

**RESILIENCE AND SURVIVAL:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE SELECTED
AFGHAN EMIGRANT LITERARY TEXTS**

BY

NAHEED ANJUM



NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES

ISLAMABAD

July, 2025

**RESILIENCE AND SURVIVAL:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE SELECTED
AFGHAN EMIGRANT LITERARY TEXTS**

By

Naheed Anjum

BS, International Islamic University Islamabad, 2021

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

In English

To

FACULTY OF ARTS & HUMANITIES



NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES, ISLAMABAD

© Naheed Anjum, 2025



FACULTY OF ARTS & HUMANITIES
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES

THESIS AND DEFENSE APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have read the following thesis, examined the defense, are satisfied with the overall exam performance, and recommend the thesis to the Faculty of Arts & Humanities for acceptance:

Thesis Title: Resilience and Survival: A Comparative Study of the Selected Afghan Emigrant Literary Texts

Submitted By: Naheed Anjum

Registration 237MPhil/Elit/S22/2025(July)

Dr. Shazia Rose

Name of Supervisor

Signature of Supervisor

Dr. Farheen Ahmed Hashmi

Name of Head (GS)

Signature of Head (GS)

Dr. Arshad Mahmood

Name of Dean (FAH)

Signature of Dean (FAH)

Date

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I Naheed Anjum

Daughter of Muhammad Nasim Qaisrani

Registration # 237-M.Phil/ELit/S22

Discipline English Literature

Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Resilience and Survival: A Comparative Study of the Selected Afghan Emigrant Literary Texts** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

I also understand that if evidence of plagiarism is found in my thesis/dissertation at any stage, even after the award of a degree, the work may be cancelled and the degree revoked.

Signature of the Candidate

Name of the Candidate

Date

ABSTRACT

Title: Resilience and Survival: A Comparative Study of the Selected Afghan Emigrant Literary Texts

In this research, the narratives of resilience and survival of Afghan emigrants who were forcibly displaced from Afghanistan during periods of war, violence and political conflict are explored. This study investigates the survival narratives of Afghan emigrants by examining their translocational positionality, mental health challenges and their resilience. For this purpose, the study utilizes the conceptual framework built on Floya Anthias's theory of Translocational Positionality, Farah N. Mawani's concept of 'Social Determinants of Refugees Mental Health' and Morton Beiser's concept of Personal and Social Forms of Resilience (2014) to conduct a comparative analysis of Tamim Ansari's memoir *West of Kabul: East of New York* (2002), Fowzia Karimi's novel *Above Us the Milky Way* (2020) and Nadia Hashimi's novel *Sparks Like Stars* (2021). A comparative analysis of the selected Afghan emigrant's narratives explore thematic similarities and differences to understand the diversity of challenges faced by Afghan emigrants in their struggle for survival in the host land. The study suggests a shift in positionality of emigrants and refugees by examining their life narratives through the standpoint of resilience and survival rather than victimhood. Each selected text offers unique insights that contribute to a nuanced understanding of psychosocial and cultural challenges faced by Afghan emigrants in a post-conflict context and their resilience in their struggle for survival. The comparative analysis as a research method facilitated in the identification and understanding of the similarities and differences within the selected texts, revealing nuanced variations in Afghan emigrant's narratives of resilience and survival. This study is significant as it presents the life-narratives of people from war-torn areas, contributing to the growing body of literature that explores the experiences of emigrant and refugees in relation to war, migration and resettlement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THESIS AND DEFENSE APPROVAL FORM	i
AUTHOR'S DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
DEDICATION	viii
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Historical Context	2
1.2 Introduction to the Selected Authors and Their Works	4
1.3 Rationale for the Selection of the Texts.....	8
1.4 Thesis Statement	9
1.5 Research Questions	9
1.6 Research Method	9
1.7 Significance of the Study	10
1.8 Delimitation	10
1.9 Structure and Organization of the Study.....	11
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	12
2.1 Translocational Positionality	12
2.2 Resilience.....	18
2.3 Literature about Selected Texts	26
2.4 Research Gap	31
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK....	32
3.1 Research Methodology	32
3.2 Theoretical Framework.....	33
3.3 Translocational Positionality	34
3.4 Social Determinants of Refugees Mental Health.....	36
3.5 Resilience.....	37
4. TRANSLOCATIONAL POSITIONALITY, MENTAL HEALTH AND RESILIENCE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS.....	41
4.1 Translocational Positionality	42
4.2 Social Determinants of Mental Health Challenges	56
4.3 Resilience of Afghan Emigrants	63

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	72
5.1 Recommendations for Future Research	77
WORKS CITED.....	79

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

WKENY	<i>West of Kabul: East of New York</i>
SLS	<i>Sparks Like Stars</i>
AUTMW	<i>Above Us The Milky Way</i>
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful to Allah Almighty for granting me the strength, courage and patience to complete this thesis successfully.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude and love to my supervisor Professor Dr Shazia Rose, who consistently offered positive and constructive advice and always believed in my ability to complete this work, even when I doubted myself. I owe my sincere thanks to Professor Dr. Arshad Mehmood, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, for his cooperation throughout the research process.

I am also grateful to my father Muhammad Nasim Qaisrani and my mother Zarina Qaisrani, brothers and sister, nephew Ahmad Ebrahim, Niall Ahmad and niece Aks Fatima for it was their profound love and emotional support that uplifted me throughout this journey. Without their encouragement and emotional endearment, this work could never have been completed. I am also grateful to my friends for their high hopes, infinite prayers and love throughout this journey. I would also like to extend my thanks to the English Department of NUML for offering me the academic and creative space, to bring my thesis to life.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all those who come from war-torn areas, whose voices rarely reach the forefront, who face immense challenges in unfamiliar lands and who continue to struggle each day with unwavering courage and hope. Their strength and resilience is a testament to the enduring human spirit.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Forced migration has been a part of human history since its earliest days, but in recent decades, some of the most significant wars and conflicts have occurred in third-world countries, with Afghanistan being one of the most severely affected state. Decades of political conflicts, war and invasion in Afghanistan led to significant migration of Afghans seeking survival in other parts of the world. While pre-migration traumatic events are one aspect for Afghan emigrants, the forced migration initiated another cascade of challenges for them during their adjustment and survival in post-conflict context in an unfamiliar land. Reformulating the notions of belonging and social identity to create a new life in the host land is a matter of survival for Afghan emigrants who were forcibly displaced from Afghanistan. However, due to their complex positionality in the host land, Afghan emigrants encounter social and psychological challenges in rebuilding their lives. This research conducts a comparative analysis of Tamim Ansari's memoir *West of Kabul: East of New York* (2002), Fowzia Karimi's novel *Above Us the Milky Way* (2020) and Nadia Hashimi's novel *Sparks Like Stars* (2021), to explore the resilience and survival of Afghan emigrants amid the challenges of their translocational positionality during resettlement in the host land. For this purpose, Floya Anthias's theory of Translocational Positionality (2002), and Morton Beiser's concept of Personal and Social Forms of Resilience (2014) serve as theoretical lenses for examining the selected texts. Additionally, Farah N. Mawani's concept of Social Determinants of Refugees Mental Health (2014) is taken to examine the selected texts to analyze the mental health challenges that Afghan emigrants experience during their resettlement in the host land.

Floya Anthias's concept of translocational positionality asserts multiple forms of belonging and social identities, not solely limited to the social categories of race, gender or class but shaped by the intersection of social locations and processes that are unique to the experiences of emigrants. The study explores the social and political challenges asserted by the complex positionality of Afghan emigrants. Furthermore, Afghan emigrants encounter numerous psychological

challenges during their resettlement process in exile. The social determinants for emigrant's mental health are analyzed by considering Farah N. Mawani's concept that emphasizes on the psychological challenges emigrants face during their resettlement in a new culture and land. This study emphasizes on the idea that Afghan emigrants do not dwell on their victim positionality by focusing on the challenges they face, instead they strive to overcome them by adopting resilience for their survival and adjustment in the host land. Thereby, the narratives in all three selected texts are analyzed from the perspective of resilience and survival rather than victimhood. For this purpose, Morton Beiser's concept of resilience is incorporated in this work to examine the selected texts. Beiser's theory helps in understanding the practices of resilience that emigrants adopt to overcome the social challenges posed by their positionality and the psychological challenges that impact their mental well-being. These theoretical lenses help to understand the issues of Afghan emigrants from multiple dimensions and stand points. In the comparative analysis, these theories serve as frames of references to explore the resilience and survival of Afghan emigrants beyond Afghanistan.

1.1 Historical Context

Afghanistan has experienced extensive international involvement in its politics which led to war and displacement. This involvement has divided the local community along ethnic, paramilitary, religious and ideological lines. The resulting division made it difficult for Afghanistan to form a cohesive national government, leaving the country vulnerable for further manipulation by international parties. During the communist coup in 1979, a large number of Afghan population migrated to other countries seeking safety. During the 1980s and 1990s, Afghans became the largest refugee population in the world. The UN High commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi stated, "Afghanistan's displacement crisis is one of the largest and most protracted in UNHCR's seven decade history (Afghanistan Refugee Crisis Explained)".

With the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in September 2001, the situation for the Afghan community shifted entirely and they came under the spotlight once again. Consequently, this led to the dismissal of

Taliban rule and the formation of a new government in Afghanistan backed by the international community. According to the UNHCR statistics, around 6.3 million Afghans were displaced from their homes and migrated to other countries between 1980 and 2001 due to conflict and persecution (UNHCR 2022). As noted by Hiram A. Ruiz, Director of Communications for the US Committee for Refugees, the war and political conflict in Afghanistan led to their mass migration since the Soviet Invasion until the 9/11 attacks. He observed, “Between the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the present day, one in four Afghans has been a refugee” (Ruiz 2001).

Furthermore, the intervention by American forces during 2001-2002 brought a new hope for peace and an end to the era of war. Consequently, it motivated a large number of Afghan population to return to their home land. Unfortunately, despite the international involvement, violence and conflict continued to affect Afghanistan, leading to a new wave of migration from the country once again, beginning in 2005 and continuing afterwards. The majority of the Afghans left Afghanistan and emigrated to other countries for their survival. Over the past three decades, a large number of the Afghan population has been forced to leave their homeland due to towering threats that changed their life and even after their emigration, they continued to struggle for the survival.

Significantly, the term emigration refers to the process of leaving one’s country permanently that is different from the term immigration which is used for the individuals who immigrate to the other countries for better economic opportunities or to improve their lifestyle (Oxford English Dictionary). In the context of Afghan emigrants, it refers to Afghans who forcibly had to leave Afghanistan due to war and violence. This involuntary migration made their survival difficult in other countries as they carried with them the trauma of the past, of losing their loved ones and the psychological impact of constant exposure to violence along with the struggle to adjust in a new country and culture. Moreover, some host countries are not welcoming to emigrants, making their survival more difficult. These emigrants experience hardships in both pre-migration and post-migration phases. Unlike the Afghan diaspora and immigrants, the Afghan emigrants had little to no chance of

returning to their homeland to resettle, as the Afghanistan they knew no longer exists after the war and destruction.

Over the years, the constant war and violence have destroyed the infrastructure and ruined the social fabric of Afghanistan. At the same time, the forced migration and relocation of Afghan emigrants in the US initiated a cascade of issues for them specifically in the form of social, cultural and psychological barriers during their adjustment. The involuntary migration impacts millions of Afghans each year, making it difficult for them to survive and move forward in their lives. A number of literary works have been published in recent times to voice these struggles of Afghan emigrants. The literary works written by Afghan authors encompass a broad spectrum of Afghan experiences, historical narratives, political turmoil, societal and familial challenges as well as the rich Afghan culture and heritage. The most renowned Afghan authors including Khaled Hosseini, Jamil Jan Kochai, Mohammad Asef Soltanzadeh and Atiq Rahimi have provided their unique perspectives and insights to literature by voicing their opinions on the diverse experiences of Afghan people, both within Afghanistan and the Afghan diaspora. These literary works provide a deeper, more emotionally resonant picture of the complex societal and political issues of Afghanistan.

1.2 Introduction to the Selected Authors and Their Works

Before moving forward, a brief description of the authors and literary texts selected for this study is provided. The first selected work, *West of Kabul: East of New York* is written by Afghan diasporic author Tamim Ansari. Tamim Ansari writes fictional children's stories as well as non-fictional works that mainly deal with the issues related to Afghanistan, history and Islam. He currently works as a journalist and a public speaker in San Francisco. In the selected work, *West of Kabul: East of New York*, Tamim Ansari discusses his childhood in Afghanistan, his notions of homeland, the image of Afghanistan in the global spotlight and the relation of Afghanistan with America after the 9/11 attacks. The work begins with him confessing that his writing is highly impacted by the recent 9/11 attack and then the story moves back and forth, from his childhood spent in Afghanistan, his feminist American mother and Afghan father, and his early years in Kabul during 1940s-

1950s to his young adulthood spent in America. During his early years in Afghanistan before migration, Ansari was situated at the cross-roads of two cultural worlds. His mother was American and his father an educated Afghan, which give him a hybrid social position in Afghan society. He achieved more respect due to his prominent status as the son of an American woman. Similarly, he also felt a sense of belonging with his larger Afghan clan, where he cherished the harmony of kinship structures. He enjoyed the privileges of urban life in Kabul and held the position of a high status Afghan-American. Before migration, Ansari's positionality was both of an insider and outsider. In the memoir, he discusses his early years in Afghanistan based on his memory, offering a firsthand experience. He argues, "Lots of people have parents, or grandparents, or at least great-grandparents who grew up in that world. Some people even know that world personally, because they were born in it. I am one of those people" (Ansari 11).

The second literary work selected for this study is written by Fowzia Karimi, an Afghan-American author. She was born in Afghanistan and later moved to the United States after the soviet invasion. She is an author and illustrator. Her debut novel, *Above Us the Milky Way* (2020), narrates the journey of a couple and their five daughters who manage to escape Afghanistan amidst the turmoil of war. Before migration, the five daughters lived in an affectionate and culturally rich household, where they nurtured their dreams, stories, fantasies and imagination. They belonged to an educated and middle-class family, with parents who were deeply invested in their nourishment and growth. After migration, the affection and dreamlike life of all these characters vanish. Their positionality as refugees in the US, begin to create socio-cultural problems for them. The girls, who once had close friends in Kabul, now find themselves unable to share their feelings, as their classmates cannot relate to the trauma they have witnessed. The work discusses the issues of displacement and the resilience of the human spirit to overcome the pain and suffering. A.C Carls reinforces the novel's main theme by suggesting, "While the family left the war-torn land, a part of them remained and continued to mourn the loss of what they once had, a costly effect of war" (Karimi, *Above Us the Milky Way*).

Throughout the narrative, the family presents the strength and courage to endure adversity and rebuild their life in the host land. *Above Us the Milky Way*

portrays her writing style as well as illustrations and photographs, some of which are taken from her personal life, depicting the autobiographical elements in her fictional work. As she explains,

The stories here are memory condensed, not whole or linear, but distilled over the many years of my nostalgic life. And as water crystallizes around dust, so my stories would be nothing without many grains of untruth embedded within them. In the end, these are works of fancy born of remembrance (Karimi 14).

The third work selected for this research is written by Nadia Hashimi, an Afghan-American author. Nadia Hashimi is a writer and a pediatrician. She has written several popular novels that draw on Afghan culture, including her most famous work, *The Pearl that Broke its Shell* (2014). In the selected work, *Sparks Like Stars* (2021), Hashimi portrays the beauty and diversity of Afghan culture while addressing the themes of political upheaval, displacement and resettlement.

The novel presents the story of a young girl Sitara Zamani who loses her entire family and is forced to leave Afghanistan for her survival. Sitara Zamani encounters significant challenges while attempting to rebuild her life in the host land. Despite knowing that her survival in Afghanistan is compromised due to her father's political position, his subsequent assassination and the regime change that triggered the war, she is unable to completely sever her ties with her homeland and Afghan origins. Prior to the war in Afghanistan, Sitara Zamani had a happy life because her father was associated with Afghan government. Her positionality as an Afghan girl belonging to an elite class and political family provided her many privileges that other Afghan girls did not have an easy access to. Since her father was a close advisor to Daoud Khan, they lived in the government palace where Sitara had many friends and witnessed many political meetings and social gatherings. Following the invasion, she loses her entire family in the war and barely managed to escape the killings. While she survives the atrocities in her homeland, the trauma of losing her loved ones and her homeland alter the course of her life in the years that followed. Her positionality as an Afghan girl with high-status, strong political affiliations and residence in a government palace along with a balanced life in urban Kabul changes entirely after the Soviet invasion. With the help of this novel, Hashimi portrays the

life narratives of people from war-torn areas, interweaving her own experiences and historical facts into her fictional work. The story explains the traumatic past of the protagonist Sitara, her escape from Afghanistan and the challenges during her resettlement as a result of her complex positionality in the US. Hashimi states,

Aryana's story is not my story, though I leaned into my personal experiences more for her than perhaps any other character I've written. Like me, she was an Afghan American physician in training in New York City on 9/11, when America's gaze swiveled back to Afghanistan and struggled to sort out friend from foe (Hashimi 430).

With the help of this literary work, Hashimi portrays the prolonged conflicts in Afghanistan and their consequences. As we observe, "*Sparks Like Stars* is my exploration of how a country that inspired wanderlust could have tipped into decades of war and turmoil (Hashimi 428)". Despite the challenges, the novel depicts the endurance and strength of Afghan emigrants. Hashimi sees Afghanistan not as the victim of war but as the land of hope and resilience amid the challenges. She argues, "I see Afghanistan as a survivor, victimized by colonialism, imperialism, the Cold War, and, at times, by her own people" (Hashimi 428).

Through the story of Sitara, Hashimi presents the resilience of Afghan emigrants, who chose to move beyond victim positionality and rebuild their lives. As we observe, "Those who survived plod forward bearing scars and trauma" (Hashimi 430).

On her website, she further explains that the novel includes fictional characters but the inspiration is taken from factual details based on real life characters and incidents. On her website, she offers a brief description of her inspiration for this novel.

Having discussed this plenty in book clubs and festivals, it was time to explore the turning point in a story with as little whitewashing of history as possible. I wandered through a great many rabbit holes researching this book, learning of looted artifacts, reading personal accounts of American Foreign

Service officers stationed in Kabul, and delving into the story of Anastasia Romanov (nadiashimibooks.com)

Her work presents the resilience of Afghan emigrants in rebuilding their lives at the face of social and psychological challenges in the host land.

1.3 Rationale for the Selection of the Texts

Deeply connected to Afghanistan's history and culture, the selected literary works provide the voices of Afghan emigrants, their experiences and perspectives on the enduring consequences of prolonged conflict as well as the immense human suffering it has resulted in. The three selected literary works present the life narratives of people from war-torn areas and their journeys beyond Afghanistan. Each selected work depicts the plight and struggles of people from war-torn regions and the ways in which they present strength and courage to continue with their lives in new and unfamiliar lands.

In *West of Kabul: East of New York*, Ansari discusses the issues of migration and the experiences of Afghan emigrants during their resettlement in the host land by describing his lived experiences as an Afghan emigrant in the US. Fowzia Karimi's *Above Us the Milky Way* portrays the complex social and psychological problems of emigrants in the host land. Her work offers deeper insights to understand the themes of displacement, resettlement and resilience of emigrants amidst the constant social and cultural challenges in the host land. Nadia Hashimi's work offers a more resonant picture of Afghan emigrants in the host land. Her work explores the issues of war, familial loss and psychological challenges during adjustment from the eye of a young Afghan emigrant girl who is forced to leave Afghanistan for her survival. Sitara, later known as Aryana, presents remarkable resilience during her resettlement amid the challenges of her positionality, cultural trauma and memory of a hostile past. A comparative analysis of these three selected literary texts helps to explore the issues faced by the emigrants in exile and their resistance in dwelling in the issues of positionality and trauma of the past for their survival in order to rebuild their lives for them.

1.4 Thesis Statement

A comparative analysis of Tamim Ansari's memoir *West of Kabul: East of New York*, Fowzia Karimi's novel *Above Us the Milky Way* and Nadia Hashimi's novel *Sparks Like Stars*, helps to unveil the narratives of resilience and survival of Afghan emigrants amidst their complex translocational positionality and psycho-social struggles during resettlement in the host land.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the elements of translocational positionality of Afghan emigrants that affect their adjustment in the host land?
2. In what ways, do the selected texts share similarities in illustrating the social and psychological challenges experienced by Afghan emigrants during their resettlement?
3. How do the selected texts depict the resilience of Afghan emigrants in overcoming the challenges of complex positionality and psycho-social struggles in the host land?

1.6 Research Method

The study is a qualitative research where the researcher carried out the comparative analysis of the primary texts to address the research questions. The comparison focuses on identifying and highlighting the similarities and differences thematically between the selected texts. The analysis assists in the "explanation of differences, and the explanation of similarities" (Azarian 2) between the selected texts. The similarities and differences are explored by considering the following elements; frame of reference, grounds for comparison, thesis, organizational scheme, and linking of A and B (Walk, 1998).

The purpose of comparative analysis is to examine the selected literary texts from multiple dimensions to understand the translocational positionality of Afghan emigrants, the social and psychological challenges in the host land and the resilience they adopt to overcome these challenges. This holistic approach helps understand the issues of Afghan emigrants during their resettlement in the host land. The

detailed description of the theoretical framework, research method and steps of comparative analysis are provided in Chapter 3.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is that it provides a comparative analysis of the selected Afghan emigrant literary texts which helps to explore the resilience and survival of Afghan emigrants amidst the social and psychological challenges they face during their resettlement. Displacement and relocation are recurring themes in Afghan literature, particularly in the context of the Soviet Invasion. While the previous studies have focused on the deadly consequences of the Afghan war and the resulting long-term trauma and identity crises experienced by individuals, my work focuses on the concept of translocational positionality, mental health challenges and resilience of Afghan emigrants by examining contemporary Afghan-American literature. My work focuses on exploring the challenges and resilience of Afghan emigrants by foregrounding the agency, resilience and strength with which they attempt to rebuild their lives in the host land. The study examines the selected works with a central focus on resilience and survival rather than presenting refugees and emigrants as passive victims of war and violence. This research is also significant as it explores the life narratives of displaced people from war torn areas, specifically Afghans and their issues in exile. It provides a framework for understanding the survival mechanisms adapted by displaced people to cope with the challenges amid the complexity of their positionality.

1.8 Delimitation

The study is delimited to a comparative analysis of Tamim Ansari's *West of Kabul: East of New York* (2002), Fowzia Karimi's novel *Above Us the Milky Way* (2020) and Nadia Hashimi's *Sparks Like Stars* (2021) to explore the resilience and survival of Afghan emigrants in the US. The study is carried out using Floya Anthias's theory of Translocational Positionality, Morton Beiser's concept of Personal and Social Forms of Resilience (2014) and Farah N. Mawani's concept of Social Determinants of Refugees Mental Health (2014). The work is delimited to the exploration and comparison of the narratives and issues in the selected literary

works, thereby the pictorial elements in *Above Us The Milky Way* are not taken for examination.

1.9 Structure and Organization of the Study

The chapter breakdown for the current study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction and a thorough historical background of the study. It includes the introduction and rationale for the selected literary texts. Further, it outlines the thesis statement and research questions upon which the study is carried out along with the significance and delimitation of the study.

Chapter 2 provides a review of literature on the relevant theories and literary texts. The chapter is divided into two sections where the first section deals with the existing literature about the selected theories and the second section deals with the literature on the selected literary texts.

Chapter 3 deals with the theoretical framework and research methodology. It is divided into two sections where the first section explains the research method and steps of comparative analysis. The second section deals with the theoretical framework and explains both the primary and secondary theoretical sources for this study.

Chapter 4 is the main chapter of this study. In this chapter, there is a detailed comparative analysis and discussion on the selected texts. It is divided into three sections on the basis of three frames of references outlined in Chapter 3.

Chapter 5 provides the conclusion and findings of this study. It also presents the recommendations for future researchers.

CHAPTER: 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

By reviewing the existing body of knowledge, this chapter seeks to identify gap that the current study intends to address. For this purpose, the review of related literature across two areas of scholarship is necessary: existing literature about resilience and translocational positionality and literature on the selected texts.

2.1 Translocational Positionality

In the article, “Living With Change Among A Transient Population: Narratives and Practices of Collective Belonging among Swedish Migrants on the Costa del Sol in Spain” (2017), by Annie Woube, the idea of translocational positionality is used to explore the life narratives of Swedish migrants living in Costa del Sol, Spain. The article investigates the ideas of transnationalism and diaspora to understand their social positions in Spain. She explains the notion of transnationality as the mobility between the native land and the foreign land, as individuals try to figure out their way between both states. Woube considers translocational positionality as a framework to analyze collective belonging through different practices in the host land among the people who share the same country of origin. By incorporating the framework of translocational positionality, the research explores how this notion helps in the construction of identity and identification practices in the narratives of Swedish migrants. Understanding the position of migrants in the socio-cultural spaces of host land allows for an analysis of their strategies to navigate their collective belonging. Woube explains diaspora as the shared consciousness of a group of people with the same origin and as a mode of cultural production for them. This helps them build a migrant community and consequently, a practice that makes their everyday local life somewhat bearable in the host land. She further states,

The sameness works as the starting point for collective identification and a sense of belonging. The transnational movements of Swedish migrants have an impact on activities and cultural (re)production produced formally within

the Swedish arenas; events and opening hours are scheduled on the basis of the ebb and flow of the circulation. (Woube 148)

Woube's work explores the strategies through which the diaspora maintain their collective belonging by adopting practices that help them explore, understand and create their collective identity in local and transnational spaces. While Woube's research is highly valuable in understanding diaspora and transnationality but it is limited to exploring these concepts in the context of Swedish migrants. My research examines the transnational narratives in the context of Afghan emigrants and moves a step ahead by identifying their problems and shed light on the resilient practices they adopt to overcome challenges of identity and belonging in the host land.

In her work "At the Borders of Otherness - A Decolonising Translocational Positionality Approach to Difference: Releasing Kuwaiti Online Voices" (2019), Khadija AlAli explores the notions of difference and power among Kuwaiti online voices. These ideas are at the core of societal inclusion and exclusion, resource allocation and rights and are rooted in binary logic. Al-Ali takes the intersectional positionality approach to explore the difference and power that permeates in every field, in the real and virtual world. It is exercised on the notions of the 'unwanted Other'. Furthermore, she explores two main concerns in her work to examine these complex dynamics. First, she discusses arguments regarding difference within the framework of feminism, referring to the translocational positionality approach. Secondly, she examines Kuwaiti online texts to understand the online experience in relation to power and difference. The concept of intersectionality helps to understand the overlapping and interconnected social categorizations, rather than reducing them to fixed binaries. This approach helps in understanding the domain of power and difference with regard to multifaceted experiences of Kuwaiti individuals. By employing a translocational approach, Al-Ali concluded that Kuwaiti identities are not limited to binaries and are not fixed. Rather, they are shaped through the intersectionality of multiple social categories as well as by spatial and contextual factors. This research provides valuable insights by understanding the complexity of positionality and intersectionality of social categorizations that shape Kuwaiti's online experiences which were previously reduced to simplistic binary categories. This paper presents an alternative view to the dynamics of difference and power that

were earlier constructed on the basis of binary structures. While this work is really helpful for my understanding of the topic, it is limited to the context of online space for Kuwaiti individuals. My intervention focuses on Afghans who have been forcibly displaced from their native land and face challenges in recreating their identities and belonging in a foreign land due to their translocational positionality. Therefore, I approach translocational positionality from a completely different dimension and context.

Kaisu Koskela investigated the experiences of highly skilled migrants in Finland with reference to translocational positionality embedded in the intersectionality framework. In her work titled, "Intersecting experiences: class, gender, ethnicity and race in the lives of highly skilled migrants in Finland" (2019), she conducted a study on highly skilled migrants in Finland by employing Floya Anthias's notion of translocational positionality to explore the complex interplay of social identities and social categorizations within the intersectional framework. Koskela argued that by placing translocational positionality in the intersection of social categories such as race, gender, class, nationality and ethnicity, the research addresses the influence of these categories on reshaping the migrant's self-identification in Finland. She asserts that Anthias's concept of translocational positionality is used with reference to the intersection of social categories to study the complex interplay of social factors as race, gender and class, which plays an essential role in reshaping migrant's experience and relationships in the host land. The reformation of identity is situational, contextual dependent and highly impacted by class markers. Koskela states, "Finns are most positive towards those immigrants who are willing to follow cultural values of the host society and have good educational qualifications and relevant occupational skills." (Koskela 323). With the change in the environment and cultural setting, these experiences and relationships in the process of self-identification also changes, making them fluid and dynamic. Moreover, class markers are not just for the identification but are also the reason of acceptance for the immigrants by the members of the host land.

This research is different from mine, as it focuses on class markers as prominent reasons for reshaping experiences in host land within the context of voluntary migrants. However, my intervention is using the lens of translocational

positionality and resilience and studying a different context of Afghan-American emigrants who were forced to migrate and relocated for survival.

Dzintra Ilisko's research, titled "Translocational Positionality of Returnee Migrants: The New Normal" (2021), and Soheyla PourAli's research, "Intersectional-Translocational Positionality in Arab-American Women's Narratives: Reading Randa Jarrar's *'A Map of Home'* and Laila Halaby's *'West of Jordan'*" (2022)", both investigate identity construction and belonging in the context of women migrants by employing Floya Anthias's theory of translocational positionality. Ilisko focuses on Latvian women returnees to understand their struggles of identity and belonging when they return to their native lands after many years. The engagement of returnee women in relation to the larger group imposes multiple belongings and identities across different cultures and contexts. Ilisko concludes that translocational positionality implies that relocation or return results in the changed roles, cultures, and expectations from inhabitants of native lands. Furthermore, the process of returning is complex and multifaceted, requiring a deep understanding of their positionality in multiple spaces and contexts. Consequently, they navigate their sense of belonging with the 'Other', with the kinship ties and their transnational identity by engaging with the larger community in the native or foreign social and cultural sectors. The concept of belonging is even more complex for the female migrants. They argued, "Belonging is manifested in experiences and emotional reactions as experienced in social bonds, particularly in women's narratives of longing for their home, relatives and friends who were left in their homeland" (Ilisko 4).

Similarly PourAli employs the concept of translocational positionality to explore the identity construction for in-transit Arab women. For in-transit Arab-American women, inclusion and exclusion in the host culture vary with changes in time, space and locality, influenced by the intersectionality of social categories such as race, gender and class. These categories operate within broader social systems, influenced by the power relations, cultural hierarchies and historical contexts of the host land. The study reveals that the intersectionality of multiple social categories highly impacts the inclusion, exclusion and resource allocation in the host land for in-transit Arab-American women. Consequently, they struggle with reshaping their

identity and belonging in the host land. While Ilisko's work is significant for its treatment of the Latvian women returnee, it is limited to this one specific group of women. On the other hand, PourAli's work provides a broader perspective of in-transit Arab-American women relocated to the host land. My work differs from both as it does not focus on in-transit women migrants and returnee migrants rather it focuses on forcibly displaced Afghans. My intervention is to employ the translocational positionality and its challenges within the framework of Afghan emigrants relocated in the US, thereby providing a deeper understanding of migrants' experience in a different context. However, I also analyse other characters in the selected texts, foregrounding the relocation of Afghan emigrants. Therefore, my context is entirely different from these two research works.

Exploring the biographical narratives to understand the heterogeneities in migrant's experiences, Mercy Mashingaidze et al. used the notion of translocational positionality and multi-situatedness in their research work titled "The multi-situatedness of biographical narratives: contributions to critical migration research" (2022). They used the concept of translocational positionality that refers to the stress individuals experience from shifting locations and intersecting identities between their inherent race, nationality, class, ethnicity and gender and the belonging they experience in the host land. They argued that 'groupist' ideas in migrant studies have generalized the concept of identity construction and belonging that is otherwise very complex and subjective. Similar to migration, the positionality in translocal spaces also shifts with changes in context. Zimbabwean narratives reveal issues of personal agency, the role of family and migrant networks that significantly impact the concepts of identity and belonging. They remain connected to their transnational families and intersecting identities, which impacts their lives more than broader societal events. In addition to these concepts, the work also presents the notion of multi-situatedness, meaning that an individual's experience and relationships are influenced by larger contexts and spatial-temporal factors. Mashingaidze argues, "This inherent composite multi-situatedness enables researchers to follow and learn how individuals experience, influence or are influenced by broader and dynamic contexts, structures, norms, and policies that regulate their everyday life" (Mashingaidze 58).

This concept highlights the importance of understanding the cultural realities and lived experiences of migrants within broader contexts. By incorporating biographical narratives, this work addresses translocational positionality beyond the nation-state, focusing on class markers as a significant element in reshaping migrant's positionality. Mashingaidze emphasizes that complex positionality necessitates the reshaping and reconstituting of family life and kinship ties. This work is significant because it provides valuable insights into the complex interconnected factors shaping migration, relocation and their consequences that helps in my understanding of the heterogeneities in migrant's experiences related to identity construction and positionality in the host land. However, my work differs as it explores the life narratives of Afghans relocating in the US.

Ipek Demirsu Di Biase et al. explore the role of translocational positionality in the identity construction of post-migrant young individuals residing in San Siro, a neighborhood in Milan. In their research work "Translocational Belonging in Urban Peripheries among the Postmigrant Generation: San Siro and the Trap/Drill Subculture of Milan" (2024), Di Biase et al. addresses the complexity of identity construction for post migrants through the framework of translocational positionality by examining intertextual urban spaces via media narratives, testimonies, song lyrics as well as ethnographic fieldwork. The research reflects on a controversial event that occurred on June 2, 2022, where a large crowd of young individuals with a migratory background gathered to celebrate their African traditional dance and music. Despite its initial intentions, the event ended in a case of harassment as well as clashes with local police. As a result, this incident sparked a nationwide debate over issues of racism, discrimination and the failure of integration and assimilation of young migrants in the host land. The research analyses the event to highlight how the nationwide debate emphasized the exclusion and discrimination of migrants in society. It is worth noting that the author focus on post-migrants, those who have never migrated themselves but are second or third generation of migrants yet they still face instances of racism and discrimination in urban spaces. Multiple belonging and constant mobility influences the identity of post-migrants living in San Siro. As cited by Di Biase et al. in the work,

At this juncture of space and identity, the study focuses on the identity construction of postmigrant youth living in urban peripheries, who tend to be characterized by ‘ambiguous positionings and discontinuities’, and for whom mobility and multiple belongings have become the normality (Di Biase et al 6).

The song lyrics written by Seven7oo members, selected for this study, represents how identity reconstruction is influenced by multiple belonging. It also reflects the frustration of these young individuals who struggle with racism and discrimination while living constantly in vulnerable conditions as marginalized communities. By taking into account ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with Seven7oo members and analyzing them within the framework of translocational belonging and identity construction, the research concludes that music serves as a medium of social interaction that plays a pivotal role in creating and sharing cultural assumptions and values. Therefore, it significantly contributes to the identity construction of post-migrant young individuals. While this study offers valuable insights into the lived experiences of marginalized post migrants communities but it is limited to their reconstruction of identity. My intervention declares that I take a step further by examining construction amid resilience amid translocational positionality by focusing on emigrant rather than post-migrant.

2.2 Resilience

In the critical research titled, “Suffering, hope, and entrapment: Resilience and cultural values in Afghanistan” (2010), Mark Eggerman, and Catherine Panter-Brick argues that the notion of resilience is highly important in war-torn Kabul, as it helps people to make some sense of life and show resilience after the massive catastrophe they have witnessed. Afghans have endured the devastating impact of war in every facet of their lives. They assert that most Afghans suffer from the ‘broken economy’ caused by war and conflicts while others suffer from the lack of educational opportunities. Consequently without proper education, and a stable economy, upward mobility in social and cultural circles is impossible. Apart from the key role that economic stability plays in upward mobility of Afghan emigrants, the researcher observes that the moral and social order strongly embodies a sense of hope among

them. The moral and social order inspires Afghans to a large extent and therefore serves as a backbone for their resilience. The study discusses Afghan's resilience, highlighting its deep connections to Islamic faith stating that "Strong religious faith [*iman*] and individual effort [*koshesh*] are values that structure a *discourse of resilience* in the face of adversity, often through acceptance of "the will of God" and a hope that everyday perseverance will be rewarded with His "mercy" and "protection. Interviews with Afghans reveal that they have paid a large price for the war in terms of loss of human lives and materialistic possessions. It is the richness of faith and moral values that help them make sense of adversity and show resilience. Furthermore, familial, moral and cultural values plays an essential role in making Afghans resilient and strong in facing day-to-day life after the barbaric and violent conflict. This work is significant in addressing the issues Afghan emigrants experience as a result of constant war, political upheavals and conflicts. Although I also refer to the similar concern in my research but my dimension is different since I address the positionality of immigrants and I approach the idea of resilience from a different perspective, highlighting how practice of resilience serves as the driving force for Afghans to overcome the challenges they face in the host land.

Mariastella Pulvirenti and Gail Mason, argue that resilience needs to be explored through the narratives of refugee women, as they are the most vulnerable to violence in their native lands. In their research work titled as, "Resilience and Survival: Refugee Women and Violence" (2011), they assert that women are exposed to the danger and violence during conflicts in their native land, during displacement, and even after migration in detention or refugee camps. By conducting the interviews with 18 members, who work with and provide services to refugee women, the study explores two main issues; the experience of violence among refugee women and the risks of using the concept of resilience for these women in a neo-liberal context, given their vulnerability to violence. Pulvirenti et al. argues that it is important to understand the concept, meaning and experiences of resilience in the context of refugee women during their pre-migration and post-migration phases. According to Pulvirenti et al, "Resilience has been said to be a particular quality of former-refugee women, many of whom have experienced torture, violence and intimidation in their countries of origin, during flight across borders, in refugee camps or detention and during resettlement" (Pulvirenti et al 8).

Furthermore, it is also significant to explore whether there are any dangers in using the concept of resilience in this domain because resilience needs to focus on strengths and circumstances that permits individuals to overcome their past traumatic experiences. Refugee women face extensive physical and psychological violence during wars and conflicts. Pulvirenti et al. also refers to Pittaway's concept (2004) that highlights, "In 1995 the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that 80 per cent of all refugee women are 'routinely raped and sexually abused' by opposing forces, border guards and peace-keeping forces" (Pittaway 2004).

Moreover, many male members of these families, who might themselves have been subjected to violence during the war and conflict, end up exercising domestic violence and abuse towards female family members. Thereby, women who are forced to leave their native lands, or engaged in unauthorized mobility, are subjected to extensive violence and abuse. Surprisingly, however, despite these challenges, refugee women show great resilience and admit traumatic experiences and they do not show long term mental health problems. This form of resilience is not innate but develops through support. My intervention would be that I am not focusing on gender-based violence to understand the theory of resilience but my research deviates from this as it primarily focuses on emigrants with reference to their experiences of post migration and relocation.

In the critical work titled, "Gendered Sources of Distress and Resilience among Afghan Refugees in Northern California: A Cross-Sectional Study" (2017), Carl Stempel et al. argue that gender plays an essential role in resettlement process and sources of resilience by analyzing a case study of 250 Afghan refugees in the USA. They found that gender 'moderates' the influence of resilience and distress sources. They identified four key areas where gender plays a role in moderating the effects of levels of distress. The first is the relationship with extended family and kinship structures, where women seem more impacted than men. Secondly, men are more positively linked to proficiency in English than women.

For women, proficiency in English is linked to lower distress levels. Moreover, in a traditional setting, men with egalitarian views and women with religious beliefs experience lower levels of distress. Lastly, gender impacts

dissonant acculturation i.e. women experience lower level of distress in trying to adjust to a new culture than man. These gendered interactions reflect the experiences of individuals who have been traumatized by leaving their home land and adapting to life in the host land. This research provides valuable insights into the problems of the acculturation process, gender roles and identities that Afghan immigrants experience when they arrive in a new context. This work is limited to gendered perspectives and does not consider the positionality of immigrants. My research fills this gap by moving beyond gendered boundaries and focusing on the positionality of emigrants, the challenges it creates and the resilience emigrants adopt to overcome them.

In critical work, “Belonging as a Resource of Resilience: Psychological Wellbeing of International and Refugee Students in Study Preparation at German Higher Education Institutions” (2019), Michael Grüttner reflects on the use of the term of resilience in relation to social inclusion and belonging. Gruttner investigates resilience among refugees in the educational sector by collecting data from preparatory courses at German higher education institutions. He asserts that students who come to Germany as refugees and asylum seekers often face difficulties prioritizing their education. At times, they face discrimination which adversely affects their education, security and well-being. Consequently, these issues led them to struggle with fragmented education and occupational careers. However, they face these challenges and often show more resilience due to their harsh experiences of displacement and relocation. While these students demonstrate more resilience than other students, Gruttner argues that they also require social and personal resources as their support system. Social and personal resources play an essential role in protecting migrants from discrimination and its adverse effect on their mental health and well-being. This support system can make them feel more included, thus creating a sense of belonging. Consequently, these students will have lower rates of school or college dropout and occupational career disruptions, leading to a more secure and stable life. Gruttner also highlights that higher educational institutions (HEIs) should foster resilience and create a sense of belonging for refugee students. This work provides valuable insights in understanding the role of resilience in the well-being and emotional stability of refugee students, but it is limited to their

educational context, however my work focuses on Afghan emigrant's positionality and resilience in broader social and cultural contexts.

In the research article titled as, “Resilience The Immigrant Settlement Sector, A Consideration of the Place of Accountability and Performance Management” (2020) by Sharon Broughton and John Shields, the resilience of immigrants and refugees living in Canada. The research primarily focuses on examining the measurement frameworks and their impact on evaluation strategies in non-profit sector that is responsible for settlement of Refugee and immigrants in Canada. Furthermore, they assert that the complex dynamics of resettlement process for refugees and immigrants is often challenging, but it is of utmost importance to highlight that resilience can greatly aid this process. They argue that resilience is the ability to ‘rebound and adapt to change’ and depends on multiple factors within the immigrant settlement sectors and the newcomers they serve. This research is significant in developing my understanding of the need for resilience in resettlement sectors, their accountability and measurement. My intervention is that I explore the resilience of Afghan emigrants in relation to their translocational positionality.

Tengku Nila Fadhli et al. reflects on the factors contributing to the resilience of refugees in their work, “Adversity, emotion, and resilience among Syrian refugees in the Netherlands” (2022). They theorize the notion of resilience by examining the experiences of Syrian refugees in the Netherlands. The research focuses on the forced migration of Syrians to other parts of the world due to constant political conflicts and war. The researcher argues,

The current civil war in Syria is the worst international humanitarian tragedy since the Second World War. After a decade of crisis, over six million people have fled from Syria, and even more have been internally displaced, making Syrians currently the largest refugee population in the world (Fadhli et al. 2).

Syrian refugees frequently experience emotional turmoil and mental health problems due to the trauma, loss and violence they encounter in their native lands as well as during migration. Furthermore, they face additional challenges in assimilating into the socio-cultural and economic sectors of the host land in the post-

migration phase. By using a psychopathological approach, they highlight the resilience refugees adopt in overcoming mental health challenges and psychological stress. Resilience is defined as the process of navigating the methods of acquiring and maintaining well-being in adversity. While traditional researchers have focused on identifying the internal factors, this study seeks to identify external socio-ecological factors, such as the institutions of family, community and friends. The researchers argue that there is a dependence and interconnectedness between external socioecological factors and internal factors. Similarly, for Syrian refugees, it is important to understand the role of external factors that evoke resilience, which could include family and social relations as well as community support. The work does not provide a broader framework for understanding migrant's positionality in the host land and the resilience in the face of adversity within the broader socio-political contexts. My work is different because it works on a different context of Afghan emigrants and investigates the challenges faced by the Afghan emigrants in the host country in accordance with their positionality in the larger socio-cultural and political factors and the practices of resilience that helps emigrants to overcome those challenges.

Hadi Farahani et al. in their research titled, "How Can I Trust People When They Know Exactly What My Weakness Is?" Daily Life Experiences, and Resilience Strategies of Stateless Afghans in Iran" (2023), explore the issues faced by Afghan immigrants in Exile. Farahani et al. explores the situation of Afghan emigrants residing in Iran, focusing on the themes of statelessness and forced migration to uncover their life experiences and cultural realities. In this research, four main problems faced by Afghan emigrants are identified. First, they are ignored by both the local community and state authorities, as if they are non-existent. Additionally, they are treated as second-class Muslims in Iran. Lastly, their future, along with that of their descendants, is marked by uncertainty and unpredictability due to their position as emigrants. Hadi Farahani et al. argue that since stateless persons have no legal status in the host countries, they are often marginalized from social and economic sectors. Furthermore, policies and practices subtly or prominently prioritize their own citizens in socio-economic sectors, making it difficult for emigrants to access job, health and education. Farahani et al, also

referred to similar other case studies in their work that emphasizes on the same institutionalized discrimination against vulnerable Afghan emigrants.

Various studies have shown that, since 1995, the Iranian government has followed a policy of “making Iran a less desirable destination for Afghans” by establishing restrictive measures to limit the access of Afghans to free or subsidized resources, such as education, energy, and health services (Farahani et al. 5) .

This research is significant in understanding the circumstances of Afghan migrants in Iran in terms of jobs, citizenship and cultural or religious practices. My intervention declares that my research focuses on understanding the challenges Afghan emigrant’s experience due to their complex positionality and the resilience they adopt to overcome these challenges.

Frances Morales et al. (2023) asserts that resilience generates hope, optimism and religiosity, providing a sense of sustainability of the parents of asylum seekers. In the research work, “Strengths and Resilience Among Central American Parents Seeking Asylum in the United States” (2023), fifty-one parents of Asylum seekers were interviewed to understand their experiences in the U.S. The research employed a convergent parallel mixed method as research methodology, using both qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the interviews. A number of individuals and families migrate from the Northern Triangle region to seek safety and a better life in asylum seekers in the US. In their native land, they face excessive violence and danger while the process of migration and resettlement also brings life-threatening risks. During migration, they encounter challenges such as danger, violence, hostile environments and uncertainty. Once they reached the host country, they face challenges in rebuilding their lives amidst trauma, loss and the uncertainty of the future, all striving for a better and secure future for their children. They also need to go through a legal process of migration. Morales et al. argue that resilience lies in the adaptation and adjustment of immigrants and refugees in the host land. Hispanic immigrants in the U.S show extraordinary resilience and strength in overcoming the challenges, which contributes to better mental health and reduced stress in their lives. The research recommends that a strength-based approach can better understand the resilience of immigrants in overcoming the trauma and loss

experienced during premigration and migration phase. As Morales et al. state, “It is essential that the mental health community gains insight not only into migration-related trauma but also into their unique strengths” (Morales et al. 17).

This understanding can help immigrants overcome challenges during their relocation. While this research is significant in understanding the notion of resilience, it does not outline the exact steps needed to exercise resilience and strength beyond faith and spirituality. My intervention is to fill this gap by identifying the processes and practices of resilience adopted by Afghan emigrants during resettlement in the host land.

The history of human forced migration dates back to the dawn of human history, but one of the biggest catastrophes was the Second World War, which left thousands homeless and displaced. Since then, many scholars in the humanities and social sciences have presented various perspective on the refugees and emigrant’s issues of displacement, relocation and their relevant consequences in mainstream media and literature. The most recent significant wars and conflicts have occurred in third-world countries, with Afghanistan being one of the biggest target. Displacement and relocation are recurring themes in contemporary Afghan literature, particularly in the context of the Soviet Invasion. Khaled Hosseini’s novels *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* are globally renowned for their depiction of displacement, trauma, and forced migration. These novels also focus on the idea of resilience and fighting back against all odds. They present the deadly consequences of the Afghan war and conflicts that result in long-lasting trauma and identity crises for individuals.

I have selected three Afghan texts for my study, which are based on similar contexts but present slightly different narratives. These texts have not been explored from the perspective of translocational positionality, the challenges and the resilience of Afghan emigrants in the host lands. The review of these selected texts, done previously by other authors, is provided below.

2.3 Literature about Selected Texts

Tamim Ansari's memoir *West of Kabul: East of New York* is the one of texts I have selected for this study. In the article titled, "(Re-) Framing the Afghan Fundamentalism in West of Kabul, East of New York" (2001), Silke Schmidt examines the memoir from the perspective of how Ansari reconceptualized Islamic Fundamentalism with reference to Afghanistan during the 9/11 incident and its consequences. The researcher also explores the role of Ansari's profession as a journalist, which paves the way for public agency and contributes to reshaping Islamic fundamentalism in the global spotlight. Schmidt highlights that Ansari's bicultural identity helped him to be both an insider and outsider to the 9/11 situation and its aftermath in America. She argues that Ansari's memoir is not a one-sided story of a biased Afghan or an American journalist; it is an Afghan-American story resulting from his dual identity. He also emphasizes that his unique position as an Afghan American in America enables him to gain deeper insights into this situation. Ansari discusses the binary contrast between East and West and uses it as an underlying structure throughout the book to emphasize his bicultural identity. This dual identity places him in an in-between space between both the East and West. He provides an alternative perspective about Afghans asserting that they are "just human beings", and should be treated as such, instead of the dominant narrative that labels them terrorists or the 'epitome of evil'.

Furthermore, Schmidt argues that Ansari understands the differences between Afghanistan and America and constantly tries to find common ground for cultural negotiation, though he also realizes that these efforts are often easier said than done. That is why he, somewhat hopelessly, states that what he envisions could be a realm of 'imagination'. He also refers to his emails written in the prologue at the beginning of the memoir. Schmidt's work highlighting the dual identity of Ansari as an Afghan-American, which helps in my understanding of the link between identity construction and translocational positionality. However, the study does not explore the survival narrative and the positionality of Afghan emigrants in translocational spaces with reference to Ansari's memoir, nor does it explore these notions to understand the resilience of emigrants but rather focused on the religious identity of Afghans in the diasporic spaces.

Khamdamova Nilufar's conference paper, "Historical Influence Of *West Of Kabul, East of New York* by Mir Tamim Ansari" (2022) examines the impact of Ansari's memoir in a larger historical context. She argues that Tamim Ansari's personal life and career path are closely intertwined and that his literary works reflect this connection. In her work, Nilufar focused on reading the memoir from two main perspectives; how and why it is embedded in the larger historical framework and the memoir as a reflection of Tamim Ansari as public figure in the field of journalism. According to Nilufar, this memoir is an account of Ansari's development as a journalist. He talks about the world he inhabits and the Afghanistan he lived in during his childhood, the Afghanistan he visited after the war, rather than 'I narrative', that is the case with most memoirs.

In addition to these two research works, a number of significant book reviews have been published on the memoir, including reviews and articles in *the New York Times*, *Toronto Star* and *BookPage*, which I will refer to for the analysis to understand the impact of this memoir in the larger American context. I will also refer to the emails of Ansari that went viral during the post-9/11 incident and were a significant topic of discussion during 2001 and 2002.

Fowzia Karimi's novel *Above Us the Milky Way* (2020) has gained popularity for usage of the illuminated English Alphabet. In one of the book reviews published on the website World Literature Today, it is stated that, "While the family left the war-torn land, a part of them remained and continued to mourn the loss of what they once had, a costly effect of war" (Karimi, *Above Us the Milky Way*).

In another similar book review by Hantian Zhang, in her review titled, "Collage of One Family and Two Lands-A Review of Fowzia Karimi's novel *Above Us The Milky Way*" (2022), argues that Karimi's uses her artistic creation in employing alphabets to structure the journey of emigrant family in a kaleidoscopic pattern, presenting a collage of family's experiences in Afghanistan, their displacement and their relocation into a new culture in America. Karimi's richly detailed narrative blends the boundaries of memory and imagination. Zhang emphasizes that this novel presents an emotional narrative that resonates with the lives of emigrants in America. To the best of my knowledge, there is only one published research work on this novel but there are several book reviews that are mentioned below.

Nadia Hashimi's novel *Sparks Like Stars* (2021) is the third text I have selected for this study. In the book "Gender, Place & Identity of South Asian Women" (2022), Garima Singh, establishes a link between gender, space and identity by drawing on selected works of four female Afghan authors including Nadia Hashimi's novel *Sparks Like Stars*. Using Michel Foucault's method of discourse analysis, she examines the female characters in the novels to explore the role of gender in providing discourse that allows female characters to challenge and resists the dominant discourse and initiate change. In her research, she explores the role of female characters with reference to the space they inhabit by emphasizing the fluidity of identity that changes with the change in relational or symbolic space.

Leticia Cosbert Miller, in his work "Nadia Hashimi's new novel '*Sparks Like Stars*' embraces Afghan culture from war-torn Kabul to success in the U.S" (2021), asserts that the novel embraces Afghan culture and presents a fictional story with an autobiographical undertone. Miller argues that Hashimi's personal life experiences are interwoven with the incidents of the 1978 Soviet invasion, mixing autobiographical details into the fictional narrative. As an Afghan-American, Hashimi is impacted by the war-torn Kabul and feels pain about its devastating conditions. Miller states that Hashimi uses a child's perspective to provide insights into the 1978 invasion and its devastating consequences. In the first half of the book, Sitara is a child experiencing trauma and confined to rooms. In the second half, her life completely turned around and she became a successful doctor in America, however, she still shows severe symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and a constant feeling of guilt. Miller further asserts that Hashimi's novel explores themes of nationalism and mourning for Afghanistan while living in America. This work provides valuable insights but is limited to reviewing the story and examining narrative techniques, characterization, and the theme of nationalism.

Samina Yasmin and Mumtaz Ahmad critically analyze *Sparks Like Stars* in a postcolonial context in their work, "Hybridity and the Quest for Self-Identity: A Critical Analysis of Nadia Hashimi's *Sparks Like Stars*" (2021). By placing the novel in a larger postcolonial context, they examine the concepts of searching for self-identity in multiple cultural settings. Analyzing the work through Peter Morey's

theory of cultural representation, they explore protagonist Sitara Zamani's journey in pursuit of her identity in a multicultural context. They assert that postcolonial discourse challenges the essentialist and hierarchical forms of identity constructed on binary structures of 'Us and Other' and emphasizes the formation of new identities emerging through diverse cultural influences and attachments. Hybridity entails the formation of new identities based on intersection of multiple cultural influences, providing a way to understand self-identity in a contemporary globalized world. Yasmin and Ahmad present the idea that Sitara Zamani's search for identity encompasses her relationships and experiences in different cultures of Afghanistan and America, as well as her past self as a child and her current identity as a doctor. She constantly struggles with figuring out her identity in a space between Afghanistan and America, past and present, personal history and cultural memory. She often finds herself in a liminal position, where these notions intersect to create a new form of hybrid identity. Amidst the memory of Afghan heritage and her past self, and the feeling of belonging in America, the notion of identity became both a space for constraints and creativity. Yasmin et al. argue, "The metaphor of language as a home, the echoes of Kabul's mountains on American soil, and the self-description as a mosaic of memories, dreams, and traditions, each serve to illustrate the dynamic, ongoing process of identity negotiation" (Yasmin 7). Sitara's life was entirely different in Afghanistan compared to America, as if she had lived in two different worlds. Sitara's formation of a new identity is subject to her negotiation between the changing experiences and relationships in these two worlds. The study highlights the multifaceted nature of identity formation in a postcolonial context and the role of external factors and experiences in constantly reshaping self-identity that broadens my understanding of character's positionality in a multicultural context. This study is highly relevant to my work but is limited to cultural hybridity as a source of identity formation.

Muzaffar Qadir Bhatti, Ayesha Komal and Syeda Masooma Zahra in their work titled, "Unveiling Trauma's Echo: Exploring the Impact of Traumatic Events on the Psyche of Sitara Zamani in *Sparks like Stars*" (2024), refer to the traumatic experiences of Sitara Zamani that strongly impacted her sense of self and altered her personality. Sitara was exposed to trauma and loss at the age of eight. She witnessed conflict, violence, loss of family members and displacement, significantly impacted

her mental well-being including her memory, decision-making ability and emotional bonds. This event altered her personality and impacted her so severely that she could not smile or even grin for weeks after the incident. She lived in America for the years to come and became a well-known doctor but it was still visible in her personality that her ability to make decisions, or solve problems or form relationships was so severely damaged that she could no longer function like a normal girl. The work highlights that Hashimi's novel unveils the distortion of identities, sufferings and struggles of youth when they encounter traumatic events. It is further argued in the study that, "According to the abreactive model of trauma, which asserts that traumatic events cause a "worldly hole" and a person to fall apart". Sitara's situation is a clear example of such trauma and Sitara herself asserts that she has trouble "connecting with her significant other" (7). Furthermore, Sitara also loses the ability to share her feelings with anyone and could no longer connect with other people on emotional level and thereby remain detached. The author argues that, "She has often considered that unless she has the chance to leave the consumed darkness of her past, she cannot be a decent wife or have a normal life" (Bhatti 7).

Even after many years since the incident of losing her family in Afghanistan occurred, Sitara tends to replay and recall the memory in her mind. Thus, it was not the incident itself that was extremely damaging and traumatic but the recalling of the memory again and again in the following years shattered her personality. This work is valuable in bringing forth the impacts of traumatic events on the psyche of the protagonist. It also contributes to understanding the impacts of trauma on the protagonist's actions, decisions, behavior and mental well-being that I will also be referring to during my analysis to understand her positionality. My intervention is that my work investigates the protagonist's resilience after the traumatic events to explore the coping mechanisms she adopted to heal and recover.

It is worth noting that the material on her website, nadiashimibooks.com, Nadia Hashimi provides a brief description of her inspiration for this novel, which can help trace the autobiographical elements in her work. She argued that she could relate to the character of Sitara more than any other character she has written in her literary works so far.

2.4 Research Gap

While little notable research has been published on all three selected texts, the literature review shows that no previous study has analyzed these texts by constructing a theoretical framework based on Floya Anthias's theory of translocational positionality, Morton Beiser's concept of Personal and Social Forms of Resilience (2014) and Farah N. Mawani's concept of Social Determinants of Refugees Mental Health.

Despite the growing body of literature on the themes of migration and Afghan diaspora in the contemporary times, Nadia Hashimi's *Sparks Like Stars* and Fowzia Karimi's work *Above Us The Milky Way*, has received little scholarly attention when viewed from the lens of translocational positionality and resilience. Furthermore, I have not come across any research work that has conducted a comparative analysis of these three selected texts. Therefore, the similarities and differences between these diasporic Afghan texts and the significance of these elements have not been explored before. The proposed study aims to introduce a new dimension by examining selected texts to explore the resilience and survival of Afghan emigrants amid the challenges of their translocational positionality during resettlement in the host land, a dimension which to the best of my knowledge has not yet been explored.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Research Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature where the researcher carries out a comparative analysis of the selected Afghan emigrant literary texts to identify and highlight the similarities and differences thematically. The focus of the research is comparative analysis of the themes and issues related to the experiences of Afghan emigrant as depicted in the selected texts. The analysis assists in the “explanation of differences, and the explanation of similarities” (Azarian 2) of the experiences of the characters between the selected texts. The similarities and differences are explored by considering the following elements; frame of reference, grounds for comparison, thesis organizational scheme, and linking of the themes and issues in the selected texts A and B (Walk, 1998).

The frame of reference refers to the issues and themes that the researcher analyzes in the selected texts to explore the similarities and differences. Firstly, for this study the researcher has used translocational positionality, social determinants of refugees’ mental health and resilience as frame of references. Secondly, the grounds for comparison refer to the aspects selected for comparison which form the basis for analyzing the similarities and differences in the selected texts. The key grounds of comparison for this research are instances of resilience and the survival of Afghan emigrants in the selected texts. Next, the thesis outlines how the selected narratives are connected or related to each other. The comparison of the selected themes and issues helps understand the nuanced variations in the narratives. Fourthly, in the thesis organizational scheme a point-by-point approach of compare and contrast is used. In a point-by-point approach, the researcher discusses similar points about A and B before moving on to the next point of similarity or difference between A and B.

In the final step of linking A to B, the researcher links each point of similarity or difference back to the core thesis of the paper for a logical and systematic sequence. In this research the similarities and differences in depiction of all three issues titled as translocational positionality, social determinants of refugees' mental health and resilience are related back to the core argument of resilience and survival.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

In this study, the comparative analysis is made using the lens of Floya Anthias's theory of 'Translocational Positionality' and Morton Beiser's concept of 'Resilience' as theoretical lenses to understand the resilience and survival of Afghan emigrants in the host land. Floya Anthias's theory of Translocational Positionality (2002) helped to understand the positionality and stand point of refugee and emigrant characters in the selected texts. Morton Beiser's concept of 'Personal and Social Forms of Resilience' (2014) helped in understanding the resilience of Afghan emigrant characters in the selected works in overcoming the challenges created by their complex positionality. Farah N. Mawani's concept of 'Social Determinants of Refugee Mental Health' (2014) is taken to examine mental health challenges of Afghan refugees and emigrants in the primary texts selected in this study. Although the three theorists selected in this research are not from the field of literary studies but given the interdisciplinary nature of this study, the selected theories are incorporated to develop a framework to examine the selected Afghan emigrant literary texts from multiple dimensions and viewpoints. The inclusion of theorists from other disciplines is justified by their relevance to the objectives of this research, which examines the selected literary texts through interdisciplinary lenses to explore the social, cultural and psychological challenges to understand the resilience and survival of Afghan emigrants.

While Floya Anthias theory of translocational positionality helps to analyze the intersectionality of social categories that affect the adjustment of refugees and emigrants' during resettlement, Mawani's concept of mental health helps explore and explain the factors that impact their mental well-being in the host land. Resilience emerged as a dominant theme in the struggle of Afghan emigrants, reflecting their efforts to cope with mental health challenges in exile. With the help of framework

built on these three theories, the researcher examines the selected works with a holistic approach to understand the plight and struggles of people from war-torn areas. The quest is ingrained in the idea that the selected theoretical underpinnings help to understand Afghan narratives of survival and resilience and offer a deep emotive experience in understanding displacement and resettlement of Afghan refugees and emigrants in other parts of the world.

The theories are explained in detail in the following sections of the chapter.

3.3 Translocational Positionality

The positionality of refugees is a recurring concern in sociology and literature driven by the need to understand and manage the mass refugee population in host countries. With rapidly changing socio-political circumstances in the globalized world, the shift in policies and laws regarding refugees also tends to change. The question of how refugees position themselves and how they are positioned by the government or the members of the host land is crucial in understanding the challenges they experience during their resettlement. Drawing upon Floya Anthias theory of Translocational positionality, the researcher explores the sociopolitical challenges Afghan emigrants experience in the host land. Floya Anthias argues that translocational positionality of refugees depends on the reformation of their identity and belonging in the new land. Reformation of both these factors radically impacts the positionality and standpoint of the refugees, consequently imposing multiple social, psychological and political challenges for them in the host land. Anthias asserts that the ways in which refugees position themselves or are positioned by the host government shape their experiences of marginalization and privilege.

The individual's translocational positionality is embedded in his identity and identity is not fixed to the essentialized and rigid social categories. In general, an individual's identity is based on the social categories of race, gender and class, but Anthias argues that the shift in time and context results in how we understand and perceive these social categories. Anthias argues that identity is not a stable entity, rather it is constantly redefined by the changes in context, time and place. She argues that identity is not an individual possession where it is considered as a fixed, rigid and essentialist characteristic, rather the notion of identity is embedded in the

intersection and overlapping of social categorizations. These social categorizations are bound to change in a new context because they are rooted within the larger power structures. Therefore, identity is not a static but fluid concept where it becomes a site of struggle in the host land rather than a fixed essentialized individual possession, as Anthias emphasizes, “All these latter formulations cannot be understood, of course, without treating Identity as a site of struggle, relating to strategies of power, recognition, representation and redistribution” (Anthias 7).

Therefore, it shows that identity and belonging are reframed by the intersectionality of social categorizations rooted in the power structures and these become the sites of recognition, resource allocation, exploitation, oppression and social inequalities

Translocational positionality of refugees and emigrants is changed by their own personal agency as well as by the treatment from the members of the host land. Refugees and emigrants themselves are active agents of their own survival, thereby changing how they position themselves in a new context depends on how they develop a sense of belonging through interactions and connections with the members of the host land. Belonging depends on the interactions, connections and social positioning of the individual, as Anthias suggests, “Positionality relates to the space at the intersection of structure (as social position/social effects) and agency (as social positioning/meaning and practice)” (Anthias 502).

The idea of belonging is to have a relation to a larger group, which is dependent on both the emigrant and the host society. Refugees also experience alienation and exclusion due to their complex translocational positionality. They experience systematic inequalities or racism because they are perceived as a burden on the economy. This strongly impacts the sense of belonging of refugees to the native community in the host land. Therefore, beside personal agency, the larger power structures play a major role in defining refugees' positionality, consequently creating socio-political challenges for them.

For refugees and emigrants, to create a sense of belonging is not just recommended, it's a necessity for their survival. However, discrimination and racism in the host land creates hurdles in reformation of their sense of belonging in the host

land. This creates challenges for refugees because they are discriminated against due to their complex positionality as ‘refugees’.

Floya Anthias theory helps in understanding the complex translocational positionality of Afghan emigrants and the challenges it imposes on them. This theory is highly helpful as it presents a unique perspective on translocational positionality. Floya Anthias theory of translocational positionality allows for a multidimensional analysis of the selected Afghan-American literary texts. This research focuses on understanding the socio-political challenges imposed on refugees and migrants due to their complex translocational positionality. Significantly, Afghan emigrants does not only face social and cultural challenges due to their complex positionality but they also experiences adverse effects on their mental health and emotional well-being. In order to understand the mental health challenges resulting from this complex positionality, migration, trauma and dislocation, Farah N. Mawani’s concept of Social Determinants of Refugees Mental Health serves as the second frame of reference through which the researcher analyzes the selected texts.

3.4 Social Determinants of Refugees Mental Health

The researcher uses Farah N. Mawani’s concept of ‘Social Determinants of Refugees Mental Health’ to understand the mental health challenges refugee’s experience during their resettlement. Refugees and emigrants experience trauma, violence and atrocities in their home countries prior to leaving. Furthermore, displacement and post migration coupled with pre-migration violence brings more challenges for refugees, consequently impacting their mental health. In this regard, Farah N. Mawani offers unique perspectives on mental health challenges by emphasizing that social determinants play a crucial role in impacting a refugee's mental health. Mawani defines social determinants as social factors such as socioeconomic status, social support as well as factors like systematic discrimination and racism that impacts refugee's mental health.

Mawani divides the influence of social determinants on refugee’s mental health in four categories; Macro-level, Community level, Family level and Individual level. At macrolevel, the social, economic, political and physical environment of both home land and host land is considered. Refugee’s experiences,

expectations and fears of the economic, social and political contexts in the home land also impacts the perception of these categories during resettlement in the host land. Moreover, at family level, if refugees have experienced loss of family during the resettlement process, it strongly impacts their mental well-being in the host land. It creates a sense of alienation for refugees and emigrants. Suffering a loss of family member and lack of social support in the host country also negatively impacts refugee's mental health, as Mawani asserts,

Suffering a loss of support or experiencing a lack of needed support can thereby contribute to lowered self-esteem. Refugees have described feeling downtrodden and helpless with a sense of desperation, disappointment and despair when they did not receive support they needed (Mawani 35).

At community level, a significant factor that impacts refugees' mental health is the systematic discrimination or racism they experience in the host land. Incidents of discrimination and racism during resettlement potentially increases the risks of psychological disorders among refugees and emigrants. For this reason, Mawani argues, social inclusion should be a necessary approach at community level to provide care these refugees deserve, rather than the instances of social exclusion from the members of the host community.

Other socio-cultural factors at family level and individual factors that impacts refugee's mental health includes lack of support during pregnancy, lack of like-ethnic community, lack of access to health and educational opportunities, lack of equal economic opportunities as well as social inequalities. Mawani argues that refugees and emigrants are vulnerable to mental health issues due to their continued exposure to traumatic experiences. However, social and government support can play a key role in shifting the dynamics for refugees and emigrants in the host land. This theory helps in understanding refugee's mental health challenges that paves a way to understand the resilient practices they adopt to overcome these challenges.

3.5 Resilience

Floya Anthias asserts that translocational positionality embedded within the intersectional framework creates significant hurdles for refugees and emigrants attempting to rebuild their lives in exile. The complexity of emigrant's positionality

obstructs both the social and emotional aspects of survival during resettlement. In order to overcome the social adversity and mental health challenges for their survival in the host land, refugees adopt several significant coping mechanisms and practices. The term resilience is broadly defined in psychology as human capacity to bounce back from difficult time periods, trauma or severe stress. According to the American Psychological Association, resilience is generally defined as the “process and outcome of successfully adapting difficult or challenging life experiences” (APA). For refugees and emigrants, it has always been challenging to build a new home in new land

Drawing upon this broader definition of resilience, Morton Beiser offers a unique perspective of resilience by emphasizing on Personal and Social forms of resilience. Beiser emphasises that refugees and emigrants experience three different hierarchical phases when they arrive in the host land. The first phase is of relive or ‘Euphoria of Arrival’, where refugees and emigrants are relieved and optimistic. In this phase, they are calm and hopeful for the future. With the passage of time, they enter the second phase referred to as ‘disillusionment’, with the host society. During this phase, they develop feelings of nostalgia for their homeland, family, community and everything they have lost during displacement and resettlement. During this phase, refugees and emigrants have potential risk to develop psychiatric disorders. The third phase is the phase of acceptance and adaptation. During this phase, refugees and migrants begin to accept their circumstances. They begin to adapt the culture and tradition of the majority of the people of the host land.

In these three phases, refugees adopt different forms of resilience that play a crucial role in helping them survive in the host land. In this regard, Beiser presented two broad categories of resilience; Personal forms of resilience and Social Forms of Resilience. Beiser emphasises that during personal forms of resilience, emigrants and refugees are active agents for their own survival. He argues that the traumatic experiences of the past or the uncertainties of the future are at times extremely overwhelming for refugees and emigrants, leading to severe depression during their second phase. In order to tackle this issue, they adopt an important coping strategy where they divide time intervals into three separate phases of life. This way, they perceive past, present and future as three separate time intervals. As a result, they tend to focus only on their present. Beiser states, “Having split the three spheres of

time apart, victims of overwhelming stress concentrate on the present, to the relative exclusion of past and future” (Beiser 76).

This technique of splitting their past, present and future into three different time intervals helps refugees to live, move forward and focus only on the present that plays a crucial role in helping them survive and rebuild a new life in the host land.

In personal forms of resilience, another common coping strategy that refugees adapt is dissociation. For this, they detach and disconnect themselves from the painful memories of their past. Due to the intensity and overwhelm of the past traumatic experiences, refugees and emigrants feel a dire need to sever those memories entirely. They keep those memories out of their present life. Dissociation helps refugees and emigrants to only focus on their current life, “Dissociating painful memories from consciousness can be an effective coping strategy, rather than a neurotic defense mechanism” (Beiser 76).

For refugees and emigrants, the pre-migration phase or other traumatic experiences of their past are intense and triggering, which is why they disassociate themselves from their past. Another personal form of resilience is the suppression of the past memories, a concept similar to disassociation practices. In disassociation, refugees detach themselves from the traumatic experiences of their past whereas in the suppression phase, they numb these memories and actively repress them. However, for refugees, it is a short-term solution that is not effective in the long run. In this case, time does not heal, rather over a long period, the memories resurface in consciousness, potentially leading to severe psychological disorders. Beiser argues that suppression does not help in the long run, “The reintegration of past memories into consciousness is probably an ineluctable process, and one that becomes more pressing with the passage of time” (Beiser 79).

He further argues that suppression is a short term solution, likely to lead to severe depression in the future as memories continues to resurface in their consciousness. Beside the fact that suppression is adopted by refugees as a coping strategy, it is not effective in the long run while also strongly impacts refugees’ mental health, “Be vigilant about the possibility that years, or even decades after refugees have

resettled and apparently affected a satisfactory adjustment, mental health risk based on past experience may resurface” (Beiser 102).

The social forms of resilience include creating bonds with the larger network, family or kinship structures. Involvement in work and community is the matter of survival for refugees, which is why they begin to develop bonds and networks in the work space. Moreover, Beiser argues that when refugees and emigrants begin to meet people from their own land, they feel a sense of belonging. The notion of belonging to the larger group helps them stay healthy. Having a spouse also helps buffer the impacts of trauma during PTSD. Being able to connect to ‘like-ethnic community’ helps refugees and emigrants to settle in host land.

Floya Anthias theory of translocational positionality allows for a multidimensional analysis of the selected Afghan-American literary texts. Significantly, Afghan emigrants face not only social and cultural challenges due to their complex positionality but also experiences intense impacts on their mental and emotional well-being.

In order to understand the mental health challenges resulting from this complex positionality, migration, trauma and dislocation, Farah N. Mawani’s concept of Social Determinants of Refugees Mental Health serves as the second frame of reference through which the researcher analyzes the selected texts. This theory helps in examining refugee’s mental health struggles that paves a way to understand the resilient practices they adopt to overcome these challenges

Beiser’s theory of resilience is highly helpful to examine the selected stories of survival. It helps to understand the coping mechanisms that refugees and emigrants adopt to overcome the social and mental health challenges that obstructs their survival and adjustment during relocation in the host land. This research does not limit the work to the victim positionality of the refugees and emigrants, which is why the notion of resilience is an important theoretical framework to analyse the selected Afghan-American literary texts.

CHAPTER 4

TRANSLOCATIONAL POSITIONALITY, MENTAL HEALTH AND RESILIENCE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Focusing on the issues of translocational positionality, mental health challenges and resilience of Afghan emigrants, this chapter undertakes comparative analysis of the selected texts to explore the narratives of resilience and survival. The analysis foregrounds the resilience of Afghan emigrants amidst the challenges they face during their resettlement in the host land. A comparative analysis helps in exploring and understanding the depiction of issues in the selected narratives from various dimensions and standpoints based on five steps; frame of reference, grounds for comparison, thesis, organizational scheme, and linking of A and B.

The frame of reference in this research consists of three key issues: translocational positionality, social determinants of refugee's mental health and resilience. The research examines resilience and survival of Afghan emigrants as key grounds for comparison in analyzing the narratives presented in these three selected texts. These narratives help understand the similarities and differences in the situations and issues that Afghan emigrants face during their resettlement in the host land. Analyzing three different Afghan emigrant literary texts helps explore and highlight the variations in the survival narratives of people from war-torn areas and their resilience. The organizational scheme follows a 'point-by-point' method to assist in exploring the similarities and differences between A and B. This method helps understand the nuanced variations in one issue before moving on to the next rather than considering point A as the lens to explore point B as the focal text. In the concluding part of these three sections, the similarities and differences in the issues of translocational positionality, social determinants of refugee's mental health and resilience are linked to the thesis argument of resilience and survival.

This chapter is divided into three sections, where the first section identifies and explores the aspects of translocational positionality as the first frame of

reference. This section explores the similarities and differences, with a point-by-point approach, to examine how translocational positionality affects the adjustment process of refugees and emigrants in the selected narratives. The second section explores the second frame of reference titled as social determinants of refugees' mental health to explore and understand the social and psychological challenges that Afghan emigrant's experience in the host land. The third section illustrates the resilience of Afghan emigrants which helps them overcome the challenges during resettlement in the host land.

4.1 Translocational Positionality

Afghans have struggled with war, violence and political conflicts for decades, resulting in instability, poverty and mass migration. Consequently, Afghan emigrants voluntarily or involuntarily migrated to other parts of the world for their survival to escape the atrocities at home, but they barely managed to resettle and create a new life for themselves in exile. According to a news report, for many Afghans, the act of staying alive after massive catastrophe became a significant achievement in itself and so most of these Afghans emigrants were just happy to be alive (Al Jazeera, 2023). With the little hope of survival, when Afghan emigrants moves to a new land, they try hard to create a new life for themselves and their families because unlike voluntary migrants, Afghans often lack the option to return to their homeland due to on-going conflict and instability. Albeit these efforts, migrants are not always welcome in the new societies they seek to join. While recent developments in laws and immigration policies have presented some flexibility in the legal procedures, the cultural and social issues during the resettlement process still persists and impacts the lives of millions. Consequently, in most parts of the world, native communities are perceived to be unwelcoming towards immigrants and refugees, not because of their personal failings but due to their complex socio-political dynamics that shapes their positionality. According to a report, "The political, socio-economic, financial and environmental consequences associated with more than three decades of protracted refugee presence have placed a heavy burden on the host communities and contributed to an increasing sense of asylum fatigue in the host countries" (UNHCR 2014).

Floya Anthias addresses this concern by exploring the socio-political and cultural challenges face by emigrants to understand how their translocational positionality shapes their experiences in the host land. Anthias believes that emigrant's identity is not fixed rather it is shaped through intersections of multiple aspects including space, class, and culture embedded in the larger power structures and cultural contexts within the host land. Translocational positionality is a key concern for emigrants, as it reflects the interaction between structural constraints (i.e. racism, exclusion) and personal agency (ability to resist or adopt for survival) of the characters in the selected texts. It presents the idea that these characters, after leaving Afghanistan continue to struggle between how they have been positioned by the natives and government of the host land and how they position themselves in the socio-cultural fabric of the host land. For Afghan emigrants, this creates a persistent struggle between multiple positionalities because how they positioned themselves does not always align with how they have been positioned and perceived by the members of the host land.

By foregrounding Floya Anthias's concept of Translocational Positionality, we are able to examine the consequences of complex positionality of Afghan emigrant's in the selected texts. In *Sparks Like Stars* (SLS), the protagonist Sitara Zamani experiences extreme social and psychological challenges due to her complex translocational positionality. Sitara is eight years old when her entire family is killed during a military coup at the palace, leaving her as the sole survivor. Later she escapes Afghanistan to ensure her survival, given the threats she faces due to her family's political role. She leaves Afghanistan with the assistance of an American embassy worker Antonia and her mother Tilly. Impersonating her dead sister, Aryana, and by using her documents, Sitara is able to leave Afghanistan and go to America with Tilly.

They'd stared as I'd spread the documents across the living room table like a hand of cards—my sister's American birth certificate, my Afghan birth certificate, and Faheem's as well, my mother's high school diploma, and the deed to the home in my father's name (Hashimi 134).

As a consequence of her translocational positionality she is rigorously interrogated at the airport in the US, the security officers ask her a number of questions to establish the reason for her presence in the US, even threatening her to put Tilly in “jail”.

...You may just be a kid, but we need to know who you are and why you’ve come here. If you don’t talk, that lady is going to jail instead of the hospital (Hashimi 177).

After the interrogation, she is sent to the Child Protection Services, who later places her in foster care in the US. She herself describes the fact that she is treated like a ‘stray dog’ who is shifted from one place to another due to her complex positionality. This metaphor, ‘stray dog’, demonstrates the emotional and spatial dislocation she is experiencing in the host land, which is central to her translocational positionality.

As I was shuttled from one office to another, from one curious stranger to another, I couldn’t help but feel like that stray dog (Hashimi 183).

Initially she is put in foster care of Janet and Everett but once Ann, the officer from child protection services leaves, she is mistreated by Janet and Everett due to her complex positionality. Janet and Everett realise that she is an emigrant and refugee, which is why they are not interested in taking care of her.

Hearing nothing, I tried to turn the knob. I was locked in. The way Janet had warned me about keeping the room clean, I was terrified of what she might do if I soiled the room with urine. I knocked louder and yelled with urgency (Hashimi 191).

Her positionality between past and present and as an emigrant in America creates complex socio-cultural issues during her resettlement. As a result, she continues to struggle being an Afghan in America and this struggle is evident in her description,

I had much to figure out. In my head, I was ten-year-old Sitara. To this new world, I was twelve-year-old Aryana. And in truth, I wasn't strong enough to shoulder two identities and two nationalities (Hashimi 271).

Anthias argues that translocational positionality asserts overlapping identities and these identities are subject to shift in various social and cultural spaces. Living as an Afghan girl in America, Sitara is well aware of the shift in her identity as a result of her complex positionality. Consequently, after spending sometime in America, Sitara feels that she needs to completely let go of her Afghan self to be able to survive in America. She argues,

I survived by letting Sitara go, adding her to the body count of the palace coup. I tucked away the family I'd lost, the childhood I'd had (Hashimi 271).

Sitara understands that being in America is her only escape. Living in Afghanistan becomes difficult for her for two major reasons; she can be targeted or killed due to her family's association to the previous government and secondly, life would become difficult with the onset of civil war in Afghanistan that does not seem to end anytime soon. Consequently, escaping Afghanistan and moving to the US is a matter of survival for her like any other emigrant and refugee seeking shelter and protection. As a result, during the first few years in the US, she is completely cut off from anyone from her native land and she tries hard to adjust in the American culture. On one occasion, she claims that Afghanistan is a 'lost world' for her,

Once upon a time, a little girl with velvet ribbons in her hair crouched deep in the belly of a palace, tucked behind copper pots and urns and cartons heavy with treasures of a lost world (Hashimi 9).

Similarly, in the memoir *West of Kabul East of New York* (WKENY), we observe Ansari and his father struggling with the same issue. The Ansari family, which consists of five members including three children—Tamim, Rabeeca and Riaz—leaves Afghanistan to move to the US.

Our departure from Afghanistan was actually a defection—an escape (Ansari 77).

While they manage to escape from Afghanistan for their survival, resettling in the new culture and country proves to be challenging, specifically for their father. The father finds himself torn between his Afghan self and the extended Afghan family that he might lose if he stays in America. Conversely, if he leaves the US, he might become distant to his wife and children. His complex positionality challenges his resettlement in the US, as we observe:

If he went back, he might never get out again: He would lose us. If he stayed, he might never be allowed into Afghanistan again: He would lose his larger family, his brothers, the clan—that greater self to which an Afghan belongs by birthright (Ansari 96).

Tamim also struggles with the same issue but he argues that resettling in America is only possible by leaving Afghan identity behind. During his resettlement process, Tamim argues that Afghanistan is “the world I left behind, a world that is lost to me” (Ansari 10), similar to how Sitara Zamani also describes Afghanistan as a “lost world” (Hashmi 9).

Sitara and Ansari continuously refer to Afghanistan as a ‘lost world’, implying that Afghanistan is a world they have left behind. Unlike Sitara and Ansari’s description, Afghanistan in *Above Us The Milky Way* (AUTMW) is not a lost world. Most of the characters in the novel including the family with their five daughters, who are referred as ‘five sisters’ (50) throughout the novel and their Afghan relatives view and refer to Afghanistan as their ‘first land’ and not as a lost world. The five sisters feel that they never truly departed from Afghanistan and that it comes with them to America. On multiple occasions, the girls refer to Afghanistan as their first land,

It is only her third year celebrating the old holiday in the new land and she has brought together enough friends from the first land (Karimi 100).

In the “new land” i.e. the US, most of the characters including the five sisters try their best to adopt the native culture for their survival. At the same time, due to their complex positionality, it is difficult for them to accept one culture, identity and nationality entirely. While the family managed to escape atrocities at home, they

face multiple socio-cultural challenges during their resettlement process and experience nostalgia for the homeland.

The family, hopeful and loyal, would not take the new land into its heart because it knew loss and evaded it at the cost of comfort and joy (Karimi 53).

In the new land, they struggle and suffer due to their complex translocational positionality but at the same time, they put efforts to embrace their new life. They feel that their heart is in both lands simultaneously, the “first land” and the “new land”.

“..two chambers of their hearts in each of the two lands” (Karimi 55).

On the contrary, in *WKENY* the key characters find it difficult to formulate their sense of belonging with two nations and culture. Tamim escapes Afghanistan for his survival but he manages to accept and assimilate into American culture in the initial years. In the first few years, unlike Sitara and five sisters, Ansari and his mother do not experience the immediate resurfacing of past trauma. Ansari’s brother Riaz struggles with reformulating his sense of belonging to any one country entirely. Their father is unable to create any sense of belonging in America where he is completely cut off from his extended Ansari tribe. In the first few months in America, he continues to meet Afghans in America to feel a sense of belonging.

DURING MY FATHER'S MONTHS in Washington, we were connected to a network of Afghans... (Ansari 79).

The nostalgia that Ansari and his mother experience is not as psychologically intense as it is for Sitara Zamani and the five sisters. All major characters in *WKENY* including Tamim Ansari, his brother Riaz and sister Rabeeca along with their parents leave Afghanistan when they are under a threat by the government of their home land. However, when they step into America, Ansari, his sister and mother decide to seamlessly integrate into the native culture to ensure their survival while Riaz and their father seem reluctant initially. On one occasion, Ansari confesses that he prefers to be called an American,

And I moved to America at age sixteen, and graduated from Reed College, and grew my hair down to my waist, and missed Woodstock by minutes, and revered Bob Dylan back when his voice still worked. I made a career in educational publishing, and if you have children, they have probably used some product I have edited or written. I am an American (Ansari 9).

Anthias asserts that creating a sense of belonging is not just recommended, but it's a necessity for refugees and emigrants for their emotional and social survival. In the selected texts, we observe that the feeling of belonging to a larger group is a challenge for the main characters in all three selected texts. The five sisters are unable to feel any belonging to the new land. There is an invisible barrier between them and the members of the native land. They feel 'strange' in this new land and observe,

It was strange to arrive in a peaceful land, to share a classroom and a schoolyard with children who still had their innocence and peered out through a single pair of eyes: for our lids opened and closed as theirs did, but revealed intermittently different sets of eyes. We could stand at once in a desolate cityscape surrounded by tanks and headstones, and on a school playground filled with the din of laughter and bouncing balls, skipping children (Karimi 72).

Unlike Sitara and Ansari, Fowzia Karami's key characters are unable to call themselves Americans throughout the narrative. They feel like they are living in both worlds simultaneously, which is why they are unable to fully accept their new identity and nationality completely.

And so the sisters lived two lives on two continents simultaneously, in a present-that-is and in a past-that-might-have-been (Karimi 63).

The five sisters feel as if their positionality as emigrants, makes them "invisible" in the socio-cultural order of the new land.

In the land of the sun, they are invisible (Karimi 107).

In order to survive in the host land, the emigrants try to adopt American culture and practices. For instance, Sitara changes her family name to Antonia's

Surname ‘Shepherd’ to be recognized as American. This shows Sitara’s effort to forge a new identity to align with the culture of the host land.

I took on Mom’s last name and officially became Aryana Shephard, the girl who fell from the sky (Hashimi 218).

However, people often notice a strange difference between her American name and her Afghan features. This example underscores the tension between Sitara’s self-positioning and how she is externally perceived and categorized by the members of the host land. On one occasion, she points out that native people recognize this difference and question her complex positionality and identity. It is evident in one of her conversations with her patient,

“I’m Dr. Shephard. Tell me about yourself.” He looks at me then, as some people do, seeing something in my face that doesn’t quite match my name (Hashimi 253).

People try to unveil her origins to find out the fact that she does not belong to America. Sitara argues,

People throw identities at me and look to see if one will stick: Greek, Italian, Lebanese, Argentinian, Eastern European (Hashimi 9).

By using the word “throw identity”, it is evident that she does not like to be discriminated against by the native people after all the efforts she puts into being American. Due to her complex positionality, it is difficult for her to feel any sense of belonging to any nationality. In America, she cannot claim to be American because people constantly question her identities and the fact that her Afghan features do not resonate with her American identity. For this reason, during her visit to Turkey with Antonia, she feels more at peace as an American, residing outside America. Outside America, she holds a powerful position as an American passport holder and citizen that provides her a sense of belonging to America because no one can question her belonging and identity there. During her visit to Turkey, she explains,

In the moments when my heart opened to God, I thanked Him for designing this way for me to disappear and exist, this chance to become an American without living under an American microscope (Hashimi 219).

Her translocational positionality burdens her with multiple identities and nationalities which she is unable to hold on to for a long period of time. Sitara realizes that she needs to let go of her Afghan identity and nationality to be able to completely integrate in this new social and cultural context of America. Her positionality as an Afghan emigrant create challenges in her social and psychological survival, which is why, Sitara constantly struggles to rebuild her life to adjust in the new land. Even after many spending many years in the US, Sitara finds herself caught between her memories of Afghanistan and her present in America.

My world had swerved from beautiful to punishing and back again...It was on the banks of the Nile, realising that a river must flow in one direction if it wants to reunite with the sea... (Hashimi 220).

Similarly, on multiple occasions, Ansari too struggles with multiple identities due to his translocational positionality. He tries to adopt one and leave the other. Since living in America is a matter of survival for both Sitara and Ansari, they did all the efforts to possibly erase their sense of belonging with Afghanistan in order to assimilate into America to feel any sense of belonging to at least one of the cultures.

Yes, I was born and raised in Afghanistan, and I know Islam intimately, from the inside, in my very soul.(...)But my mother was American, and not just any American, but a secular one to the max, and a feminist back when there hardly was such a thing(...)And I moved to America at age sixteen, and graduated from Reed College, and grew my hair down to my waist, and missed Woodstock by minutes, and revered Bob Dylan back when his voice still worked...I am an American (Ansari 10).

Both of the characters show more acceptance of change of their American identity for their survival unlike most characters in Fowzia Karimi's work. In AUTMW, we observe that the five girls try to accept the native culture while also

maintaining their ties to the Afghan culture. In the initial years, they try to retain their connections with ethnic-like communities in order to stay rooted to their Afghan origins but at the same time, they also begin to find more jobs and better opportunities to adjust in the host land. As the five sisters observe,

Mother too now finds a job, attends school at night to study the new language, and learns to drive a car (Karimi 60).

Anthias argues that discrimination and racism in the host land creates many hurdles in reformation of refugees and emigrant's sense of belonging in the host land. As a result, refugees face challenges in recreating their sense of belonging because they are discriminated against due to their complex positionality as 'refugees, asylum seekers and emigrants'. We observe that all three selected texts share a similarity in the fact that most of the characters never truly experience a strong sense of belonging to America due to their complex translocational positionality.

On multiple occasions, Sitara experiences discrimination even if she tries to adopt the native culture for her survival. Anthias argues that belonging with multiple nations simultaneously creates more complexity and challenges for refugees and emigrants in adjustment in the host land. The translocational positionality of Sitara, Ansari and the five sisters as an emigrant creates challenges during their assimilation. It is evident in Ansari and Sitara's narratives that they are not fully accepted by the members of the host land, who still view and position them as refugees and emigrants in their land.

These incidents of not being accepted as American become evident and the discrimination with Afghans is intensified following the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centers. For Afghans and broader Muslim backgrounds, this shift reflects how translocational positionality is not static but responsive to larger global changes in the socio-cultural aspects. Following the 9/11 incident, Afghan emigrants are further pushed towards margins. For Sitara Zamani, her complex translocational positionality is evident in the discrimination and otherness she faces in America in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks. One night, just a few days after the 9/11 incident, while

crossing the street in New York to get back home, two to three man shouts at her from across the street,

We're going to bomb your people back to the Stone Age. Get the hell out of this country (Hashimi 249).

Following the 9/11 incident, it is evident that these men are strongly triggered and they recognize Sitara as an Afghan woman, which is why they direct their hate towards her after the incident. In another paragraph, Sitara refers to the incident again describing that,

When they were close enough that I could see they were nothing but ordinary men, one of them made a gun of his fingers and pointed it directly at my head. All of you (Hashimi 249).

This incident traumatizes Sitara and she immediately rushes to her home to escape the boys. While she looks at her reflection in the mirror, she realises how badly she is shivering. This incident of discrimination strongly traumatizes her further. She argues,

I didn't realize I was shaking until I tried to slide the key into the front door of my apartment building. I took a deep breath and looked up, catching my reflection in the glass. My eyes were wide and my skin pale. The fleece hood was plastered to my head, making it look like I was wearing a hijab. I knew why they'd targeted me (Hashimi 249).

Floya Anthias's asserts that the discrimination and racism in the host land due to their complex positionality as 'refugees' severely impacts their adjustment. This is also evident in Ansari's work, as he faces discrimination in the host land after the 9/11 incident, much like Sitara Zamani. For Ansari, his brother and sister, it is even more difficult because they are not accepted as Afghans in Afghanistan and as Americans in America. They are not accepted as Afghans in Afghanistan because their mother is an American. For example, when Ansari's family moves to Lashkargah, both Rabeeca and Tamim make several new friends who are children of American and Afghan officials but at one occasion, they witness

Yet we remained Americans with an asterisk (Ansari 54).

Similarly, in America, they are positioned as Afghan emigrants and refugees. Following the 9/11 incident, it is evident that Ansari and his family are positioned as Afghan emigrants or refugees in America, who are expected to represent Afghani viewpoint to Americans. While Ansari positions himself as an American and claims that he knows very little about Afghanistan drawing on the experiences in the first few years of his life. Yet American media constantly positions him as an Afghan and they want to hear him to understand the stories and viewpoints of Afghans. Ansari feels that Afghanistan is a world lost to him, because he is adopting American culture as he had been living in America for a long period of time. He argues that he cannot explain the viewpoints and stories of Afghanistan, as he has very little information about Afghanistan. For him, Afghanistan is a lost world that he left behind years ago.

[...]the dissonance between the world I am living in now and the world I left behind, a world that is lost to me (Ansari 11).

Ansari also refers to himself as an ‘unconflicted soul’ and ‘American guy’ (219) after residing in the United States for many years. However, on multiple occasions, he faces discrimination as he is positioned as an Afghan due to his translocational positionality. This develops more frustration in him, as he feels marginalized in America even after trying his best to stay embedded in American culture and space.

"Don't let those dirty Afghans in here!" I was shocked and confined—not just that he was calling Afghans dirty but that he was calling us Afghans. After all, among the Afghans, we were Americans; so if we weren't Americans, either, what were we? (Ansari 67).

We observe these incidents of discrimination on the basis of identity in both Hashimi and Ansari's narratives, On the contrary there is no such mention of similar incidents of discrimination in Karimi's work.

Anthias argues that identity and belonging are reframed by the intersectionality of social categorizations rooted in the power structures and these

become the sites of recognition, resource allocation, exploitation, oppression and social inequalities. At one point, Sitara realizes that they position her as an emigrant living in America. This incident strongly points out that they label her as an Afghan-American emigrant, where the hyphen strongly refers to her affiliation with Afghanistan, regardless of Sitara's efforts to accept and try to adopt American culture. Her translocational positionality becomes a site of exploitation and discrimination after the 9/11 incident. On another occasion, Sitara describes her understanding of her positionality as well as how she is perceived by the native members of the host land,

They'd seen me for something I wasn't—a devout Muslim. But they'd also seen me for what I was (Hashimi 249).

The use of past tense, of what 'she was' strongly indicates that in order to survive in America, Sitara let go of her sense of belonging to Afghanistan by leaving her home land and any association with it behind.

The translocational positionality causes a lot of social and cultural problems for emigrants and refugees, underpinning the idea that they cannot be completely positioned to anyone nationality or identity. A reoccurring pattern across both Hashimi's and Ansari's texts is their intense efforts to fit in, either within the Afghan culture or with the dominant American culture. For this, they have gone to lengths. For example, once Ansari's Afghan classmates beat him but he refuses to complain about it to ensure that his classmates do not get any punishment, simply with the intention that this act might help him to 'fit in'. He states, "I had no desire to get my classmates in trouble. I just wanted to fit in" (Ansari 65).

On the contrary, all the major characters in Fowzia Karimi's novel do not try to let go of their Afghan identity. Rather they continue to look forward towards Afghans in America, their relatives coming in the next few years and keep listening to old songs to revisit the memories of Afghanistan. Anthias argues that refugees and emigrants also experience alienation and exclusion due to their complex translocational positionality. For this reason, meeting ethnic-like communities helps them feel a sense of belonging. They choose their translocational positionality despite the challenges it entails.

She listens to the music (of the old land) and is transported and, when she thinks she is alone, she sheds tears that hiss when they hit the iron or are run over by it (Karimi 62).

The hybridity in which their mother lives due to her complex positionality is also evident in the lives of these girls. The girls feel as if they are in a hybrid position between two nations and two identities, between a traumatic past and a positive present. This creates a conflicted personality within themselves; as one of the five sister's experience,

She reads aloud the words from her favorite book in order to scrutinize the timbre of her voice changed. Is she herself or is she another? (Karimi 81).

On different occasions, they have gatherings where several Afghan emigrants are invited to their house. During these gatherings, the five sisters always notice an old man who constantly stands at the door with a book in his hand, which he always holds tightly. They often wonder what this book is about and finally come to a conclusion that,

The book holds something beloved and spent, a story of a life lived elsewhere, of life before the knowledge of war. And yet the manner in which the half-book man occupies the present—not aimlessly, but deliberately, walking the halls of the sisters' house, the streets of their neighborhood, the alleyways of their city—tells the sisters that though he is homeless, unbound, he is not superfluous to the spaces he now drifts through (Karimi 90).

This incident indicates that similar to other characters in the story, the old man also remains caught between the past and the present and he is unable to reconcile with the Afghanistan he left behind with the new American culture where he moved in search of safety. This incident shows how trauma, displacement and dislocation severely affects the emigrants that they are unable to move beyond their native land to position themselves to one land or culture completely. He cannot move beyond the traumatic experiences of the past.

And that the book in his hand is something like a towline, which, binding the past, tugs and heaves it into the present, moment by moment (Karimi 90).

All three selected narratives share similarities in illustrating the socio-political challenges faced by characters as a result of their complex positionality. All three narratives offer a unique understanding of the positionality of Afghan emigrants and the practice they undertake in order to survive emotionally and socially in a new world, despite their traumatic past. Yet their positionality often poses challenges which hinders their efforts to completely assimilate in American culture. Even at times, when they try to position themselves as American in the socio-cultural matrix of America, they are positioned as Afghans or refugees by the Americans, which strongly impacts their own efforts for survival. Amid of these complexities, they also face different forms of racism and discrimination and these incidents accelerated following the 9/11 attack. The trauma and complex positionality of these characters continue to create socio-cultural challenges for them, making it difficult for them to assimilate entirely in any one country or culture. They continue to navigate between multiple identities, social positions, nationalities and belongings.

4.2 Social Determinants of Mental Health Challenges

Translocational positionality of Afghan emigrants not only causes social and cultural challenges but it also results in impacting their mental health. As explored through the lens of translocational positionality in the previous section, most of these characters in all three selected texts are constantly struggling to negotiate between cultural expectations and fractured belonging. Beside their complex positionality, the constant trauma of the past, inability to feel any sense of belonging to any nationality and identity, tension between assimilation and resistance as well as discrimination by the members of the host land are just a few of the social factors that strongly influence the mental health of Afghan refugees and emigrants.

Farah N. Mawani emphasizes a four level framework to understand the social determinants of refugees' mental health. These include macro-level, community level, family level and individual level factors. In the selected Afghan emigrant's narratives of resilience and survival, we gain an insight to the lifelong struggles of Afghan emigrants in the pre-migration and post-migration stages.

Afghan emigrants face mental health challenges on a familial level. In all three selected texts, the key characters lose their closest family members during war in Afghanistan which becomes their biggest trauma and challenge during their resettlement. For instance, Sitara Zamani loses her entire family during war,

As I told these two men that my family had been killed before my eyes, I was surprised to find that I could speak of that moment without collapsing to the floor (Hashimi 179).

This incident impacted Sitara's mental health so severely that even after many years in America, she is unable to make any emotional connection to people.

In the case of the five sisters, we see that they lose many of their closest relatives during war and violence in Afghanistan. In one incident, these girls offer a brief description of familial loss they suffered during the war and how it affected them.

But in my father's small family of farmers, the losses seem remarkable. His family was cleaved, and then cleaved again to an excessive degree and in brutal ways by the war. My aunt, my father's only sister, had five children and lost all five, in one or another manner. My father lost all three of his brothers. It is strange, whether chance or fate, that his own life was not taken. In the beginning, when the forces first arrived, disappearances were common (Karimi 71).

On another occasion, the five sisters describe,

In the beginning, there was war. Before the war, there was family, there was life, simple (Karimi 28).

Similarly, after Tamim Ansari's father Amanuddin leaves for Afghanistan and his brother Riaz for Pakistan, the family meets them occasionally. They also miss the close-knit presence of their Ansari tribe in America, to which they feel deeply connected in Afghanistan. Ansari argues that the warmth and belonging he feels with his Afghan tribe can only exist in his imagination in America.

Going back to the ancestral village meant going home to a warmth and belonging that today, in my basement office in San Francisco, I can only imagine (Ansari 25).

Most of these characters do not suffer much at socio-economic level primarily because they manage to earn for themselves and their families. All three selected texts share the fact that most of them fortunately never really face any extreme financial disparity in the host land. Sitara starts her career as a doctor and earns for herself. Likewise, Ansari also becomes a journalist which helps him earn a decent amount of money for his living. As we observe,

That year, I cut my hair, traded in my wild hippie garb for corduroys and sport shirts, and moved to San Francisco, where I got my first real job. I wanted to be a writer, but I ended up editing a newspaper for an outfit called the Asia Foundation, which financed tiny development projects in various Asian countries (Ansari 79).

In Fowzia Karimi's novel, both the parents of the five sisters start working for financial stability, as we observe,

But it is a job and it allows him to buy his first used car (Karimi 60).

In macro level factors, the political context of their country of origin and resettlement impacts the mental health of Afghan emigrants and refugees. Sitara Zamani and Ansari explain discrimination following the 9/11 incident from Americans, resulting in impacting their sense of belonging in the host land. At the same time, most of these characters experience constant anxiety about the safety of family members and friends they leave behind in Afghanistan. Apart from the ongoing political engagements with the host land and political upheaval in the home land, they also feel re-traumatized considering the fact that their families back in Afghanistan are suffering. Significantly, in all three selected texts, news of war and violence in the home country re-traumatizes them, making it extremely hard for them to move forward in their lives. As we examine, Sitara Zamani experiences re-traumatization when reading news of violence and war in Afghanistan. She argues,

Some nights turn into morning and I realize I've been surfing the web for hours trying to make sense of war and politics (Hashimi 242).

Similarly, Ansari experiences trauma of personal loss because his family starts living miles apart after their displacement. His father leaves for Afghanistan and he never comes back to live with his family in America.

I SAW MY FATHER ONLY twice after he moved back to Afghanistan, each time for only a couple of days (Ansari 192).

Likewise, we observe the incidents of re-traumatization resulting from horrific news about their homeland, as evident in the experiences of the five sisters and their family. On multiple occasions, they try to explain their feelings,

We did not leave intact. The knowledge of death, the wisdom you gain from the understanding that a beloved uncle is tortured, then buried alive, a cousin decapitated, that women are raped, have their fingernails pulled out, their breasts cut off, this wisdom you carry with you across borders and over the years of your life. This wisdom circles the nuclei within your cells and ensures you metabolize all suffering, great and small (Karimi 71).

Translocational positionality creates psychological problems for them at community level because most of these characters never feel any sense of belonging to any nation or identity. They are unable to associate themselves with groups and communities. The five sisters notice that the community they previously had in Afghanistan is destroyed and people are killed. They point out the horrible results of war and violence in Afghanistan, which have robbed them of their communities and extended family members. They argue,

And his friends, his coworkers, those he was acquainted with and those he cherished, were picked up one by one, imprisoned, tortured, murdered (Karimi 231).

Similarly, Ansari feels a lack of community because he is unable to feel any sense of belonging with one nationality and identity.

If the cultures are far apart—like those of Afghanistan and America—one feels an urge to get entirely over to one side or the other. My siblings and I grew up with such divided souls, and we responded in different ways (Ansari 225).

Furthermore, at community level, in order to overcome their trauma, characters in the selected texts require some social support in the host land. Farah N. Mawani argues that refugees and emigrants are strongly impacted by ‘social inclusion/exclusion and formal social support’ (Mawani 31) because it strongly impacts their resettlement process. A systematic approach to provide social support from the native members would have helped them to overcome their trauma. However, it is not easily available and they mostly feel alone. Sitara argues,

Never, that little girl in the palace knew with brutal certainty, had any child in history been more alone (Hashimi 10).

However, this trauma is partially because they lack social support in the host land and partially because they lose their loved ones in the war. The lack of social support strongly impacts their mental health, making them feel lonely and stuck in life. Following 9/11, Sitara experiences incidents of discrimination. Instead of the social support she needs at that time to overcome her familial loss, she faces discrimination and she is only able to share her thoughts to her Nigerian friend who is also an emigrant in America. Sitara argues that both of us feel alone and suffer alone after this horrific incident. Furthermore, she states,

And now we’d both lived through the ugliest event in New York City’s history. I wasn’t going to shock her with what I’d seen (Hashimi 251).

Need for social support is also strongly triggered by the fact they are unable to cope with their personal loss. Death of their loved ones, displacement and challenges of resettlement continues to impact them and they feel torn between pre-migration and resettlement stages. They also realize that people in America cannot relate to them because they might have never experienced such severe trauma and loneliness, which is why Afghan emigrants start to suppress their emotions. Sitara argues,

And if I told anyone my story, they might think me insane as well (Hashimi 240).

Sitara represses her emotions and she feels that she can never move beyond her traumas. For this reason, she decides not to bring a child into this world and not to build a family.

That's fine with me. I've never thought it was safe for me to bring a child into this world, not with all my sharp edges and dark corners (Hashimi 231).

Even after spending years in America, war and violence leaves deep scars on her soul. At times, she wants to escape the horrors of reality. She argues,

Even now I'm not sure. I know I craved escape—from that room and that house and maybe even from the dark cave my head had become. I'd wanted to fly, to feel weightless in the infinite sky, even if only for an instant (Hashimi 229).

Similarly, Ansari finds it difficult at times because he lacks social support from his family. His father and brother Riaz leave for Afghanistan which impacts him strongly. To overcome the lack of emotional support and to feel any sense of social support, he soon manages to make his own circle of friends in America, which shows his courage and agency. During his first few years, he moves to a hostel, located in a town, where almost 200 people usually live together as one tribe. Ansari tries to stay part of this group to form social bonds and finds some social support as an alternative to the larger tribe he used to have back in Afghanistan. Even in the host land, he tries to find some social support like he used to have in Afghanistan.

The tribal pretensions of the counterculture spoke to my Afghan soul. In Portland, I was part of an intimate community—we sometimes even called ourselves a tribe—a closely interwoven network of friends and lovers numbering perhaps two hundred, just about the size of the Ansary network in Kabul and Deh Yahya (Ansari 79).

Likewise, key characters in AUTMW experience similar trauma at community level. Even though the mother of the five sisters tries hard to move beyond her past, her traumatic experiences and deep-seated yearning for her

homeland resurfaces amidst her resilience and practices of trying to adjust in the new land.

Mother, who fears nothing and welcomes all experiences, all people, embraces her new life and her new friends even as she mourns the loss of her first life and agonizes over loved ones left behind (Karimi 60).

On another occasion, the mother listens to the songs of the old land, to remember the relatives that were killed or murdered during the war. In the uncertainties of new land, they find it difficult to move beyond their old land. They notice their mother crying on many occasions when she recalls their past life and their home land. For example, on one occasion, the girl observes,

She listens to the music (of the old land) and is transported and, when she thinks she is alone, she sheds tears that hiss when they hit the iron or are run over by it (Karimi 62).

The trauma of losing family members in the war and escaping to a new land for survival is not easy. While the past lives with them buried in their chests, it is also challenging for them to reformulate their sense of belonging and get a clear idea about where they stand and where they position themselves. On one occasion, they claim;

The dead, who [e]migrated and lived with them, walked with them, sat down to meals and lay down to sleep beside them, were innumerable (Karimi 76).

Despite a strong deep-seated yearning for the loss they experienced before migration, the family still fights against all odds and present remarkable resilience by trying their best to adjust in the new culture.

The past traumatic experiences, constant exposure to violence during war and the instances of racism in the new culture, makes it difficult for Afghans to adjust in the new land and reformulate their sense of belonging. The fact that they lost their family members in the past is the most psychologically draining and overwhelming incident in their lives. Undeniably, it is extremely difficult for them to move beyond the violence and war they experience in their home land. Despite the hardships and

loss, it is observed that most of these characters in the selected texts present remarkable resilience by adopting multiple coping mechanisms and strategies for their survival and adjustment, which are depicted in the next section of this chapter.

4.3 Resilience of Afghan Emigrants

Amid the socio-cultural problems in the host land, Afghan emigrant characters in all three selected texts present remarkable resilience. Fighting against all odds and hardships, they struggle to survive and piece their lives back together within a new cultural and social context. The process of adjustment is not easy or simple, as the violence, loss and trauma they have witnessed continue to linger in their lives. Most of these characters adopt various coping mechanisms in an effort to overcome their trauma and adjust, striving to rebuild their lives as best they can. The coping mechanism adopted by refugees are shaped by the unique circumstances they face but in each selected narrative, Afghan emigrants presents notable resilience in their struggle for survival in the host country. Morton Beiser offers a unique perspective of resilience by emphasizing on ‘Personal and Social forms’ of resilience. Beiser presents the idea that refugees and emigrants experience three different hierarchical phases when they arrive in the host land. Beiser argues that during these three phases, refugees adopt different forms of resilience to survive in the host land. He presents two broad categories of resilience titled as “Personal Forms of Resilience and Social Forms of Resilience”.

Beiser argues that the initial phase after the arrival in the country of settlement is referred to as ‘Euphoria of Arrival’. In the selected texts, all three protagonists experience a relief during the first few weeks of escaping Afghanistan and resettling in America. During this phase most Afghan emigrants are optimistic. For instance, Sitara Zamani’s escape from Afghanistan is an opportunity for her to be able to stay alive. Sitara’s growing up and resettling in the US to pursue her career in medicine is evident of the fact that she starts a new life to reframe her sense of belonging in America. She decides to resettle in the new world order. Sitara describes her inner thoughts,

Adam and I have settled into this new world order, though, and decided that the coffee shop is our favorite addition to the block, especially when the two armchairs by the front window are up for grabs (Hashimi 229).

During their initial phase, the five sisters in *Above Us The Milky Way* are also hopeful about their future amid all uncertainties. For them and their entire family, resettlement in the new land allows them to start a new life where they are able to go back to school or work and live a normal life for a while. They start to indulge themselves in different activities to start a new life in the new culture.

And she embraces and indulges in the new life's charms: swimming and barbecues, beauty pageants and horror films (Karimi 61).

Similarly, for most key characters in Tamim Ansari's work it is difficult to stay in Afghanistan. For the Ansari family, escaping Afghanistan is a matter of survival. In the first few years, they feel optimistic in the US. The mother starts teaching and begins to embrace a new life regardless of the challenges. All three siblings start their college life with a hope for a better future.

She went to work as an elementary school teacher, and that's where she put all the love left over from the considerable portion she budgeted for us children (Ansari 89).

With the passage of time, this 'Euphoria of Arrival' almost fades and the difficulties start to emerge. While the immigration is a matter of survival for these Afghan emigrant characters, it is an extremely difficult decision. They start to feel nostalgic for their home land but most importantly the traumas of the past resurfaces, taking a toll on their mental health. Consequently, Beiser argues that refugees and emigrants then enter into the second phase referred to as 'disillusionment', with the host society. During this phase, they develop feelings of nostalgia for their home land, family, community and everything they have lost during displacement and resettlement. During this phase, refugees and emigrants have potential risk to develop psychiatric disorders. Among the three selected narratives, Sitara Zamani suffers the most profound loss of loved ones and faces extreme trauma and

experiences PTSD in the host land. She also feels nostalgic about her family and her home land.

The relief in her voice makes me wonder if she'd been thinking I wasn't okay until I volunteered to sit in a theater and watch a musical that reminds me of the night I snuck into my parents' empty home in Kabul (Hashimi 238).

Her home land and her traumatic past becomes a challenge for her and worsens her mental health. She confesses,

My homeland, my story, overwhelms me (Hashimi 242).

Her traumatic past resurfaces in her memory and she begins to develop PTSD. Resurfacing of the traumatic past is yet another psychological impact that she faces.

I made sure no one noticed that my hands had begun to tremble, that I hadn't taken a second bite of my slice. I slipped away to the bathroom, ran the faucet, and pressed a towel over my mouth to muffle my cries (Hashimi 239).

The five sisters also experience nostalgia for their home land. While the mother is trying to adjust in the new land with new people, the traumatic experiences of the past and the love for the homeland resurfaces. Despite this, she manages to welcome new experiences and embraces her new life. This shows the strength and courage in her character.

Likewise, once the five sisters manage to come to the new land, similar to Sitara Zamani, they are initially not able to assimilate and live longer in the phase of disillusionment as they feel they are at the borders of both lands. Beginning from the pre-migration phase, the five girls, their family and other refugees barely manage to escape the horrors of war.

Some left their lands in a boat, others on foot, others in the beds of trucks, or hidden beneath their seats (Karimi 107).

On the contrary, Ansari experiences a nostalgia for his homeland but he accepts his fate and tries to move forward. He starts to assimilate in the new culture in the first few years of his arrival. He finds it an opportunity to finally move to

America and starts a new life as an American, with the hopes that his identity will no longer be questioned.

The next thing I knew, we were landing in Tehran and our journey to the West had truly begun. Soon I would be relieved of the discomforts of a divided self, free to roam the world as just one person: Tamim Ansary, American guy (Ansari 97).

Beiser refers to this third phase as the phase of acceptance and adaptation. According to him, refugees and migrants begin to accept their circumstances during this phase. They also try to adapt the native culture and tradition in the host land. In the selected texts, we observe that at some point all characters try to adjust and assimilate in the host land. The characters present resilience at both personal and societal level. As we observe, Sitara begins to assimilate and start a new life for herself.

I've carved the life I have out of stone, and stones are not easily carved (Hashimi 234).

Upon arriving in the new land, the five sisters also try to adjust to the new culture but a deep-seated yearning for the past, their deceased loved ones and the uncertainty of future engulfs them. Despite these challenges, the family shows remarkable resilience in the host land and tries to adopt the native culture and adjust to the new surroundings.

Father nevertheless planted the seeds he had snuck into the new country in the ready soil of their small suburban yard (Karimi 55).

At another occasion, the father also tries to find new jobs in order to adjust in the host land and begin a new life amid the social and psychological challenges.

Father opens the newspapers and, in his small notebook, neatly puts down the job titles, the addresses, and the phone numbers of the companies and employers within a thirty-mile radius. He neatly writes down his own qualifications assiduously earned over the many years in the first land. He diligently calls to set up appointments and interviews (Karimi 59).

Both parents and their five daughters continuously try to adjust and assimilate, even when it is hard for them to transcend their traumatic experiences.

In the selected texts, the characters differ in adopting different forms of personal resilience as their coping mechanism for their survival. While Sitara and Ansari use dissociation techniques, the five siblings choose to divide time zones and only focus on the present so they may remain connected with the past yet they do not feel nostalgic about it. Beiser emphasizes that during personal forms of resilience, emigrants and refugees are active agents for their own survival. He argues that accepting their fate and assimilating in a new culture is challenging for refugees and emigrants. They face extreme mental pressure and at times develop severe depression. In order to cope with these challenges, they began to disassociate themselves. They use this coping technique as a personal form of resilience. This helps them keep the memories of the past out of their present life. To deal with such severe trauma and re-traumatization, Sitara uses dissociation technique as her coping mechanism to move beyond this phase. However, she herself realises that dissociation techniques will only suppress her trauma and will not work in the long term. Sitara prefers to live in the fairy tale and tries to disassociate herself from reality.

It had seemed safer to focus my energies on a fairy tale, and so I turned to Anastasia Romanov as a healthier option, like snacking on celery sticks instead of fries (Hashimi 239).

Sitara Zamani's decision to confront the supposed killer of her family to find out the truth regarding the horrible attack on the palace depicts the unwavering strength she gains over time. She also decides to go back to Afghanistan to find out the truth and have the courage to see the dead bodies of her parents.

Ansari also uses the same technique by disassociating himself from the memories of Afghanistan. He cuts off any relations with Afghans in the initial years. He argues,

DURING MY FATHER'S MONTHS in Washington, we were connected to a network of Afghans, but after he left, those connections faded, and we didn't try to hold on to them (Ansari 101).

It is only much later that he realises that he never completely moves beyond his Afghan self that has almost become a part of his sense of self.

When I finally started to swim out of the counterculture in 1976, I had been away from Afghanistan for twelve years but had never really lived in America yet (Ansari 79).

The five sisters do not disassociate themselves rather they keep themselves busy in the new land so they do not have much time to feel emotions. In this way, they choose to meet members of ethnic-like communities but only to focus on the present life they all have rather than dwelling into the past traumas or nostalgia. The five sisters keep themselves busy throughout the day. As we observe,

When it was over, after the feuding sisters had exhausted their limbs and their spirits, each returned to her chores or her homework and carried on not-speaking. With minds turned inward, roiling stomachs, and busy fingers, they went about their daily tasks, awaiting the adults' return (Karimi 131).

Due to their complex positionality as emigrants in the host land, they feel that the traumatic past they face is something people in the host land are not able to understand because they do not have anything familiar. They know they cannot share the pain and suffering with the people in the new land because they might not be able to align with their experiences of the past. For this reason, they keep it to themselves and repress their emotions. They suffer but inside their houses and not in-front of people in the new land, who they feel are completely unfamiliar to the reality they have experienced.

Unlike Father, She (their mother), the storyteller, speaks to others of the horror she herself has escaped, though neither of them suffers openly in the new land (Karimi 61).

By keeping their wounds to themselves, they present remarkable resilience despite the tragedy they suffer.

Resilience is also practiced by creating bonds with ethnic-like communities. This social form of resilience is also practiced by families when they reframe their identity when meeting ethnic-like communities and people from their home land. Beiser argues that the social forms of resilience include creating bonds with the larger network, family or kinship structures. In the selected literary texts, we observe that Sitara Zamani manages to make friends to have some kind of social support in the host land. She makes a new friend Dayo, a Nigerian woman who shares a war history with Sitara and both are emigrants residing in America, so that helps them understand each other's positionality, fears and expectations. So Dayo becomes her first friend in America and Sitara tries to retain this friendship over all these years. She explains,

Dayo, whose family had immigrated from Nigeria when she was sixteen, started off as my mentor but became so much more when the city imploded (Hashimi 246).

Similarly, meeting ethnic like community and kinship structures strongly helps the five sisters and their parents to form social bonds despite the challenges in the host land.

Others recently arrived in the land of the sun with little more than their scared fixed eyes, their tired heavy ears, their broken tongues. They speak with voices colored by disparate landscapes, histories, and horrors (Karimi 106).

Similarly, Ansari likes to meet Afghans with whom he feels a sense of belonging. He feels as if these people will never question his sense of belonging.

At least my fellow Afghans graciously assured me that it didn't matter; it was enough that the eight of us got to meet one another and share our stories (Ansari 284).

When Afghans came to the host countries, it was difficult for them to show resilience. They were vulnerable and weak, yet their only hope for survival was to present remarkable resilience. In Ansari's memoir, most key characters initially find it difficult to accept their fate. For example, Ansari's cousins and relatives who come to America as their only way to escape believe that someday they will move back to

Afghanistan. However, with the passage of time, they realise that resettling in the host land is the only way for them to survive. They initially assume that they can move back to Afghanistan once the war is over. For this reason, they initially do not change to American culture and strongly hold on to their Afghan sense of self.

When Afghans first started moving to the United States in significant numbers, they came clothed in the raiment of the old customs. They married their own, and cousins competed to outdo one another. They tried to hold on to everything, because they thought they were going back (Ansari 214).

It is only much later that they realize that none of it is easy. While escaping is difficult, returning to Afghanistan proves just as challenging, especially since the Afghanistan they once knew no longer exists after the war. Their loved ones have either died or they have escaped and the infrastructure is completely ruined. New cultural values and a touch of westernization comes in Afghanistan in the midst of war and violence. Beyond this idea of returning to their home land, they are also struggling to maintain their translocational positionality because they try to adopt at least some of the native norms and values to survive in the host land. Soon they realise it and as Ansari notes, many Afghans show resilience by moving through their traumatic past and adopting the American culture and lifestyle.

People had to fit into the clockwork schedules of America, and eventually they did.[...] It was not anything I had learned; it was they who were changing, letting go of habits brought over from the lost world, becoming Americans (Ansari 214).

Afghan emigrant and refugees are often unable to move back to a worn-torn area because they do not have much left behind. The social fabric is ruined, infrastructure destroyed and their loved ones escape to seek shelter and protection in other lands. Without their remarkable resilience, it would not have been possible for Afghan emigrant characters to survive in the host land. These acts of resilience in all three selected texts depict how they choose to move beyond their victim positionality and overcome the challenges they faced during their resettlement process. Despite the socio-political challenges and psychological hardships, they utilize multiple coping mechanisms including dissociation from their past life,

keeping themselves busy, focusing on the present life and extending ties to ethnic-like communities for social support. By examining these stories of resilience and survival of Afghan emigrants, the research points out that despite their complex positionality, social and mental health challenges, all these emigrant characters coming from war-torn areas show similarities in their efforts for survival and better future. For this reason, all these characters are able to build a better life for themselves by achieving financial independence, extending ties with ethnic-like communities and forming new relationships after years of hardships and struggles at the face of war, displacement and resettlement.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This is the concluding chapter of this study which outlines the key findings of the entire work and also provides recommendations for further research. In this research a comparative analysis of three selected literary texts is carried out to study resilience and survival of Afghan emigrants to understand the issues of displacement and resettlement in contemporary times. Grounded in Floya Anthias's theory of translocational positionality, Morton Beiser's concept of Resilience and Farah N. Mawani's concept of Social Determinants of Refugees Mental Health, the findings of the selected texts depicts the cultural realities and lived experiences of Afghan emigrants and refugees. In a world marked by war, political conflicts and displacement, this research focuses on the enduring strength and courage of Afghan emigrants, who manage to escape their home countries amid the instability to rebuild their lives in the host land. The life narratives explored in this work emphasizes on the urgency and necessity of understanding the ongoing crises faced by millions of Afghan refugees and emigrants across the globe.

In chapter 4, the comparative analysis of the selected texts has helped to bring to light how the Afghan emigrant characters in each text present a picture of resilience to overcome the challenges they faced in the host land and through their will and resilience, their struggles and stories of survival bring them out not as victims but heroes of their own lives.

With the help of comparative analysis, the researcher has explored and analyzed the resilience and survival of Afghan emigrants amidst their complex translocational positionality and the psycho-social challenges they face during resettlement in the host land. The researcher has examined the portrayal of Afghan emigrant subjects to unveil their socio-psychological issues in exile. This study has taken translocational positionality, mental health and resilience as three frames of reference to conduct comparative analysis of the selected texts. Comparative analysis as a research method facilitated in understanding the similarities and differences in the selected texts to emphasize on the nuanced variations in the

survival narratives of Afghan emigrants. Each selected work provided unique insights to help understand the diversity of challenges faced by Afghan emigrants and refugees during their adjustment in an unfamiliar land. This study helped to understand the impact of refugee's resilience in overcoming the social and psychological challenges during resettlement.

In connection to the first research question, the study analyzed the translocational positionality of Afghan emigrants. This study analyzed how Afghan emigrants positioned themselves and how they have been positioned by the members or government of the host land. In all three selected texts, several similarities and differences have been observed with regard to their translocational positionality. The findings of the analysis show that as a result of their complex positionality, key characters in all three selected texts felt a sense of belonging with two nationalities and identities. This indicates that translocational positionality creates challenges in the adjustment process of refugees and emigrants, as the way they position themselves does not always align with how they are positioned by the members of the host land. Significantly, Nadia Hashimi and Ansari's narratives depicted the idea that most characters in these texts decided to let go of their past sense of self and any belonging with Afghanistan in the initial years to adjust in the host land. For them, Afghanistan was a lost world that they left behind. On the contrary, Fowzia Karimi's characters considered Afghanistan as their first land and decided to stay in connection with both lands simultaneously. All key characters in Fowzia Karimi's narrative did not let go of their sense of belonging with Afghanistan to adjust in the host land. They maintained strong ties with their extended families in Afghanistan as well as Afghan emigrants in the host land.

Furthermore, it is observed that it is difficult for Afghan emigrant characters to navigate their sense of during their resettlement due to their translocational positionality. By analysing Tamim Ansari's memoir, the researcher observed that Ansari, his brother Riaz and his father tried to reformulate their sense of belonging and social identity to create a new life but their complex translocational positionality remained a major struggle in creating a new life in the host land. Their inability to relate to one land or one identity entirely reflects the complexity of their positionality, which significantly shapes their self-perception and sense of belonging

in exile. As a result, they lost the center of their lives after leaving Afghanistan, which is why Riaz and his father could never fully accept American culture and lifestyle and eventually left America. Ansari and his sister Rabeeca managed to assimilate in the host culture but they too shared feelings of nostalgia for Afghanistan. They constantly struggled to find middle ground between their American life and Afghan culture. This indicates that due to their translocational positionality, they constantly struggled with the conflicted sense of self and always tried to fit-in in at least one culture to feel any sense of belonging.

The analysis of Nadia Hashimi's novel shows that most key characters reformulate the notion of belonging and social identity to rebuild their life for their survival. The protagonist Sitara manages to escape Afghanistan amidst the constant threats. Previously due to her father's affiliation with the Afghan government, she was constantly threatened with death, making it impossible for her to survive in Afghanistan. Sitara realises that being in America is her only escape from atrocities at home. Consequently, she seeks protection and shelter in America for her survival. Although she is never able to fully come to terms with the trauma of losing her family, it is her resilience and will to survive that she accepts American culture and moves forward. Due to her translocational positionality, she faces socio-cultural challenges such as adjustment with the host family and mental health issues like suppressing her true emotions and not being able to form attachments with people during her relocation in the US. Although the trauma of losing her family and displacement severely affect her mental health issues, the study reveals that she still struggles and make efforts to move ahead in her life in America.

The complications in reformulating a sense of belonging to the new land were also observed by analysing Fowzia Karimi's novel. In the novel, five sisters and their parents feel survival guilt because they manage to escape the atrocities while their friends and family members are still going through the war and violence. On the one hand, they try to build a social life by finding new jobs for better adjustment, but on the other hand, they constantly think about their past life and feel strange among the native members of the host land. This points out that translocational positionality caused a constant struggle during their survival and

adjustment in America. The analysis reveals that the five sisters makes efforts to rebuild their lives in the new land.

The comparison of these texts illustrated that during their resettlement process, Afghan emigrants face socio-political challenges as a result of complex positionality which hindered their process of adjustment in the host land. Despite the differences in their struggles, their identities resulting from the intersectionality framework embedded in the larger social and power structures, impacted their sense of belonging in the host land. Most of the characters in the selected texts depicted constant struggles, however, even after putting in much effort, some incidents in the selected narratives depicted that their identity as emigrant or refugee made them invisible in the host land's sociocultural order. The findings of the analysis of the selected narratives emphasized that although the Afghan emigrant's identity and sense of belonging remains fractured in the host land, they present notable resilience to move beyond the challenges to adjust in the new land. For instance, Sitara Zamani manages to become a doctor and gains financial freedom while Ansari becomes a journalist and marries an American woman to start a new life. Furthermore, the five sisters and their parents manage to find new jobs to resettle in the host land.

In connection to the second question, it is observed that Afghan's experienced several mental health challenges that hindered their adjustment in the host land. As a consequence of their translocational positionality, they are unable to completely align with one land or one identity entirely. As a result, they constantly try to fit-in in the native culture and social order. At the same time, their traumatic past continues to resurface in their memories, making it difficult for them to move beyond the past and adjust in the new culture. Grounded in Farah N. Mawani's theory of Social Determinants of Refugees Mental health, it is observed that in all three selected texts, most of the characters manage to find a stable source of income which helps them survive in the host land. However, their sources of income, class and gender vary which is why they are positioned differently in the host land. Sitara Zamani as a doctor and Ansari as a journalist are able to align more to the American lifestyle but for most characters in *Above Us The Milky Way*, life is difficult as they constantly struggle to make ends meet.

The researcher highlighted the intensity of past traumatic experiences coupled with the discrimination in the host land, resulting in extreme psychological challenges that strongly impacted the mental well-being of Afghan emigrants. Furthermore, difficulties in the engagements with socio-cultural and political institutes of the host country also created feelings of isolation and insecurity among Afghan emigrants, since they were already more prone to traumatic and posttraumatic disorders. Their mental health also worsened with the horrific news of the homeland, including the on-going political conflicts and war in the native land as it triggered the traumas. Consequently, after watching horrific news about the political circumstances of the homeland, the emigrants felt severe pain even being miles away physically. The researcher also points out that the complex positionality is not limited to how refugees or emigrants position themselves. Most often, they tried to assimilate and fit-in in the native culture because it was a matter of survival for them. However, their past continues to resurface in their lives. They could not go back to Afghanistan and later on when they went back, they realized that the Afghanistan they left behind, no longer exists. It was not a simple nostalgia but the pain of never being able to go back to the lost world. This points out that Afghan emigrants' trauma never faded yet it was described and experienced differently in all three selected narratives, emphasizing that there is no monolithic experience of migration and displacement but an on-going struggle each individual faces and fights differently. This study also ascertained that selected texts shared multiple similarities such as the recurrence of the traumatic experiences of the homeland, exposure to violence and political conflicts, separation with the closer or extended family, desire to live with ethnic-like community and inability to see themselves as one unconflicted soul.

In connection to the third research question, it is observed that Afghan emigrant characters in all three selected texts presented remarkable resilience despite the socio-cultural and psychological problems in the host land. Even after struggling with complexity of their translocation positionality and mental health challenges, they tried to accept native culture to survive as well as for a better future for themselves. They tried to move beyond their traumatic past in order to adjust in the host land for their survival. They adopted different techniques of resilience to cope with the challenges in the host land. This thesis primarily focused on providing

insights of resilience and survival of Afghan emigrants amid all the challenges of dislocation, trauma and resettlement. The comparative analysis of all three selected narratives proved that Afghan emigrants are not passive victims of war, violence and trauma but they are strong, resilient agents who struggle to live a meaningful life.

This research emphasized on understanding the resilience and survival of Afghan emigrants despite their complex positionality and mental health challenges. This research is centered on the idea of resilience and survival; beginning from the issues of migration and adjustment process towards the resilient practices adopted to overcome them. This holistic approach in understanding the issues of Afghan emigrants and their resettlement helped understand their issues in the larger discourse of migration, trauma and resilience.

5.1 Recommendations for Future Research

As the global population of Afghan refugees and emigrants increases every year, it is of utmost importance to understand their issues in exile by situating their life narratives in the larger discourse of migration and exile. The findings of this research helps build a framework to understand the positionality of emigrants and refugees to address the systematic barriers they face during their adjustment process. This research also underscores the significance of policy making to address the issue of migrants and refugees in the host countries.

Future researchers can build on the framework of resilience provided in this research to explore more social and psychological coping mechanisms and practices for the emigrants and refugees that can assist them in their adjustment process. Furthermore, refugees and emigrants' struggles are generally overlooked in the larger discourse, which makes them feel more isolated in the host land. Moreover, understanding their issues from political dimensions in the future can help in providing specific solutions centered on emigrants' welfare by making them feel a part of the larger community in the host land. It will also help in reducing instances of racism and discrimination from the native members by positively influencing the adjustment of emigrants.

Future researchers can explore the role of host countries in educating the general public to understand that the emigrant subjects who are forcefully displaced from the native lands are not at fault and thereby should not be treated as a burden. It is important to build future research on the fact that emigrants are forced to leave their lands and with the emotional and social support they can be properly reintegrated in the host cultures. Thereby, welcoming them and treating them as humans is the least help that the members of native land can provide to emigrants and refugees who risk everything for a chance of safety and shelter. By understanding these narratives of resilience and survival, future researchers can explore the areas where more cultural practices and political policies can be made to protect emigrants who are vulnerable to abuse, poverty and discrimination in the host countries.

WORKS CITED

- Al-Ali, Khadija. "At the Borders of Otherness: A Decolonising Translocational Positionality Approach to Difference: Releasing Kuwaiti Online Voices." *MUSTAQBAL: The Journal of Arab Future Education*, vol. 26, no. 119, 2019, pp. 9–38.
- Alexander, Jeffrey C. *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. University of California Press, 2004.
- Anthias, Floya. "Interconnecting Boundaries of Identity and Belonging and Hierarchy-Making within Transnational Mobility Studies: Framing Inequalities." *Current Sociology*, vol. 64, no. 2, 2015, pp. 172–90. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392115614780>.
- Anthias, Floya. "Identity and Belonging: Conceptualisations and Political Framings." *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2013, pp. 102–10.
- Anthias, Floya. "Where Do I Belong?" *Ethnicities*, vol. 2, no. 4, 2002, pp. 491–514. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687968020020040301>.
- Ansary, Tamim. *West of Kabul, East of New York: An Afghan American Story*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002.
- Berry, John W. "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation." *Applied Psychology*, vol. 46, no. 1, 1997, pp. 5–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/026999497378467>.
- Bhatti, Muzaffar Qadir, Ayesha Komal, and Syeda Masooma Zahra. "Unveiling Trauma's Echo: Exploring the Impact of Traumatic Events on the Psyche of Sitara Zamani in *Sparks Like Stars*." 2024.
- Broughton, Sharon, and John Shields. "Resilience, the Immigrant Settlement Sector: A Consideration of the Place of Accountability and Performance Management." 2020.
- Di Biase. "Translocational Belonging in Urban Peripheries among the Postmigrant

Generation: San Siro and the Trap/Drill Subculture of Milan.” 2024.

Eggerman, Mark, and Catherine Panter-Brick. “Suffering, Hope, and Entrapment: Resilience and Cultural Values in Afghanistan.” *Social Science & Medicine*, vol. 71, no. 1, 2010, pp. 71–83.

Fadhli, Tengku Nila. “Adversity, Emotion, and Resilience among Syrian Refugees in the Netherlands.” 2022.

Farahani, Hadi, et al. “How Can I Trust People When They Know Exactly What My Weakness Is? Daily Life Experiences, and Resilience Strategies of Stateless Afghans in Iran.” 2023.

Grüttner, Michael. “Belonging as a Resource of Resilience: Psychological Wellbeing of International and Refugee Students in Study Preparation at German Higher Education Institutions.” 2019.

Hashimi, Nadia. *Sparks Like Stars*. HarperCollins, 2021.

Hashimi, Nadia. “About Nadia Hashimi.” *Nadia Hashimi Books*, www.nadiashimibooks.com/about.

Ilisko, Dzintra. “Translocational Positionality of Returnee Migrants: The New Normal.” 2021.

International Organization for Migration. “Key Migration Terms.” International Organization for Migration, 16 Mar. 2016, www.iom.int/key-migration-terms.

Karimi, Fowzia. *Above Us the Milky Way: An Illuminated Alphabet*. Deep Vellum Publishing, 2020.

“Above Us the Milky Way: An Illuminated Alphabet.” *World Literature Today*, www.worldliteraturetoday.org/2021/winter/above-us-milky-way-illuminated-alphabet-fowzia-karimi.

- Khamdamova, Nilufar. "Historical Influence of *West of Kabul, East of New York* by Mir Tamim Ansary." *Archive of Conferences*, 18 May 2022, pp. 33–35, conferencepublication.com/index.php/aoc/article/view/2058/2141.
- Koskela, Kaisu. "Intersecting Experiences: Class, Gender, Ethnicity and Race in the Lives of Highly Skilled Migrants in Finland." 2019.
- Mashingaidze, Mercy. "The Multi-Situatedness of Biographical Narratives: Contributions to Critical Migration Research." 2022.
- Miller, Letticia Cosbert. "Nadia Hashimi's New Novel Sparks Like Stars Embraces Afghan Culture from War-Torn Kabul to Success in the U.S." *Thestar.com*, 5 Mar. 2021, www.thestar.com/entertainment/books/2021/03/05/nadia-hashimis-new-novel-sparks-like-stars-embraces-afghan-culture-from-war-torn-kabul-to-success-in-the-us.html.
- Morales, Frances, et al. "Strengths and Resilience Among Central American Parents Seeking Asylum in the United States." 2023.
- PourAli, Soheyla. "Intersectional-Translocational Positionality in Arab-American Women's Narratives: Reading Randa Jarrar's *A Map of Home* and Laila Halaby's *West of Jordan*." 2022.
- Pulvirenti, Mariastella, and Gail Mason. "Resilience and Survival: Refugee Women and Violence." 2011.
- Schmidt, Silke. "(Re-) Framing the Afghan Fundamentalist in *West of Kabul, East of New York*." 2001.
- Singh, Garima. "Afghan Women Authors' Discourses of Resistance: Contesting Interplay between Gender, Place, and Identity." *Gender, Place, and Identity of South Asian Women*, edited by Moussa Pourya Asl, 2022.

Stempel, Carl. “Gendered Sources of Distress and Resilience among Afghan Refugees in Northern California: A Cross-Sectional Study.” 2017.

Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2006.

UNHCR. “UNHCR – Refugee Statistics.” *UNHCR*, 2022,
www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/.

Van der Kolk, Bessel A. “Trauma and Memory.” *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*, vol. 52, no. S1, 1998, pp. S57–S69.
<https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1440-1819.1998.0520s5s97.x>.

Woube, Annie. “Living with Change Among a Transient Population: Narratives and Practices of Collective Belonging among Swedish Migrants on the Costa del Sol in Spain.” *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2017, pp. 148–55.

Yasmin, Samina, and Mumtaz Ahmad. “Hybridity and the Quest for Self-Identity: A Critical Analysis of Nadia Hashimi’s *Sparks Like Stars*.” 2021.

Zhang, Hantian. “Collage of One Family and Two Lands—A Review of Fowzia Karimi’s Novel *Above Us the Milky Way*.” 2022.