

## MENTAL HEALTH AND INTERPERSONAL CONNECTIONS: AN EVALUATIVE STUDY OF THE PROTAGONISTS OF THE NOVELS BY PREETI SHENOY

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### ABSTRACT

*This review article explores the way we form relationships with people we encounter and how our interpersonal skills grow. People who have close connections with others will probably gain a sense of assurance, security, and belonging as well as less stress and a lower risk of depression and anxiety. They might also stand a better chance of achieving success on both a personal and professional level. This study also focuses on the protagonists of the novels of Preeti Shenoy namely Ankita, Veda, Diksha, Vipasha etc. undergo challenging situations in their personal lives but cope with formidable obstacles with support before they achieve their goals. The paper analyses the various kinds of difficult situations they are dealing with in order to understand these characters' motives, problems and responses. This review article relies on secondary sources from various articles, theses, books, journals, research, etc. The paper synthesizes data from many research articles to better understand the connection between mental health crisis and interpersonal connections after completing an extensive evaluation of the body of existing knowledge. The review highlights the importance of mental health, interpersonal connections and explores various strategies to cope with difficult situations in life through the novels of Preeti Shenoy. Her novels illustrate the characters' emotional journeys life's and provide hope to the readers that they can overcome any problem with great confidence. Based on the research findings, this article concludes that counselling and meditation techniques positively impact on the affected individual by bringing calmness to the mind.*

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**Keywords:** *Interpersonal, Relationships, Trauma, Protagonists, Counselling, Mental Health.*

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### Introduction

As one of India's most famous authors, Preeti Shenoy is known for her modern fiction novels. She has profoundly influenced the world of literature, with her engaging stories and resonant characters. She has penned novels featuring strong female protagonists. Preeti Shenoy began her writing journey with her debut novel, "34 Bubblegums and Candies," published in 2008. A collection of brief, real life incidents and anecdotes that relate to the various aspects of life are included in this book. It garnered immense popularity, establishing Preeti as a promising author in the literary world.

Since then, Preeti Shenoy has written several best-selling novels, including "Life Is What You Make It," "Tea for Two and a Piece of Cake," "The Secret Wish List," "It's All in the Planets," "A Hundred Little Flames", "A Place called home", "The Rule Breakers", "The Magic Mindset: How to find your happy place", "When love came calling", "Wake Up, Life is Calling", "Love a little stronger" and "It happens for a reason." Her books explore themes like love, relationships, self-discovery, and personal growth. Known for her ability to portray emotions and relationships with depth and sensitivity, she has earned a dedicated readership.

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Preeti Shenoy's writing style is characterised by its simplicity and easy-to-relate-to narratives. Her stories often delve into the complexities of everyday life, highlighting the triumphs, struggles, and dilemmas faced by her characters. Through her books, she aims to inspire and uplift readers, encouraging them to reflect on their own lives and find meaning in their experiences.

### Methodology

#### • Search Methodology and Article Selection

The present article is a narrative review of Mental health and Interpersonal Connections: An evaluative study of protagonists of the novels by Preeti Shenoy. The terms "Relationships", "Interpersonal", "Counselling," "Coping" and "Mental health" were used in a search of the Google Scholar electronic database. The goals of the paper are satisfied by the secondary data collection. The main information for this study was assembled from a variety of secondary sources, including journals, conference proceedings, book sections, and other websites. A thorough evaluation and synthesis of the body of research as a whole was done. Additionally, it is utilised to identify research gaps and goals.

#### • Methodological and Thematic Analysis of Selected Articles

Google Scholar was the source of the vast bulk of the research articles. The total numbers of papers were divided into four main categories, which were then used to organise the review.

- To analyse the importance of mental health
- To recognize the impact of interpersonal connections
- To explore various strategies to deal with difficult situations in life in Preeti Shenoy's novels

Published papers were categorised and summarised in light of the material that is currently accessible on dealing with mental health, interpersonal connections and strategies to deal with difficult situations in life. There has been a lot of research on mental health and interpersonal connections but little of it has been focused on ways to overcome it in the context of the protagonists of the novels by Preeti Shenoy. The literature that is now available is only from a limited number of writers, but about the novels of Preeti Shenoy it has not been done. More representative study on these ideas is required, especially from the writings of a contemporary novelist like Preeti Shenoy.

### Results

#### • Importance of Mental Health

**Table 1**

Our emotional, psychological, and social well-being all fall under the category of mental health. It influences our thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. Additionally, it influences how we respond to stress, interact with others, and make right decisions. Every period of life, from infancy to maturity, is vital for mental health. Over time, a person's mental health may alter based on a variety of reasons such as strained family relationships, work pressure, health conditions, monetary problems etc. It may result in depression, loneliness which disrupts the normal life of the individual. By the following literature review, we can conclude that poor mental health affects the individual and those closely associated with him.

S. No.	Area & Focus of the Research	Outcome of the Research	References
1	Explains how an Indian woman experiences male dominance and female oppression and explains how strongly women disagree with the portrayal of male dominance in the novel.	This study demonstrates how the novel's representation of male dominance towards women is deconstructed and effects the mental health.	Astuti, R. D., , et.al. (2021).
2	Focuses on bipolar disorder, a psychiatric condition marked by mood swings, its treatment, and its aftereffects on the victim.	Any disaster's aftermath requires total caring as opposed to speaking people's concerns, critiquing them, and bringing up their past.	Ramasubbiah, A., et.al. Vimala, D. (2019).
3	Attempts to understand how Ankita maintains equilibrium in her life by handling both internal and external conflicts.	Even when circumstances are bleak one should hold onto hope and maintain stability in life.	Magishavarthini, S., et.al. (2022).
4	Analyses the novel's hidden meaning in light of Freud's psychoanalytic theories.	The ability to assert control over one's unconscious mind, which is superior to the conscious (ego) and superego (conscience) minds, is extremely rare.	Nandhakumar, K. (2018).

5	Claims that Preeti Shenoy's <i>Life is What You Make It</i> and <i>Wake Up, Life is Calling</i> present postmodern interpretations of paranoia.	The study's conclusions look at how postmodern paranoia appears in various works.	Pandeeswari, D., et. al. (2021).
6	Focuses on the protagonist's state of mind	At the end, she changed from being a shy woman to a confident one.	Rebello, S. J. A., et. al. (2023).
7	Highlights the aspect reflection of changing life underlined by Preeti Shenoy.	Shows that one shouldn't consider suicide in frustration when facing challenging situation in life	Bhosle, K. G.
8	Depicts the challenges of contemporary women, like Diksha, who must give up their desires and aspirations to preserve the honour of their family in a society that is dominated by men.	Preeti Shenoy truly helps us understand how to decide whether or not we are modern, whether we are still following outdated practises and projecting the image of self-sacrificing women, or whether we are ready to be independent women.	Mehra, A.
9	Explores the struggle faced by all modern women who want self-actualization and change in the novel.	Because of her fervent drive to pursue her goals and desires regardless of the many circumstances, the character in <i>The Secret Wishlist</i> is shown to be armed with feminist principles.	Mahajan, K. N., et. al.
10	The female character Veda, who overcomes by sacrifice and dangers to reach self-realization, undergoes an individuation crisis that ultimately leads to self-actualization, is examined through the lens of Jung's theories on the above topics.	Individuation that leads to self-realization also offers the chance to strike a balance between inner and outside tranquilly of mind and drives continuous evolution towards greater mental maturity that learns hidden aspects and important life lessons through several unexpected situations.	Khadiri, N., et. al.
11.	Attempts to do a parallel analysis of the short stories <i>The Bet</i> (1889) and <i>The Secret Wish List</i> (2012) by renowned Russian playwright and short story writer Anton Chekhov.	Emphasises the value of having the freedom to make your own decisions and your obligation to take responsibility for them. A person's choice is firmly under their own control because they have the choice to accept or reject whatever environmental stimuli they encounter when making that decision.	Magishavarthini, S., et. al. (2023).
12.	Tries to identify August Pullman, the <i>Wonder</i> novel's central character, as he develops as a person.	The complete personality of a person will alter or evolve if their environment, social pressure, and self-concept change.	Sagimin, E. M., et. al. (2019).
13.	Aimed to uncover Ryohei Arisu's personality evolution as the lead in the television series <i>Alice in Borderland</i> .	Change in Arisu's personality	Anggrela, R. F., et. al. (2021).
14.	The same level of care should be taken to monitor one's mental health as one's physical health.	Readers learn from those featured in the book that PTSD symptoms can be addressed with the right medical and psychological attention.	Magishavarthini, S., et. al. (2022).
15.	To draw attention to some fiction books that deal with issues of mental health and mental illness.	These books gave readers the impression that they weren't the only ones who dealt with mental illness; millions of others had also gone through it in one way or another and had triumphed over it with the support of loved ones, friends, and society as a whole.	Dar, A. M. (2020)

#### • Importance of Interpersonal Connections

It is the process by which people communicate their thoughts, feelings, and intentions to one another through messages and signs. Any conversations between people that take place face-to-face, online, or over the phone are considered interpersonal communication. People interact with one another in both verbal and nonverbal ways. We also express ourselves through body language, tone of voice, facial emotions, and gestures. Interpersonal communication skills can aid our personal and professional relationships by effectively conveying our ideas and intentions. Listening abilities will also help one better comprehend and empathise with people.

Table 2

S. No.	Area & Focus of the Research	Outcome of the Research	References
1	In Woolf's <i>To the Lighthouse</i> , we are introduced to a group of fictitious people whose real desire is to construct wholesome relationships with those around them, with varying degrees of success.	The novel <i>To the Lighthouse</i> , demonstrates how to build a fulfilling and joyful relationship with another person	Prabha, T. V., et. al. (2022).
2	Explores the complexities of human connections, including how they connect and isolate individuals from one another.	The Ministry of Utmost Happiness tells a tale that highlights the rifts and gaps in human relationships before reuniting the characters, who reconcile despite having a number of grievances against one another.	Mishra, B.
3	Project Anita Nair's improvement in handling the complexity of parent-child relationships from her previous novel to the next.	An entire parent-child connection is a web of three generations' implications. It provides understanding to analyse and resolve the difficulties in parent-child relationships.	Patil, S. M., et. al. (2019)
4	Learn about the complexity in today's relationships caused by shifting political boundaries and shifting human emotions.	The inter-personal relationship known as <i>The Shadow Lines</i> is based on both truth and fantasy, and it is relived via repetition.	Chandel, R. (2019)
5	Relate the idea of ethnic family relationships to R.K. Narayan's novels in order to demonstrate how effectively Narayan captures ethnic features in his works.	The significance of ethnicity in presenting a society's values.	Pushkala, R, et. al. (2020)
6	Explain the many interpersonal relationships that the book depicts.	The British and Indians were not considered equal at the time the novel was written, and friendship can only exist between equals.	Nafi, D. J. (2016).
7	<i>Heat and Dust</i> by Ruth Praver Jhabvala explores the closeness and interpersonal relationships and their impact on the psyche of individuals from various cultural backgrounds.	The characters' daily interactions foster intimacy and interpersonal relationships.	Khaliq, N., et.al. (2022).
8	Investigates the connections between Jane Eyre's imperative statements and interpersonal interactions.	It is suggested that new imperative markers, such as vocatives, personal pronouns, and directional verbs like come and go, be used to assess social dynamics in literary works.	Li, Y., et. al (2022).
9	Analyse the author's depiction of women's pain and suffering in both private and public settings.	It illustrates how women are oppressed in both the private and public arenas and challenges the idea of a woman's uniqueness as a human being.	Mathew, J. S., et. al (2020).
10	The subject of <i>A Matter of Time</i> by Shashi Deshpande is the complexity of interpersonal relationships.	It demonstrates the difficulties, conflicts, and attempts made by married women to maintain a healthy relationship in spite of all the complications.	Sarkar, S. (2020)
11.	Examine the wide variety of personal feelings in Preeti Shenoy's novels, with a focus on the relationship between men and women.	The work beautifully depicts Preeti Shenoy's efforts to promote peace among relationships, particularly those that are not primarily based on blood. In reality, it creates a pathway for fresh connections between those considered strangers or unknowns.	Kalyani Swapna, P., et. al (2019).
12.	Examines how a woman's mental problems and a man's harshness combined to create marital discord between Maya and Gautama as a result of their obstructed communication and inconsistent contrariness.	On the basis of common goals, concepts, and interests, a changeless alliance can be established. Their mature mindset, open-mindedness, comprehension, and adaptable personalities significantly contribute to the development of marital congruity.	Rajkumar, S.

13.	Aims to investigate how certain Indian English women novelists treat their families.	The most crucial skill in every relationship, especially the one between a wife and a husband, is understanding one another.	Wani, A. R., et. al (2019).
14.	Attempts to examine the various facets of the interpersonal relationships shown in <i>The Binding Vine</i> , as well as how these relationships affect how women are positioned in Indian society and how their status within the family and in society as a whole give their relationships a unique shape.	Promoting concepts like female solidarity, female friendship, and the importance of sisterhood in a society that is controlled by men.	Yadav, P (2019)
15.	The goal of the current study is to understand how changes in finance and the market impact human relations.	The mayor of Casterbridge emphasises how important the industrial revolution, business, and market fluctuations are to people's lives. Relationships between men and women are governed by money.	Shashikant Mhalunkar, (2023)

• **Strategies to Cope with Stressful Situations in Life in Preeti Shenoy's Novels**

Under persistent stress, we find it difficult to function. From the above literature review, we can very clearly understand that the protagonists are able to rise to the occasion in spite of all the difficult situations in their lives.

Rise to the occasion involves achieving outstanding outcomes under stress, perform better than usual, go above and beyond what is expected of you during trying circumstances, surpass regular limitations or standards, get additional confidence and skills to handle significant obstacles, and go above and beyond what is necessary for the situation at hand.

Although troubles abound in life, we must never lose sight of the fact that every issue can be resolved. One should approach the problem head-on and calmly come up with a solution. When in need, one should not be reluctant to contact counsellors for qualified assistance. Our hearts and minds can feel less burdened when we communicate openly with our loved ones. Yoga and meditation practices too can help us lead a stress free life and assist us in self-development.

**Conclusion**

Preeti Shenoy's novels are based on women protagonists who take the role of a wife, daughter, mother etc. Her novels convey that interpersonal influences and mental health are linked to one another. So, building healthy relationships and safeguarding our physical and mental health is very much necessary. In adversity, one should always maintain hope and rise to the occasion because every problem has a solution. Also, we should remember that there is always time to approach for help. We can lead a happy and contented life with a positive mindset.

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