Perceived Self-Efficacy as a Mechanism for Post-traumatic Recovery in Gurnah's *Afterlives*: The Case of Hamza

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ABSTRACT

This essay aims at reading Abdulrazak Gurnah's Afterlives (2020) as a part of the larger theoretical project of post-traumatic fiction. Within the framework of social cognitive theory, this essay contends that perceived self-efficacy, with its protective function and demonstrable contribution to post-traumatic recovery, enables Hamza, Gurnah's protagonist and a survivor of several traumatic experiences, to exercise some measure of control over his life adversities. Hamza's experiences highlight the substantial relationship between trauma, perceived self-efficacy, and post-traumatic recovery. The analysis leads to the conclusion that Afterlives can productively be considered a work of post-traumatic fiction, both involving and exposing its protagonist's perceived capability to manage his personal functioning in the aftermath of his traumatic experiences. This study not only contributes to literary scholarship by offering a new perspective on Gurnah's work but also provides valuable insights for psychological research on trauma recovery. The paper is divided into several sections: an introduction to Gurnah's work, a literature review of relevant studies, a detailed discussion of the concept of self-efficacy, an analysis of the novel, and a conclusion that ties the findings to contemporary psychological theories. Additionally, this study provides recommendations for future research, suggesting the exploration of self-efficacy in other literary works and examining its application in real-life trauma recovery contexts.

Keywords: Abdulrazak Gurnah; Afterlives; post-traumatic fiction; perceived self-efficacy; post-traumatic recovery

INTRODUCTION

In 2021, Abdulrazak Gurnah (1948 -), a Tanzanian-born British author, received the Nobel Prize in Literature for his exploration of colonialism's effects and refugee experiences. In his 2020 novel *Afterlives*, Gurnah explores themes of trauma, identity, and exile in an unnamed coastal town in present-day Tanzania, chronicling colonialism's brutality and the characters' resuscitation of life after their traumatic experiences. The novel is set during and after the German colonial period in East Africa and provides a vivid depiction of the social, political, and cultural upheavals that marked the era. The narrative follows the lives of its central characters—Hamza, Khalifa, Afiya, and Ilyas. Khalifa, an Indian African clerk, marries Bi Asha through his employer's arrangement. Ilyas kidnapped and educated by German missionaries, reunites with his sister Afiya before he enlists in the schutztruppe and leaves her in Khalifa's care. Hamza, the novel's protagonist, also joins the schutztruppe, but he finds only exploitation and abuse.

Gurnah portrays Hamza's resilient attempts to manage his personal functioning after a traumatic encounter with the ruthless schutztruppe. The novel revolves around his post-traumatic experiences, exploring his belief in his efficacy to exercise some measure of control over life events, particularly in socioemotional functioning. It could be argued that Hamza's tale demonstrates the perceived capability of Gurnah's protagonist to execute behaviours when

necessary. To understand Hamza's recovery, it is crucial to examine the main events and characters that shape his experiences. Key events in the novel, such as Hamza's enlisting in the German colonial army and his subsequent return to civilian life, serve as both barriers and motivators in his quest for self-efficacy. The narrative draws readers into the interiors of Hamza's psyche as he strives to regain control after his traumatic experiences. Hamza endures a series of traumas in his life: sold as a bonded labourer by his father to escape a crippling debt; he runs away and volunteers for the schutztruppe, only to discover he has traded a wretched existence for a worse one. As an Askari, he faces scorn and ridicule from his fellows. He is also ridiculed by German officers and suffers from a life-threatening injury caused by a sword slash from a German soldier. These adversities not only symbolise the broader subjugation of Africa under colonial rule but also serve as significant barriers to Hamza's self-realisation.

Despite these hardships, Hamza's return from the war marks a pivotal moment in his life. He finds employment with Khalifa and is welcomed into his home, an act that provides him with a sense of stability and belonging. Here, Hamza develops a deep bond with Afiya, who also suffered under colonial rule. Their relationship, which eventually blossoms into marriage, becomes a sanctuary from their past traumas and a source of mutual healing and strength. The couple's marriage and the birth of their son, named after Afiya's lost brother, Ilyas, represent their resistance to the colonial legacy and their attempt to rebuild their lives. The central research problem of this study is the lack of understanding of how characters in *Afterlives*, particularly Hamza, develop self-efficacy for post-traumatic recovery. Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura's social cognitive theory, involves an individual's belief in their ability to achieve goals and manage situations. This study aims to explore the evolution of Hamza's self-efficacy and its role in his psychological adaptation and recovery. By examining self-efficacy in *Afterlives*, the research offers a new perspective that emphasises how individual efficacy beliefs promote post-traumatic adaptation in the aftermath of life adversities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Abdulrazak Gurnah's body of work has garnered significant scholarly attention, particularly regarding themes of displacement, identity, and colonialism. For instance, Pujolràs-Noguer (2023) examines *Afterlives* as part of Gurnah's ongoing narrative theme of interruption and continuation and links it to his earlier work, *Paradise*. Pujolràs-Noguer explores how the characters' stories intersect with the larger historical context of colonialism in East Africa, emphasising storytelling as a means of survival. Branach-Kallas (2022) analyses the portrayal of the Askari stereotype in *Afterlives* and highlights the complexities of postcolonial war commemoration and collective memory. Mengiste (2020) underscores the harsh and oppressive nature of German colonial rule in Tanzania and focuses on the brutal military tactics depicted in *Afterlives*. Ullah and Iqbal (2023) apply settler colonialism theory to *Afterlives* and analyse themes of genocide, oppression, and language appropriation. They discuss how Gurnah uses the colonisers' language to foreground Indigenous cultural values and highlight the socio-economic and cultural impacts of colonialism. Abbas et al. (2023) use trauma analysis theory to examine the impact of historical and personal traumas and suggest that the novel offers a profound portrayal of trauma's enduring effects on the human psyche.

Regarding the application of self-efficacy theory in literary and artistic contexts, this theory has been widely used to explore characters' belief systems and their perceived ability to achieve goals. Sabrina (2022) examines the development of self-efficacy in the protagonist of *The Midnight Library*. She highlights significant behavioural changes in Nora Seed influenced by various experiences, which emphasises self-efficacy's role in personal growth. Marinaro (2013) investigates the impact of group songwriting and poetry writing on the self-efficacy of homeless adults. Results showed both methods improved self-efficacy, with songwriting showing a slightly stronger trend. Venegas (2022) examines how literature circles can improve reader self-efficacy among students with initially low self-efficacy. The study highlights the role of interactive and reflexive positioning in fostering a positive reader identity.

With regard to the theoretical project of post-traumatic fiction, post-traumatic studies have explored various dimensions of trauma and recovery through different narrative lenses. Zabihzadeh et al. (2017) employ psychoanalytic theory to reveal how Amy Waldman portrays not only the trauma but also the path to recovery and overcoming PTSD (Post-traumatic Stress Disorder) among the female characters in her novel *The Submission* (2012). Wood (2014) examines the long journey of healing from trauma in Zadie Smith's second novel, *The Autograph Man* (2002), and highlights how individuals often attempt to escape the psychological effects of traumatic events rather than confront them directly.

While previous studies have extensively analysed the thematic elements of Abdulrazak Gurnah's novels, including the representation of trauma, colonial encounters, and the impact of colonialism in *Afterlives*, and although there is a substantial body of research on the application of self-efficacy theory in various literary and artistic contexts, there is a lack of research that combines these two areas. Specifically, no studies have focused on how Gurnah's characters, particularly in *Afterlives*, develop self-efficacy amidst the backdrop of colonialism and its aftermath. This research aims to fill this gap by exploring the role of self-efficacy beliefs in Hamza's post-traumatic adaptation and how he employs self-regulation to manage post-traumatic recovery demands. An examination of the text through the lens of the social cognitive theory of post-traumatic recovery highlights the effectiveness of self-efficacy in aiding Hamza with later adaptational challenges after trauma.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study utilises a textual analysis approach to examine the representation of self-efficacy in Gurnah's *Afterlives*. The research involves close reading and thematic analysis of the novel, focusing on passages that depict Hamza's interactions, thoughts, and behaviours related to his self-efficacy. The analysis is guided by Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological and emotional states, as well as James Maddux's fifth source of self-efficacy: imaginal experiences. Data collection involves identifying relevant excerpts from the text that illustrate these sources of self-efficacy. The analysis then interprets these excerpts within the broader context of Hamza's psychological development, taking into account the novel's narrative structure and its key themes of trauma, colonialism, and personal resilience.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

PERCEIVED SELF-EFFICACY IN SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY

Within the framework of social cognitive theory, self-efficacy theory highlights the importance of perceived self-efficacy in overcoming traumatic situations. The term "self-efficacy" was first coined by the Canadian-American psychologist Professor Albert Bandura (1925-2021) in an effort to develop a comprehensive theory of behaviour change. Bandura (1982) defined the term as "how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations" (p. 122). The British psychologist Professor Ian Stuart-Hamilton defines the term "self-efficacy" as the **"**belief in one's own ability to succeed or to cope" (2007, p. 238), while the American psychologist Professor J.E. Roeckelein sees it as "the perception that one is capable of achieving one's goals" (2006, p. 57). Collectively, these definitions of "self-efficacy" provided by renowned psychologists such as Bandura, Stuart-Hamilton, and Roeckelein converge to emphasise the pivotal role of individuals' beliefs in their own capabilities to achieve desired outcomes. The theoretical framework incorporates Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological and emotional states, as well as James Maddux's concept of imaginal experiences. These sources provide a comprehensive understanding of how individuals develop self-efficacy in various contexts, including post-traumatic recovery. In the context of Gurnah's *Afterlives*, this study applies the concept of self-efficacy to analyse Hamza's psychological development and recovery from trauma. By focusing on specific passages in the novel, the research examines how Hamza's interactions, thoughts, and behaviours reflect the development of his self-efficacy beliefs. This involves a close analysis of the text to identify the instances where Hamza exhibits or develops self-efficacy through mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, physiological and emotional states, and imaginal experiences.

Benight and Bandura (2004) highlight that numerous people undergo traumatic experiences, exhibiting a range of post-traumatic reactions including "re-experiencing of the traumatic event in flashbacks, recurrent nightmares and intrusive memories, hypervigilant arousal, impaired concentration, depression, sleep disturbances, self-devaluation, avoidance of reminders of traumatic experiences, emotional detachment from others, and disengagement from aspects of life" (p. 1130). According to *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)*, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is identified when an individual is exposed to situations involving "actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence". This exposure can lead to associated intrusion symptoms, including "recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive distressing memories of the traumatic event(s)", "recurrent distressing dreams", "dissociative reactions (e.g., flashbacks) in which the individual feels or acts as if the traumatic event(s) were recurring" or "intense or prolonged psychological distress". Furthermore, the individual experiences extreme anxiety, horror, or helplessness due to the traumatic stressor, leading to significant negative changes in mood and reactivity. Regarding mood, these alterations may involve: "inability to remember an important aspect of the traumatic event(s)", "persistent and exaggerated negative beliefs or expectations about oneself", "distorted cognitions about the cause or consequences of the traumatic event(s) that lead the individual to blame himself/herself or others", "persistent negative emotional state (e.g., fear, horror, anger, guilt, or shame)", "markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities", "feelings of detachment or estrangement from others" or

"persistent inability to experience positive emotions". In terms of arousal and reactivity, the negative alterations may include "irritable behaviour and angry outbursts", "reckless or self-destructive behaviour", "hypervigilance", "exaggerated startle response", "problems with concentration", or "sleep disturbance". In response, individuals often try to avoid distressing reminders, memories, or feelings associated with the traumatic event (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, pp. 271–272). In this context, recovering from post-traumatic stress disorder necessitates a robust sense of perceived self-efficacy in the psychosocial aftermath of trauma. This perception influences not only threat interpretation but also individuals' coping effectiveness. It cognitively regulates stress and anxiety and aids in alleviating the persistent suffering and debilitating effects of traumatic situations.

Research identifies five mechanisms for the development of self-efficacy beliefs: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, physiological and affective states (Bandura, 1997) and imaginal experiences (Maddux & Gosselin, 2012). Mastery experiences, where individuals successfully conquer new challenges, stand as the primary and most influential source for developing self-efficacy beliefs. Bandura affirms that mastery experiences "provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed. Success builds a robust belief in one's personal efficacy. Failures undermine it" (Bandura, 1997, p. 80). This optimistic mindset is pivotal, as believing in one's capability is integral to tackling new tasks effectively. The second source of self-efficacy development is vicarious experiences, where individuals witness models like themselves succeed in similar activities through consistent effort. Bandura maintains that "efficacy appraisals are partly influenced by vicarious experiences mediated through modelled attainments" (1997, p. 86). This observation enhances individuals' perceptions of their own capabilities in mastering specific activities.

The third source of self-efficacy is verbal persuasion from influential people in our lives. Bandura suggests that "social persuasion serves as a further means of strengthening people's beliefs that they possess the capabilities to achieve what they seek" (1997, p. 101). Positive verbal feedback during challenging tasks maintains efficacy and fosters a belief in one's skills for success. Additionally, social support can enhance perceived self-efficacy by empowering individuals rather than just buffering them. In the context of traumatic experiences, such support can be valuable in boosting self-efficacy while facing environmental challenges (Cheung & Sun, 2000, pp. 413-415). Bandura's research on post-traumatic recovery underscores the enabling role of social support in enhancing perceived self-efficacy. He asserts that supporters not only model coping attitudes and skills but also "provide incentives for engagement in beneficial activities, and motivate others by showing that difficulties are surmountable by perseverant effort. The enabling function of social support can enhance self-efficacy" (Benight & Bandura, 2004, p. 1133). Bandura also includes people's emotional and physiological states and mood states as the fourth source of enhancing efficacy beliefs. He asserts that when assessing their capabilities, "people rely partly on somatic information conveyed by physiological and emotional states" (1997, p. 106). Their coping and functioning are significantly influenced by their mood states. Negative emotional arousal and self-doubt can lead to an expectation of vulnerability to dysfunction and diminishing beliefs in personal efficacy. In contrast, positive emotional and physiological states can be seen as energising facilitators of performance, fostering an inclination toward expecting success.

Psychologist James Maddux introduces a fifth source of self-efficacy development through imaginal experiences, suggesting that "individuals also influence their self-efficacy beliefs by imagining themselves behaving effectively or ineffectively in hypothetical situations" (Maddux & Gosselin, 2012, p. 203). By applying these concepts to Gurnah's *Afterlives*, this study elucidates

how Hamza's self-efficacy evolves and aids his post-traumatic recovery. The analysis reveals the substantial relationship between Hamza's belief in his own capabilities and his recovery from trauma.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

HAMZA'S TRAUMATIC PAST

Throughout *Afterlives*, Hamza is portrayed as a man haunted by his traumatic past, and his narrative is the most disturbing in the novel. His early memories are marked by a profound sense of misery and trauma, laying the foundation for the distressing journey ahead:

> Hamza had hardly lived properly among a family, only briefly as a child. Later, he lived in the back of a shop, and after that, for a long time, he lived a fugitive and itinerant life, so he did not really know what was done and what was not done, only what memory clung to from early childhood.
>
> (Gurnah, 2020, p. 141)

His misery starts when his father gives him to a merchant to settle his debts, and the merchant simply treats him as property. As a teenager, Hamza flees the merchant but fails to find his family. Later, he impulsively joins the German colonial forces, the schutztruppe, unaware of the tragic consequences; "he had volunteered on impulse, fleeing what had seemed intolerable, but he was ignorant of what he had now sold himself to" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 52). As one of the few literate recruits, Hamza is promptly identified as a potential signalman. However, he soon learns that he is to serve as the Oberleutnant's Batman, a military term denoting a personal servant.

Hamza endures abuse from both German officers and his fellow Askari trainees. When summoned by the Oberleutnant, the German commanding officer, Hamza is mocked for his perceived ignorance of mathematics. Allegedly, this "requires a mental discipline you people are not capable of" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 63). The Oberleutnant instructs Hamza in German and develops a homosexual attraction to him. Hamza is immediately ridiculed by his fellow Askari recruits, led by Komba, upon learning of his assignment as a Batman:

> 'You are a shoga,' he said, 'that's why he picked you. He wants someone sweet and pretty to massage his back and serve his dinner for him. It gets cold up there in the mountains, and he will need someone to keep him warm at night, just like a little wife. What are you doing here? Anyone can see you are too pretty to be a soldier.' 'These Germans, they like playing with pretty young men, especially ones with such nice manners as you have'.
>
> (Gurnah, 2020, p. 64)

This vicious mocking severely humiliates Hamza, but he has no choice but to accept his new circumstances. The derogatory remarks of the *Feldwebel*, a non-commissioned officer and a man of a lower social class, are equally hurtful. He tells Hamza, "'Whose toy are you? You are his pretty toy, little shoga plaything, aren't you?' he said, wagging a finger in a disdainful warning and once reaching out and squeezing Hamza's nipple" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 80). In such conditions, Hamza strives to maintain emotional distance through his coping mechanisms. He dreads these times when he is vulnerable to whatever humiliation the officer desires to inflict on him. He realises that "the officer was capable of violence. He had seen it in the light in his eyes" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 80). Moreover, the novel depicts the harrowing health conditions faced by Hamza and his fellow Askaris in their service. Despite their efforts, malaria persists, with many already carrying

infections from their pre-service days. Furthermore, inadequate protection during military manoeuvres leaves them susceptible to debilitating mosquito-borne diseases. Alongside malaria, many soldiers suffer from dysentery, venereal diseases, and agonising jigger infestations in their toes. Sporadic typhoid outbreaks pose a significant threat, necessitating strict containment measures.

In the harrowing final weeks of the conflict, growing tensions and deteriorating relationships within Hamza's group lead to the flight of underpaid luggage carriers, followed by mass desertion of askari, who are humiliatingly tasked with carrying goods. The Feldwebel takes out his wrath on his African subordinates, who are by now out of control and enraged due to the imminent defeat. In a particularly tense moment, he violently slices Hamza's thigh with his sabre, causing a life-threatening injury and massive blood loss. The only chance for Hamza's survival is to transport him to a German mission station with a clinic, where he remains in a semi-coma until he recovers. These horrific events profoundly impact Hamza's emotional and mental well-being, rendering him susceptible to various symptoms associated with post-traumatic reactions.

HAMZA'S MANIFESTATION OF POST-TRAUMATIC RESPONSES

After his traumatic experiences, Hamza struggles with pervasive feelings of helplessness and experiences a range of symptoms consistent with post-traumatic reactions, including depression, emotional detachment, and avoidance of traumatic reminders. In his attempts to alleviate the "lonely and anguished moods that sometimes overcame him" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 155), Hamza seeks to engage in activities and maintain a busy schedule:

> working in the warehouse during the day, talking with Khalifa or rather listening to him … it had given him time to rest and think and bring a little calm to his life. It had also made him live again through many regrets and sorrows, but those were with him in any case and were perhaps never to be reconciled.
>
> (Gurnah, 2020, p. 155)

Hamza's avoidance of traumatic reminders is also evident in the novel. This is manifested in his reluctance to discuss his wartime experiences or any situations that might trigger these memories.

Moments of melancholy, desolation and disengagement from various aspects of life permeate Hamza's narrative. This preference for solitude becomes apparent during an evening gathering at the baraza with Khalifa's friends immediately after the muadhin's call for isha prayer. Despite Hamza's physical discomfort from his lingering hip injury, he rises hurriedly to retrieve a tray of coffee. His actions display a sense of urgency, even though he struggles with pain. When encouraged to join the elders for coffee, he declines: "It was often a relief to get away from their chatter, to get away from everyone. No one had to talk even in a crowded mosque" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 150). This scene underscores Hamza's inclination toward self-seclusion—a behaviour that mirrors the palpable impact of his traumatic experiences.

Even when Hamza first sees Afiya, and they exchange a reassuring smile, he experiences an inexplicable wave of self-pity. He feels "sorry for himself… for the loveless years of his own life, and for the episodes of gentleness in it that had been so brief" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 150). This feeling underscores the impact of Hamza's post-traumatic responses on his interactions and emotions. His deep sense of self-devaluation permeates his perception and exacerbates his psychological distress. His encounter with Afiya exemplifies this, as he experiences a complex mixture of emotions and uncertainties:

> He had little to offer her: a job that was not secure, a home that was a room granted in patronage and which could just as easily be withdrawn if his attentions offended, a bed that was a busati on the floor. His body was damaged and abused. He brought neither past joy nor future promise, just a sorry tale of abjection to add to hers when she might have looked forward to some relief from her own.
>
> (Gurnah, 2020, p. 164)

This sense of self-devaluation is further underscored by his haunting belief that his trauma is also the source of his son's torment. When his son, Ilyas, suffers from whispering malaise, Hamza believes that "it was his trauma which was the source of what was tormenting his son, an aftermath of something he had done during the war… it was something in his past which generated the evil air" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 226).

Hamza exhibits other obvious post-traumatic symptoms, such as re-experiencing his traumatic past in flashbacks. He frequently recalls "how the officer's hangovers had tormented him after the heavy-drinking sessions the Germans had indulged in" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 156). In addition, he experiences frequent night awakenings drenched in sweat, shivering, and disruptive sleep patterns. These disturbances are intensified by recurrent nightmares:

> He woke up one night in utter darkness and realised he was the one who was sobbing in his nightmare. The ground was covered in blood, sucking at his feet, and his body was drenched in it. Limbs and broken torsos were pressed against him, and voices were screaming and shouting at a demented and terrified pitch. He stilled his sobbing but could not stop the shaking of his limbs or wipe away his tears.
>
> (Gurnah, 2020, p. 111)

These distressing night-time episodes offer evident insights into how Hamza's traumatic history continues to affect his psychological well-being and sleep quality. Hamza conveys the distressing nature of his nightmares and their impact on him. In his own words, he states:

> 'I was often troubled by nightmares,' he said. 'Animals consuming me while I lay prone, unable to move. It did not feel like danger somehow, more like defeat, like torture. Now, when the nightmares come, they terrify me. Like what is coming at me will crush me with great pain, will make me suffer torments, and I will drown in my own blood. I can feel it filling my throat.
>
> (Gurnah, 2020, p. 197)

Furthermore, Hamza's hypervigilant arousal is apparent in his continuous visual monitoring of individuals in various situations, which reflects his heightened vigilance and attentiveness. On one occasion, as Hamza and the other recruits assemble for inspection, he scrutinises the building's details, including the grey tin roof, raised wooden deck, and the offices and stores behind closed doors. An officer emerges from the central office, and the ombasha announces the recruits were ready for inspection. Hamza perceives the officer's selection of him with keen eyes; "he had seen that even before the officer moved from the doorway" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 55). Moreover, when the Feldwebel refers to Hamza as a toy soldier and subjects him to derogatory remarks and physical abuse, he discerns this animosity in the gleam of the Feldwebel's eyes, which "glistened involuntarily, and in the tightening of the skin at his temple, as if he were suppressing a burning urge" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 80).

Hamza's cognitive function shows notable impairment as well, particularly in his struggles to concentrate while narrating his traumatic past. This indicates the overwhelming impact of post-traumatic responses on his cognitive attentiveness. Addressing his recurrent lapses in memory, Hamza articulates, "I thought I remembered something like that, but I am not sure. My memory is so confused" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 117). When attempting to revisit his hometown, Hamza becomes

disoriented and struggles to recognise familiar places from his past. The town's transformations and his traumatic experiences contribute to his memory lapses and the town's unfamiliarity, as Gurnah suggests, "Perhaps he had lost part of his memory along the way, overwhelmed by the cruelties he had lived through in the meantime" (2020, p. 135). Even when people appear to recognise him, Hamza believes they must be mistaken, and he remains emotionally detached from the changes in the town and the people he meets.

Ultimately, Hamza's post-traumatic reactions unmistakably illustrate the emphatic impact of his traumatic past on his psychological well-being. Meanwhile, symptoms of depression, emotional detachment, and avoidance become manifest as he confronts various challenges. His distressing descriptions of nightmares and his hypervigilance offer a glimpse into the depth of his trauma, and his self-devaluation further compounds his psychological distress, thereby highlighting the complexity of his recovery journey. Moreover, Hamza's inclination towards solitude signifies a deliberate withdrawal from the external world, which underlines the deep impact of his past experiences. The next section will discuss the role of Hamza's perceived self-efficacy in his post-traumatic recovery, shedding light on his internal resources, coping mechanisms and potential for resilience in the face of his traumatic past.

HAMZA'S POST-TRAUMATIC HEALING THROUGH PERCEIVED SELF-EFFICACY

Hamza's narrative illustrates the transformative power of perceived self-efficacy in post-traumatic recovery and aligns with Bandura's insights into self-efficacy development. His route to self-efficacy begins during his military service, an experience marked by humiliation and brutality. Yet, it is within these adversities that Hamza's self-efficacy takes root. In fact, it could be argued that Hamza's life-altering tale is in accordance with the principles of Islam that advocate for self-efficacy. His experiences reflect a profound belief in his capabilities and a sense of responsibility for his actions. Much like the teachings of Islam, Hamza's narrative underscores the importance of seeking knowledge, honing skills, and persevering through challenges. Despite the adversities he faces, Hamza puts in the effort and takes the initiative, mirroring the Islamic emphasis on individual agency. This balanced approach empowers Hamza to undertake meaningful action and continually strive for personal and spiritual growth.

Mastery experiences enable Hamza to navigate adversity with newfound confidence. Even in the harsh environment of the schutztruppe, "unexpectedly, he began to feel pride at being part of the group, not rejected and mocked as he had feared… to feel his body becoming stronger and responding skilfully to commands" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 60). Hamza's encounters with The Oberleutnant, teaching him German, further echo Bandura's view on the role of mastery experiences in shaping self-efficacy. The officer "called Hamza in and taught him German, probably to amuse himself at first but also because Hamza proved to be such a willing learner" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 74). This adaptive prowess reinforces Hamza's belief in his own capabilities. Moreover, his swift progress in language acquisition further conforms to Bandura's argument that success fosters a firm belief in personal efficacy. The Oberleutnant's directive for Hamza to copy lines in German from a book of field instructions serves the dual purpose of language practice and familiarising him with German writing: "It was a game for the officer, and it pleased him that Hamza was so responsive and quick" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 75). As Hamza advances in German proficiency, he becomes more receptive to the officer's instructions. The officer, in an encouraging gesture, gifts Hamza a copy of Schiller's "Musen-Almanach für das Jahr 1798" (Muses Almanac for the Year 1798) to enhance Hamza's German skills. The officer's intention to introduce Hamza

to advanced texts like Schiller underscores his recognition of Hamza's abilities. It is essential here to recognise the prevailing power dynamics in this scene; the officer is exerting control over Hamza, thereby adding complexity to his experiences. Nonetheless, Hamza's compliance with the officer's directives arises from the necessity to adapt to his circumstances.

Additionally, Hamza's rapid progress in carpentry signals a significant mastery experience denoting his evolving self-efficacy beliefs. His clear enthusiasm for work reveals a growing confidence in his capabilities, recalling Bandura's assertion that success in confronting new challenges fosters a strong belief in personal efficacy. Gurnah captures this sentiment by noting, "The thought of his new occupation of carpentry filled Hamza with more enthusiasm than he could remember for any other work he had done" (2020, p. 157). Hamza's recent accomplishments, particularly evident in "his growing skills as a carpenter and his newfound fame as a reader of German" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 176), stand as authentic evidence of his capacity to take on and excel in challenges. This, in turn, significantly shapes his perception of his competence and effectiveness. Moreover, Hamza's past training contributes to the enhancement of his self-efficacy beliefs. His ability to diligently care for his child's health, including vaccinations, reflects confidence in handling new challenges. As Gurnah illuminates, "Child deaths were not uncommon, but many of the illnesses that took them away were avoidable, as he knew from his time in the schutztruppe, which took good care of the health of the askari" (2020, 210-211). Thus, Hamza's past experience has equipped him with the skills needed for the responsibility of parenthood and built a robust belief in his personal efficacy.

Bandura's theory suggests that individuals' self-efficacy can be influenced by observing others succeed through consistent effort, especially if those individuals are considered role models. In the case of Hamza, his interaction with Mzee Sulemani exemplifies this concept. Hamza's observation of others' successes significantly contributes to the development of his self-efficacy beliefs. When offered a job opportunity in the workshop by Nassor Biashara, Hamza's keen interest in woodwork parallels Bandura's notion of vicarious experiences, where an individual displays an inclination towards a particular skill and observes how another person handles it and then succeeds in it. At a crucial turning point, Hamza becomes deeply involved in carpentry under the mentorship of Mzee Sulemani, whose appreciation of Hamza grows upon discovering that he can read in German, and Hamza happily translates German sentences for him as "a small repayment for the gift of the carpentry skills he was learning from him" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 170). Furthermore, Hamza's interaction with the German officer who teaches him German also exemplifies another facet of vicarious experiences. The officer's initial amusement turns into genuine delight as he witnesses Hamza's progress. This rapid progress in language acquisition highlights Hamza's adaptability and enhances his perceptions of his own ability to master new activities. Overall, these vicarious experiences contribute to Hamza's growing belief in his own capabilities as he actively seeks out skilled models.

Positive verbal feedback significantly shapes Hamza's self-efficacy and guides his transformative journey through verbal persuasion and social support. Bandura asserts that positive verbal feedback boosts a sense of efficacy and reinforces the individual's belief in his capacities following adversity. This assertion finds a precise reflection in Hamza's life, in which influential individuals offer him verbal support. The pastor's encouragement and positive verbal feedback after Feldwebel's assault serve as a powerful counterbalance to Hamza's negative self-perception. His statement, "I have watched you recover your health with the stoic patience of someone with intelligence and faith" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 119), not only provides evidence of Hamza's resilience but also offers profound social support that contradicts any negative self-perception. In addition,

Nasser Biashara's words, "Mzee Sulemani is pleased with your work… I just knew it. I knew you would be good at this. He says you have manners, which is a big word for him" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 158), provide positive verbal feedback that reinforces Hamza's sense of self-worth by praising not only his work but also his manners. As Hamza internalises these affirmations, his character evolves towards a more empowered self-concept. However, when confronted with memories of the Feldwebel's mistreatment, a corrosive impact on Hamza's perceived efficacy becomes evident. In response, Afiya's deliberate effort to counterbalance this erosion emerges through her assertion: "You are too good for this world, my one and only. Don't be ashamed, hate him, wish ill on him, spit on him" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 181). These scenes illustrate the potential power of social support and positive verbal persuasion in mitigating the detrimental consequences of traumatic events. All these instances exemplify the transformative influence of such support mechanisms on Hamza's self-perception and perceived self-efficacy.

Bandura highlights the impact of emotional and physiological states on efficacy beliefs. Despite the challenges in the schutztruppe, Hamza's adaptability in maintaining his efficacy reveals the crucial role of these states in shaping beliefs about one's capabilities. In such a bleak environment, Hamza faces negative emotions and self-doubt due to the harsh treatment and verbal abuse he endured. However, he embarks on a transformative journey when he discovers satisfaction and pride in his growing strength and skills and manages to interpret his emotional and physiological states as performance facilitators. This transformative shift is manifest in the following excerpt: "Despite the harsh regime, Hamza found unexpected satisfaction in his own growing strength and skills... Unexpectedly, he began to feel pride at being part of the group, not rejected and mocked as he had feared" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 60). This change indicates Hamza's positive interpretation of his emotional and physiological states as indicators of his growing competence. As time progresses, he comes to the realisation that succumbing to despair is not an option. Instead, he actively engages in drills to combat feelings of unworthiness: "he threw himself into the drill in an attempt to shake off the sense of unworthiness his intimate servitude to the officer made him feel" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 73). Additionally, he diligently follows orders under challenging circumstances, striving to carry out "whatever orders his officer found it possible to give under their very reduced circumstances" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 89). Hamza's resilience reflects his acute awareness of the detrimental impact of stress reactions on self-efficacy. Even amid harsh treatment, he steadfastly maintains his emotional and physiological states.

Hamza's journey further illustrates his determination to survive and adapt to new environments. His ability to visualise overcoming challenges is evident in his ongoing quest to rebuild his life despite trauma and loss. A notable instance of this is his encounter with the merchant Nassor Biashara, who illustrates how self-efficacy is influenced by imaginal experiences. Demonstrating an elevated sense of self-efficacy, Hamza articulates his aspiration to find work while simultaneously highlighting his competencies, such as his strong enthusiasm for learning and his ability to read and write. When the merchant enquires about Hamza's educational background and proficiency in bookkeeping, Hamza's response, "I can learn" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 125), aligns with Maddux's notion that visualising oneself as capable bolsters self-efficacy. This alignment is further reinforced by the subsequent employment offer, as the merchant's decision to hire Hamza is based on an intuitive recognition of potential— a reminder of Maddux's emphasis on the power of imaginal experiences. While awaiting his job assignment, Hamza experiences physical discomfort from his lingering hip injury, a visible reminder of his traumatic past. His internal dialogue reveals a resolute determination to manage this pain to avoid a descent into invalidity: "He would just have to manage the pain better. The alternative was to allow it to

overwhelm him and turn him into an invalid, as the war had done to so many. That did not bear thinking about" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 129). This resolve is a testament to Hamza's resilience, acquired over time— a reaction akin to Maddux's assertion that self-efficacy beliefs are bolstered when individuals perceive themselves as functioning effectively despite adversities. In essence, Hamza's journey, marked by resilience and a steadfast determination to overcome adversity, exemplifies the profound impact of perceived self-efficacy on post-traumatic healing. Examined through the lenses of Albert Bandura's and James Maddux's theories, Hamza's evolving self-beliefs, shaped by mastery experiences, vicarious learning, positive verbal feedback, adaptive emotional responses, and imaginal experiences, call attention to the transformative potential of perceived self-efficacy in the face of trauma and hardship.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed at reading Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Afterlives* (2020) as a part of the larger theoretical project of post-traumatic fiction. In reflecting upon Hamza's tale, there was compelling evidence in support of the transformative power of perceived self-efficacy in the face of adversity. His narrative exemplified the various facets of self-efficacy development outlined by Albert Bandura and James Maddux. Hamza's evolution from a young, traumatised soldier grappling with fear and brutality to a skilled carpenter and dedicated father demonstrated the profound impact of these mechanisms, such as mastery experiences, vicarious learning, positive verbal feedback, adaptive emotional responses, and imaginal experiences in shaping his beliefs about his own capabilities. His resilience in the face of overwhelming personal challenges unveiled a significant correlation between self-efficacy and trauma recovery. This shed light on the substantial influence of Hamza's perceived ability to navigate adversity and significantly shape his journey of post-traumatic healing.

In the broader context of literature and psychology, Hamza's tale drew attention to the importance of understanding self-efficacy's role in post-traumatic adaptation and recovery. The narrative invited consideration of the potential applications of Bandura's theory in real-life situations, particularly in post-traumatic contexts. The study's insights underscored the value of fostering self-efficacy in contemporary society, where individuals continue to face various forms of trauma. By highlighting Hamza's journey, the research emphasised that nurturing a belief in one's capabilities can lead to significant psychological resilience and recovery, not only for characters in fictional stories but also for individuals navigating their unique paths of recovery in today's real world. Hamza's story left us with a poignant reminder that, even in the face of unimaginable hardship, the belief in one's own capabilities can be a guiding light towards healing and transformation.

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