicature meaning as indirect communication.

For many years, leading linguists have been interested in negation. Givon (2001) has explained multiple facets of negation as in propositional logic, and its pragmatic use. He also has adopted a cognitive approach in explaining the underlined use of negation in events of a text and defined its scope in social interaction. Sweetser (2006) also put effort into exploring the negative spaces and their kinds in literary texts, and he argues that negation is used by authors to create contrast, particularly irony and *praeteritio* effects create a negative space building in a text. Norgaard (2007) also attempted to fill the space created due to the ignorance of negation components to generate a stylistic effect in literary texts. Norgaard analyzed negative polarity in Joyce's short story "Two Gallants" and argued that negative construction gave richer meaning to the story than its positive construction. After consulting the important efforts done by the researchers on Western texts, it is felt that notable work on Eastern texts is still missing, which needs to be addressed from the same perspective. To carry out this task, a researcher must have background knowledge of Eastern culture to resonate with the expectation the writer has projected in the text with the reader's cultural knowledge. This paper argues that negation is used as a strategy by writers to construct their female characters in their work. This study aims to explore the relationship between negation in characterization in Yousafzai's memoir *Let Her Fly* (2018). It will specifically look at the textual instances where negation performs an important role in developing female characters.

## Conceptual Negation

A comprehensive analysis of the effects of negation in language first necessitates a clear understanding of its function and implications. In other words, understanding negation involves recognizing that it is equally concerned with the notion of presence as it is with absence. As Nahajec (2021) explains the idea that interpreting negation is a matter of working out the implications of a possible but unrealized presence and reversing them to recover a potential implicature is central to this; the contextually determined significance of a possible presence serves as the foundation for the potential meaning implied by its absence.

It suggests that in a text, the presence of something is not always what matters, rather its absence also enriches its meaning in a potentially different way.

Take an example, 'his friend does not wear her cultural dress, nor can she speak her regional language'. In this sentence, negation components 'not' and 'nor' change the meaning of the sentence to its opposite. To wear a cultural dress and speak a regional are considered to be attributes of any ordinary citizen in a society but to cancel out such qualities triggers an implicature that 'his friend' is someone not usual and ordinary but rather a unique or an odd girl who may not consider wearing her cultural dress modern or speaking her native language as sophisticated. In this way, negation can be used to nullify an attribute, thus creating strange and unusual characters.

The definition of negation varies among different linguists and critics. Oxford Dictionary (2015) defines negation as the act of causing something not to exist or to become its opposite or the exact opposite of something. In English Grammar, negation denies the affirmation, or it refers to a process by which the meaning of the sentence is expressed in its complete opposite. Martiniz (1995) states that the occurrence of negation at the various lexical levels (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics) majorly emphasizes its significance. Its presence also plays a significant role in the construction of meaningful sentences in the English Language (p. 208). However focusing solely on syntactic elements is problematic since negative connectives may not always affect the affirmative meaning of a phrase and are thus not independent of semantic interpretations (Zolfaghari, 2023).

Negation is also used by the writers to avoid direct assertions in their texts to contextualize their claims. For many years, logicians, intellectuals, linguists, and psychologists have also been interested in negation. Depending on how it is used and what impact it has in the texts, dozens of scholars have defined a wide range of notions, including opposition, falsification, failure, non-existence, refusal, rejection, resistance, rectification, and evasion. The present study rests on Nahajec's (2012) definition, which rests upon Jeffries' idea, who sees it as 'a conceptual practice'. Nahajec says that meaning can be inferred at any level (syntax, semantics, logic, and pragmatics) by 'reversing' the positive polarity of a sentence to negative and by

negating the assertions made. The possibility of absence arises where there is a possibility of presence. Hence, the presence of negation words in a text raises the range of possibilities not apparently depicted; disappearance, denial, and so on (Debrez & Espinal, 2018, p. 47).

## Negation and Presupposition in Pragmatics

The role of negation in presupposition is explained here through Nahajec's concept of negation regarding the perceptual expectation of negative utterances. In literary texts, plots are developed through the prominent presence of events, objects, feelings, or qualities, thereby keeping the absence in the background. But, to move to a level above, negation is the reverse of it. The narrative world deviates from the normal view to an unusual view of the world by foregrounding negation and keeping presence in the background. This is achieved as the "absence is perceptually prominent where presence is expected" (Nahajec, p. 68). Culture and norms of society provide ground to make absence prominent against the perceptual presence of attributes. Consider Givon's (2001) example,

Background: Joe told me he won $10,000.00 in the lottery,

NEG-assertion: though later I found out he didn't.

The speaker first asserted the information that Joe told him of the $ 10,000.00 lottery he won, but later he contradicts and rejects the assertion by negation element 'didn't'. The assertion made by the speaker is backgrounded by bringing forth the negation, and the absence is made prominent. Givon (2001) defined this concept as stasis and change. 'Stasis' refers to non-events, and 'change' refers to the events in the world. Negative sentences or propositions play with the social and cultural norms for the fact that they put the event in the background and establish stasis as 'temporarily, locally salient, more informative' (p. 372). It suggests that non-events in the text play significant roles in developing characters or missing out on important events implies a great deal of information, especially in the case of female characters.

Expectation is said to have a distinct place in creating presupposing assertions. Nahajec (2012) raises the question of how expectation is important concerning negation and presupposition to trigger in a text. She then answers it by explaining that negation triggers the presupposition according to the expectations of the participants of a text "based on the context, co-text, and generic knowledge" (p. 116). To understand a NEG- assertion, there must be at least a possibility of the assumption to be relevant and understandable on the part of the hearer, which distinguishes it as 'pragmatic rather than logical'. The focus of presupposition is not the situation itself, rather it is more concerned with the expectations of the participants in any situation.

When a speaker negates something, they expect that the hearer must interpret and have an idea of what is communicated through negation. Nahajec calls this relation of negation with the expectation not as simple because the speaker assumes to expect something of the reader. But Nahajec (2012) refers to Nolkes' idea that the speaker or the writer who actually narrates is totally different from the speaker or writer who is depicted in the text, as for literary works, there are different viewpoints and thus should be interpreted through multiple points of view in the case of negation. In this case, to avoid confusion about the expectations of the speaker as well as the interpreter, she says that it is important to consider the position of the expectations triggered. She says that, as negation acts as a presuppositional trigger in pragmatics, the expectation projected by the negated information can be seen in a text and in a context, proposed by the negating process. Nahajec divides expectation into three categories explicit, implicit, and projected expectation. For her:

Understanding negation in context, then, is a case of understanding the expectations it evokes through its presuppositional nature, taking into account who holds those expectations and considering whether they are reflections of existing expectations or projections of expectations created through the act of negating. (p. 119)

Though Nahajec (2012) didn't explain the kinds of expectation in detail, it is notable to find out the expectation of negated utterances mainly in the text itself, what can be termed as explicit expectation; in the co-text, what can be termed as implicit expectation and also through generic knowledge, which can be termed as projected expectation.

## Negation and Implicature

The third premise of this paper is what Nahajec argues about negation, responsible for conveying the implied meaning in the text. She tried to answer the question that how readers try to interpret what is communicated indirectly by keeping the presence in the background. To get the answer to this question, Nahajec takes Moeschler's (1992) idea, as he suggests that negation can be interpreted based on the "optimum relevance" of the same context, which provides the ground for the cognitive efforts to understand the negated utterances. For this reason, it is important to see that negated events, entities, and attributes contain meaning in a context. She tries to answer it by quoting Moeschler's example,

Speaker A: How is the weather today?

Speaker B: It is not nice.

In the above example, B's response to A is solely based on their mutual understanding and shared context. As B knows, they would go to a beach if the weather were nice, which provides the context for B's utterance. Speaker A is now inferring the contextual meaning of B's utterance, and they will probably stay at home, or they will not visit the beach. Such circumstances provide 'invited inferences' to make the utterances understandable by checking the relevance of the context. If, in this case, the weather is nice is relevant, then they would go to the beach, which can be expressed as, if $p$ then $q$. According to Speaker B's invited inference, if the weather is not nice, they would not go to the beach, if not $p$ then not $q$. This yields two significant things here, first, by using the negated utterance, it produces the inference beyond explicitly said rather than what is implied, as in this case, 'not nice', whether means a 'bad' whether. The other significant point here is that the implied meaning of the negated utterances is only understandable by considering the significance of their positives.

The question remains how the readers can differentiate between what is said and what is meant. Nahajec (2012) refers to the flouting of Gricean maxims, as in the negated utterances, where flouting is observed to carry the implied meaning in a context. Consider the following example,

A: Someone had left the window open, and I caught a cold.

B: I had not.

In the above example, the response of speaker B is not relevant to what is said by speaker A (someone's act of leaving the window open). To conform to Gricean maxims, the response of speaker B must be relevant, truthful, informative, and to the point of speaker A's utterance, but in the above case, speaker B deviates and feels offended about what speaker A has asserted. The maxim of relevance is flouted by speaker B for not corresponding to speaker A's utterance. The speaker has merely shared the cause of catching a cold as he says "someone" had left the window open and does not inquire speaker B whether was "someone" or not. However, speaker B relies on speaker A's expectation that speaker B might be responsible for leaving the window open. If speaker B had left the window open, speaker A would be correct then; if B does not negate, A must be right then. Since B claims that he had not, it means the conversational implicature by speaker A is wrong. Thus, Nahajec says, "It is possible to see that speaker B may have interpreted speaker A's assertion as an accusation rather than a neutral statement of fact" (p. 121).

In literary texts, it is usually seen that the negative construction of a text is based on background assumptions. The above example also shows that it is commonly assumed that getting cold or having a temperature is usually because of not keeping oneself warm. While in the above case, it is not proven what the cause of A's getting cold is, Nahajec says, "it can have ramifications for the reproduction of social norms and ideologies" (p. 122). So, here it is seen that the interpretation of the utterance is not all about interpreting the presence but also about interpreting the significance of the absence.

## Characterization in Literature

Characterization has a vast history in English literature. In the mid-15th century, characterization is accepted as a literary tool. In literature, authors use characterization as a process to construct characters and generate images of those characters to present to the audience in the story. In *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (2009), Abrams and Harpham define character as:

Character is a person represented in dramatic or narrative work, who is interpreted by the reader as being endowed with particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it as dialogue and from what they do as action. (32-33)

There are two main ways of characterization, namely direct characterization and indirect characterization. Abram and Harpham (2009) have used the term 'telling' for direct characterization and 'showing' for indirect characterization. In 'telling' according to him, the author directly describes and explains the aims and disposition of the character and directly declares him as innocent, witty, cunning, etc. Whereas in 'showing', the author only presents the utterances and actions of the character, thereby leaving it to the reader to infer his/her aims and disposition in the story (33-34). Characters can be realized through their verbal interactions and actions with the other characters of the text. According to Culpeper (2014), characters are textually fabricated, but they also emerge through the text's relationship with readers' extra-textual knowledge of actual people and real situations, and with the other fictitious characters as well. Toolan (2001) expands on the same concept and suggests that fictional characters can be realized explicitly as well as implicitly. A reader makes a character out of the author's words (p. 80). The character is then constructed with the help of implicit and explicit descriptions of his actions and behavior with other characters in the story.

The present study focuses on direct characterization. The focus is to highlight the construction of female characters through the dominant use of negation in the text *Let Her Fly* (2018). It examines specific instances in which the absence of attributes functions as a stylistic mechanism

to reflect and reinforce societal expectations regarding female identity.

## Analyzing Negation in the Construction of Female Characters in Let Her Fly

Nahajec's (2012) model of negation and characterization has been employed to analyze instances from the text. Each textual reference is analyzed firstly by figuring out the kind of expectation Ziauddin Yousafzai has evoked and what it contributes to the construction of female characters.

The text *Let Her Fly* (2018), written by Ziauddin Yousafzai with co-author Louis Carpenter is written in response to the criticism that emerged after her daughter published her memoir, *I Am Malala* (2014). In the text, Yousafzai has developed female characters by missing out on the important features of their personality. Plenty of negation terms are used in relation to female characters which seems to emphasize that females are not privileged enough to get rights in Pakistan and are least celebrated. While sketching Pakistani female characters, the 'absence' of significant human traits is a projecting feature woven into the text. One such example can be taken from Yousafzai's discussion of the status of girls and boys in his family, He expands on:

My mother bore my father's children seven times and she provided a prized boy child only twice. The first time was with my brother, and then again with me. In between us, there were three daughters and there would be two more to come. Their names are Hameeda Bano, Najma Bibi, Bakhti Mahal, Gul Raina, and Naseem Akhtar. I name them here because during my childhood I never once saw their names written down. They were described only in relation to men: daughters of my father, sisters of Ziauddin and Saeed Ramzan. They were never named in their own right. It was the same when I saw my mother described: wife of Rohul Amin, mother of Ziauddin, or Saeed Ramzan. (p. 19)

Characterization in the above passage is mainly attributed to the writer's mother and sisters, which resonates reader's concept of negation in the text. Yousafzai's mother bore seven children, all were girls, but only twice did she gift the celebrated boys to the

family. The use of the negative conjunction 'but' typically points towards all five uncelebrated girls born to the family mentioned by the writer under the chapter named "Our Autumn House". Giving the readers a background assumption, boys are considered fortunate and a symbol of Spring in an 'Autumn House', their births are celebrated in the family (if p, then q). But, since his mother gave birth to girls three times more than prized boys, they were the symbol of Autumn for the family consequently, their births were also not celebrated (if not p, then not q). The implied meaning here generated is far more interesting than it apparently seems. If the writer had sketched the female characters equally celebrated as male characters, there would not have been any implicature producing the same effect of arising pity for Pakistani females in the minds of Western readers. The absence of celebration of females' birth set the background for underpinning inequality in Pakistani society.

Negation stands for the representation of female characters in the text. The narrator expects the readers to see women as weak, silent, and as those who are not even named in society. The conjunctive use of 'but' in the first line is based on the cultural assumptions of the celebrations done on babies' birth by family and friends, negating the idea of celebration done on the birth of the narrator's sisters. It sets the background for introducing female characters to the story as cursed, uncelebrated, and unnamed. The same passage is then evidence for voicing against the absence of women's identity in Pakistan. The use of negation elements to negate the verb phrase, such as 'never', shows the absence of attributes concerning women. The writer's deliberately naming his sisters in the text claims that they were 'never' named in their own right. To name a woman was considered against the honor and dignity of a man. Their identity remained hidden, their voices silenced, and their names unknown. To save honor, they would be named in relation to their male counterparts. The positive presupposition triggers expect the ideal readers to think about the existence of his sisters as they exist, have their identities, and their names as well. But negating their identity and not naming them their whole lives is actually what the writer implies about Pakistani society's treatment of women.

During the Talibanization, Yousafzai started raising his voice for girls' education as they were not allowed to attend schools and leave their houses unaccompanied by their men. In this regard, his wife Toor Pekai, and daughter Malala stood by his side as Yousafzai narrates:

We were slowly to become co-campaigners in a way that did not involve the boys. We were all united in this campaign, particularly Toor Pekai, who gave us a blessing and, crucially, supported us with her wisdom and calm, but she was not visible because, culturally, she could not be. Our patriarchal culture together with the effects of Talibanization made women prisoners inside the four walls of the home. (p. 52)

In this passage, he talks about the campaign he started along with his wife Toor Pekai, and daughter Malala. He explains how her wife played an important role in raising her voice against the restrictions the Taliban imposed on women. Characterization here is more complex as Pekai is equally struggling and playing her part in raising her voice against the Taliban's rule.

The blessing, support, wisdom, and calmness of Pekai for her family are admirable characteristics that contribute to a female character, which presupposes the strength of women in a strictly patriarchal society. The use of negative conjunction 'but' reverses the expectation of the readers who expect the change brought in a society where a woman started raising her voice to a place where she cannot come to the front and be visible in a society where women are neglected, silent, and never given their identity. She 'could not be' visible because of the social expectations prevailing in the society she was living in. The seemingly emerging voice of the narrator's wife Pekai creates conflict with the expectation projected in the readers as the narrator negates it and says that women are imprisoned in the boundaries of the houses. The narrator initially admires and appreciates her daughter and wife's support, who stood against men in a fight for justice and equality, but the cultural opposition in praising women implies the possible but unrealized case where a woman cannot be the one who can speak against the injustice and fight for equality.

In response to people's question about "how Malala became who she is" (p. 97, 2018), Yousafzai says that he did not clip her wings, which according to him, was not the case with other families. He says:

In Pakistan, I occasionally came across families who kept a bird, perhaps a dove, in their courtyard, and this bird was no longer able to fly. It would waddle around the dusty floor, lifting its head and moving it from one side to the other, but the vital ingredient in its life was gone. Somebody, no doubt a father or a brother, had taken some scissors to its primary feathers and clipped them so sharp that flight was no longer possible. It was a kind act of ownership over that poor defenseless creature, for entertainment or the desire to have an obedient pet, forced to live against its primal instinct of flight. It struck me as cruel. When I say of Malala 'I did not clip her wings,' what I mean is that when she was small, I broke the scissors used by society to clip girls' wings. I did not let those scissors near Malala. I wanted to let her fly high in the sky, not scratch around a dusty courtyard, grounded by social norms, and I would stand by her, protecting her until she had the confidence and strength to fly high herself, no longer in need of protection. (p. 97)

These lines can be a rich source of data to study Nahajec's (2012) theory of negation and characterization, which holds that negation is a potent pragmatic and discursive tool that can disclose social power structures, ideological positioning, and character representation in addition to being a grammatical phenomenon. The author here uses the metaphorical figure of a bird—a helpless creature that has been stripped of its power and kept for men's convenience and control—to characterize Pakistani women in general. The clause 'this bird was no longer able to fly' contains a descriptive negation that illustrates the loss of power, which Nahajec argues is essential to how negation can be utilized to create what a subject is not, thus characterizing any entities through absence. As explained by Nahajec, negation can reveal what is socially constructed as 'missing' or 'not permitted', and in this case, it is evident that girls are characterized through absence—the absence of accessibility, speech, authority, and freedom. By the

use of direct descriptive negation, such as 'no longer possible' and 'forced to live against its primal instinct', the author may reinforce the projection of women as living against their inherent potential, constrained by social norms, and deprived of what is essential and natural to their existence. This is consistent with the text's overarching subject of the rejection of feminine identity and autonomy. The word 'but' is employed to create a contrast between the bird's natural state and the constrained, imposed one it endures. The author characterizes it as one of 'kind ownership', which paradoxically emphasizes how patriarchal reasoning frequently passes off such coercive behaviors as love or concern. The narrator's clear judgment—' It struck me as cruel'—then dismantles this assumption that control and kindness are compatible.

Moreover, the expression 'the scissors used by society' assumes the presence of societal or ideological mechanisms that are frequently used to stifle girls' aspirations and independence. It is important to note the difference between the 'sky' and the 'dusty courtyard'. Similar to the socially built space for women, the courtyard turns into a cramped, domestic, and lifeless area, whereas the sky stands for liberty, aspiration, and complete self-expression. The dichotomy between imprisonment and freedom, domesticity and independence, and repression and empowerment is highlighted by the use of spatial metaphor. Therefore, similar to the previous passages, this one establishes patriarchal assumptions as it makes extensive use of metaphor and denial to highlight the harm done to females for the sake of culture. For readers, particularly those in the West, the meaning is

a subtle indictment of the institutionalized injustice in the name of cultural norms and a moral condemnation of systems that deny girls their basic liberties.

## Conclusion

Negation in the above instances portrays female characterization of the text *Let Her Fly* (2018). The absence of distinct women's traits by the writer shows the social expectation of women, as in Pakistan, they are deprived of their basic rights such as the equal right to education as with men and they do not have their identity rather they are called in relation to their sons, fathers, brothers or husbands. Negation in literary work requires its readers to think about every negated element and to look for the implied meaning that is of more importance than the apparent presence. This is the way some writers use negation as a handy tool to sketch female characters by denying, evoking, and opposing many of the distinct personality traits that have deep meaning beyond the lines. Through the above data analysis, it can be concluded that women and girls are characterized not just by what is said about them but, more significantly, by what they are not allowed to be, what they are not allowed to become, and, finally, what they do not want to be. By revealing how women have historically been viewed as passive objects, Nahajec's approach enables us to comprehend how negation serves as a feminist instrument of intellectual struggle in this context. Under the pretense of love, authority, or honor, the bird represents girls, especially those living in patriarchal homes, where their abilities are limited and their freedom is denied.

# References

Abrams, M. H., & Harpham, G. G. (2009). *A glossary of literary terms*. Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
Google Scholar     Worldcat     Fulltext

Culpeper, J. (2014). Language and characterisation. In *Routledge                eBooks*. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315839349
Google Scholar     Worldcat     Fulltext

Déprez, V., & Espinal, M. T. (Eds.). (2018). *The Oxford Handbook of negation* (Oxford Handbooks). Oxford University Press.
Google Scholar     Worldcat     Fulltext

Givón, T. (2001). *Syntax: An introduction* (Vol. 1). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
Google Scholar     Worldcat     Fulltext

Hornby, A. S. (2015). *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary* (J. Turnbull & Oxford Dictionaries Staff, Eds.). Oxford University Press.
Google Scholar     Worldcat     Fulltext

Martinez, I. M. (1995). Notes on the use and meaning of negation in contemporary written English. *Atlantis, 17*(1–2), 207–227.
Google Scholar     Worldcat     Fulltext

Moeschler, J. (1992). The pragmatic aspects of linguistic negation: Speech act, argumentation and pragmatic inference. *Argumentation, 6*(1), 51–76. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF00154259
Google Scholar     Worldcat     Fulltext

Nahajec, L. (2021). Negation, expectation and ideology in written texts. In *Linguistic approaches to literature*. https://doi.org/10.1075/lal.38
Google Scholar     Worldcat     Fulltext

Nahajec, L. M. (2012). *Evoking the possibility of presence: Textual and ideological effects of linguistic negation in written discourse* (Doctoral thesis, University of Huddersfield).
Google Scholar     Worldcat     Fulltext

Norgaard, N. (2006). Negation as a stylistic feature. In M. Lambrou & P. Stockwell (Eds.), *Contemporary stylistics* (pp. 263–274). London, UK: Continuum.
Google Scholar     Worldcat     Fulltext

Norgaard, N. (2007). Disordered collarettes and uncovered tables: Negative polarity as a stylistic device in Joyce's "Two Gallants." *Journal of Literary Semantics, 36*(1), 35–52. https://doi.org/10.1515/jls.2007.002
Google Scholar     Worldcat     Fulltext

Sweetser, E. (2006). Negative spaces: Levels of negation and kinds of spaces. In S. Bonnefille & S. Salbayre (Eds.), *La négation* (pp. 313–332). Presses Universitaires François-Rabelais.
Google Scholar     Worldcat     Fulltext

Toolan, M. (2001). *Narrative: A critical linguistic introduction* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
Google Scholar     Worldcat     Fulltext

Yousafzai, Z., & Carpenter, L. (2018). *Let her fly*. Little, Brown and Company.
Google Scholar     Worldcat     Fulltext

Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.
Google Scholar     Worldcat     Fulltext

Zolfaghari, F. (2023). The rhetoric of negation in research articles: A cross-disciplinary analysis of appraisal resources. *English for Specific Purposes, 70*, 192–206. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2022.12.007
Google Scholar     Worldcat     Fulltext