

HUMAN RIGHTS IN A FAMILY SETTING JODI PICOULT'S *MY SISTER'S KEEPER*

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Abstract: This research aims to explain the human rights contained in *My Sister's Keeper* and the sociological factors of cultural, economic, and educational relations. The problem studied is how human rights in the family environment are reflected in the novel *My Sister's Keeper*, which is then analyzed using a qualitative descriptive method with a sociological approach. The results of the analysis obtained show that the whole highlights the struggles faced by the Fitzgerald family resulting in neglect of the needs of others. This neglect of the needs of others is the critical point of tension and conflict in family dynamics throughout the story, as well as the strong dedication of each family member in carrying out their respective roles as outlined in the Murdock framework. The central theme of this paper revolves around the strong dedication of each family member to their respective roles and explores their characters and relationships within the context of this framework.

Keywords: *Human rights, Sociological, My Sister's Keeper, Literature*

INTRODUCTION

Human rights are fundamental rights inherent in every human being since birth. Therefore, human rights must be upheld and recognized by all people (Lolowang, 2023); (Riyanti et al., 2023). But in reality, the application of human rights is still violated in social life, for example in the health sector. Therefore, in this study, the researcher investigated the implementation of human rights in Jodi Picoult's *My Sister's Keeper*. As social beings, humans depend on other people, both within the family and in society. Humans are born with fundamental rights that are inherent in every person, that is what is called Human Rights. Human rights are literally the rights that one has simply because one is a human being (Cullet, 2023).

Among the topics that are significant in literature are those related to family and society (Maru, 2014). Various authors, including Jodi Picoult in her book *My Sister's*

Keeper, have demonstrated the significance of this. In this well-known work of fiction, she explores what it really means to be a decent mom, sister, and person in general. Readers may ponder the moral ramifications of trying to save their child's life at all costs, even if doing so means violating someone else's rights. The family in this book must decide whether to listen to their hearts or let others guide them. With grace, intelligence, and understanding throughout a tale of sadness, humour, and love, Picoult handles a real-life, sensitive subject in *My Sister's Keeper*.

A solid illustration of how a conflict of interest that led to unfavorable outcomes may have been avoided is found in *My Sister's Keeper*. One of the numerous factors to take into account before genetic selection of "savior siblings" becomes commonplace is conflicts of interest. There are some situations where using the term "savior siblings" is appropriate, like the Nash family.

Though the psychosocial development has been used as a theoretical framework to analyze Picoult's book in the past, there is still a vacuum in our knowledge of the role of family and society, which is mostly about familial disputes. To bridge the previously mentioned gap, this article analyzes *My Sister's Keeper* and illustrates the role of families in society. The functionalists agree that families are a significant social institution that are essential to the survival of societies.

Through the descriptions of her fictional characters, Picoult hopes to illustrate morals for us. She also hopes to draw readers' attention by displaying the characters' emotional responses in her work. By reading a novel, readers can experience the feelings that are described in it, and they can then start to imagine themselves as they are in the book.

"My sister's keeper" is one of Picoult's poignant new phenomena in family conflict novels. This book explores what it takes to be a decent mom, sister, and overall human being. The novel *My Sisters' Keeper* was also adapted into a film by director Nick Cassavetes in 2009. Because a novel typically has a lot more expressions and effectively conveys the information than a film does, the researcher prefers to analyse the novel rather than the film.

In fact, a variety of academic fields have produced theoretical literature on families. On what exactly the concept of family is, there is, however, little agreement among these literature. It has been noted that sociological treatises on families

typically start out by providing a fundamental explanation of what a family is. These definitions use a wide range of technical terms that emphasise various conceptual aspects and convey various degrees of specificity or abstraction.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the researcher used qualitative research methods. Primary and secondary data sources are the two categories of data sources that the researcher used in this investigation. Jodi Picoult's 2004 novel *My Sister's Keeper* serves as the main source of information. Additional sources relevant to this research, such books, websites, and other sources that bolster it, are known as secondary data sources. The technique used to analyze the data is descriptive qualitative analysis. In analyzing the data, the researcher employed a textual analysis technique for data analysis. Following data collection, textual analysis was used by the researcher to examine the data. In order to address the study problems, the researcher employed two theories: Social and Familial Theory and Sociological George Murdock Theory. Next, Anna's development was examined using George Murdock's attachment theory, with a particular focus on the relationship between Anna and her family.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Child Right for the physical Body

God has given us a wonderful gift in the form of children. A kid is defined as any anyone under the age of eighteen (18) under the Convention on the Rights of the kid, unless the child's applicable legislation states otherwise. A system of organ procurement can lead to the undesirable consequence of employing minors as organ providers. There are also worries over the possible breach of article 6 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which prohibits utilizing children's bodies to provide organs for transplantation.

The usage of the terms "own" and "ownership" to refer to both complete property rights and certain non-tradable, inalienable rights is described by Bjorkman & Hansson (2006); Suoth et al., (2023), While it is common for someone to assert that she owns her body, she seldom asserts that she owns her right to vote or her

freedom of expression. Generally speaking, ownership is a prerequisite for doing business, but ownership actually refers to the quantity of biological material that may be owned in order to establish various types of ownership relations appropriate for different ownership objects. the essentials of who owns a person's own body and other rights associated with it.

In the Journal of Medical Ethics (2006), Bjorkman and Hansson list five body ownership concepts that may be used to construct packages of rights for different types of biological material.

According to Murdock's Theories

Murdock thought that in order to properly analyse society and its cultures, a systematic comparative and cross-cultural approach was necessary. Data from several societies are gathered in a cross-cultural method to study human behaviour. Before Murdock's significant contributions, many anthropologists relied on data from particular societies to draw broad conclusions about cultural change.

Murdock spent years researching numerous communities, from those of animals and hunters to those of people and businesses, and he was a representative of all sociological complexity levels. He examined 18 distinct societies from throughout the world and presented his findings in his book *Our Primitive Contemporaries*. Murdock compares society to large families that serve important purposes. He said that all societies must perform the four major roles of sexual control, reproduction, economy, and education in order to exist; in other words, strong families enable communities to thrive.

Murdock (1949) made the supposition that marriage and family are distinct. Marriage actually denotes a number of customs that concentrate around the relationship between a sexually involved adult couple. It dictates how this affiliation is initiated and terminated, the "normative behaviour" and shared obligations within it, as well as the accepted restrictions placed on its members (Murdock, 1949, p. 1). On the other hand, the idea of a family seems nebulous when utilised in isolation. It is frequently used by social scientists to refer to a variety of social clusters that, despite functional similarities, have significant points of difference.

The Concept of Family in My Sister's Keeper

Considering it is the earliest and most durable environment in which a person grows up, family, a social institution, is said to be the most valuable item for an individual (Whyte, 1987). Murdock (1949) conducted research on the foundations and functions of families, which resulted in the creation of a universal framework that addresses aspects of family life such as sexual interactions, reproduction, education, and financial status. Murdock (1949) defined a family as two people, generally of the opposite sex, who engage in regular sexual activity with the intention of reproducing, as well as the children that the parents are responsible for raising and nurturing, often with similar moral and ethical standards.

In this section, we'll examine the Fitzgerald family's dynamics in further detail and identify a number of potential problems. These include the bond between the mother and father, Brian and Sara, Jesse, Kate, and Anna, as well as the interaction between parents and their kids. The children's socialisation with the outside world as well as the family dynamics and moral questions surrounding Kate's condition, which seems to be a never-ending problem, will also be revealed.

Based on the novel *My Sister's Keeper's* sociological analysis. The investigator comes to the conclusion that the author based this innovative tale on the social climate in America at the time. She depicts the various facets of American society at the period, including the social, political, economic, scientific, and technological aspects as well as the cultural and religious. The author adeptly depicts the temporal and spatial context from the close of the twentieth century to the start of the twenty-first.

Anna's Relationship with Her Family

Anna is the central and intricately portrayed character in the story. Her intense longing to have her own identity, separate from Kate, reflects how much her parents shaped her sense of purpose, albeit not in a positive way. Anna yearns to be both Kate's sister and her own person simultaneously, but she's aware that this is impossible because her sole purpose in life is to ensure Kate's survival.

As previously stated, at the age of two, Kate received a diagnosis of acute promyelocytic leukemia. In response, the Fitzgeralds decided to intentionally choose to have Anna born so that they might use her as an allogenic donor. Every aspect of Anna's existence revolves around Kate. A functioning family or community may be viewed from the functionalist perspective as a system in which its members are interrelated (Turner, 2017). In Anna's unique situation, her very existence is profoundly intertwined with Kate, and Kate's ability to survive is contingent upon Anna's presence.

Anna's mother, Sarah, who Anna describes as exceptionally beautiful, exhibits obsessive behaviors like compulsive shopping. In contrast, her brother Jesse displays self-destructive tendencies, reflecting their struggle to cope with the inevitable reality of Kate's impending death. On the other hand, her father, Brian, appears to have a better grasp of the situation and, unlike Sarah, views people as individuals rather than solely in relation to Kate. Within the framework of functionalism theory, mental states play a crucial role (Turner, 2002). The disparities in Sarah and Brian's mental states result in distinct ways of thinking and behaving.

The situation becomes even more distressing when Anna's mother says, "we loved you even more" (Picoult, 2004, p. 8), implying that Anna was brought into existence solely to sustain her sister's life. In line with Polger's theory (2008), the functionality of the brain can be viewed in terms of both its composition and its function. In Kate's case, it's a matter of both aspects. She is comprised of all the medical necessities and transplantable organs required to combat leukemia, and her function is to save a human life. This is what sets Anna apart and makes her exceptionally unique, to the extent that her parents may struggle to see her as anything beyond her distinctive physical attributes.

Kate and Anna's Relationship

Anna is more than simply a sister to Kate; she is also a confidante and friend. Since Kate feels that the Fitzgeralds are only holding on to their family name, she values friendship more than family. When Kate states, "If you no longer want to be my sister, then that's one thing," she is expressing her opinion. However, it seems unlikely that I could tolerate losing you as a friend (Picoult, 2004, p. 67). This

demonstrates how Kate and Anna have a special affinity that goes beyond their conventional sister roles.

Sara's Relationship with Her Family

Sara, a mother driven by her maternal instinct to protect her child, finds herself grappling with the situation and struggling to handle it effectively. Unfortunately, her actions often leave little room for Anna to make her own decisions. At one point, when Anna is asked to undergo a painful bone marrow extraction to save her sister, Sara initially tells her that she doesn't have to do it if she doesn't want to. However, she then guilt-trips Anna by emphasizing how the entire family is relying on her. Under such emotional pressure, it becomes challenging for a minor to think for herself, given the physical and mental toll involved.

For Sara, her top priority is to save Kate and ensure that Anna goes through the hardship, even if it means one child struggling to save the other. This perspective is consistent with the findings of Ridwan and Sahri (2020), who also studied Sara's attitude towards Kate and Anna. Their analysis, like ours, suggests that Sara's overprotectiveness has led to numerous issues within the family. While her actions may have initially helped Kate survive, they have come at the expense of neglecting Anna's needs and well-being.

It's evident that Anna is greatly neglected by her parents, as they don't even consider her input or what she believes is in her best interest. Sara seems to hold the belief that since Anna was brought into the world with the sole purpose of saving Kate, she is obligated to fulfill that role without question. Anna expresses her frustration at this lack of agency when she says, "A major decision about me is being made, and no one's bothered to ask the one person who most deserves it to speak her opinion" (Picoult, 2004, p. 21). This highlights the injustice of Anna's situation, where her own wishes and autonomy are largely disregarded in favor of her parents' agenda to save her sister.

Sara and Brian's Relationship

Sara and Brian's marriage is far from perfect, as they hold contrasting viewpoints and focus on different aspects of their family dynamics. Brian is more

attuned to Anna's needs and recognizes the toll that Kate's illness takes on her. He pays attention to the emotional and psychological impact on Anna. In contrast, Sara's primary and almost exclusive concern is centered around saving Kate's life. This divergence in their priorities and perspectives can create tension within their marriage, as they grapple with the complex and emotionally charged situation involving their daughters.

Brian, characterized by his pragmatic and realistic approach, displays genuine fatherly emotions in a poignant scene where he breaks into tears while lying in bed with Sara. Sara, on the other hand, is resolute in her determination to do whatever it takes to prevent Kate from dying. Anna's lawsuit serves as a turning point that sheds light on the complexities within Brian and Sara's marriage.

Every time, Brian and Sara struggle to decide what is actually best for Kate and to make the correct choices (Fanthiyah, 2013). There are overt signs of Sara and Brian's tense relationship even from the beginning of Anna's pregnancy. Sara's remark that having sex is more repulsive than having a kid in a petri dish highlights how unstable their relationship is and how different their perspectives are on the family's situation.

Jesse's Relationship with His Family

Jesse's character exhibits a deeper understanding of Anna's predicament, given that he was the first child and the initial donor candidate. However, when Sara and Brian discovered that Jesse wasn't a match, their attention gradually shifted away from him. This shift left Jesse feeling neglected by his parents and burdened with a sense of worthlessness for being unable to save his sister's life, as observed by Sidauruk (2018). Overwhelmed and helpless, Jesse turned to destructive and uncontrollable actions such as arson as a means of coping with the pain and stress. In this context, fire serves as a symbol of Kate's cancer and reflects Jesse's emotional turmoil towards it.

Brian's statement, "Maybe it's because Jesse isn't all that different from me, choosing fire as his medium, needing to know that he could command at least one uncontrollable thing" (Picoult, 2004, p. 397), highlights the parallel between Jesse's

choice of arson and Brian's own quest for control. Both seek solace in commanding something in their lives, even if it's a destructive force like fire, amidst the overwhelming sense of helplessness brought about by Kate's illness.

Murdock's family framework

Sociology indeed focuses on the study of human relationships and interactions within societies, including the dynamics within families (Blau & Meyer, 1971). Murdock (1949) contributed to this field by proposing a framework for understanding social groups, including families, in which each member is assigned specific roles. However, his framework is relatively rigid and does not accommodate modern societal norms and advancements in reproductive technology.

Murdock's framework posits that a family consists of two adults who engage in regular sexual relations for the purpose of reproduction. In contrast, the Fitzgeralds diverged from this traditional perspective. Their unique situation involved considering alternative options, such as using reproductive technology to conceive Anna, which challenges the conventional definition of family outlined in Murdock's framework. This highlights how evolving societal norms and technological advancements can reshape the traditional understanding of family structures and roles within them.

Issues with Sexual Relations and Reproduction

Sexual control is the primary and most significant role that a family or society plays, according to Murdock (2023). Since most countries have certain laws, customs, and cultural beliefs about this matter, particular sexual activities may not be accepted in other societies. Murdock holds that modern, technologically-based means of reproduction are inappropriate and that sexual relationships and reproduction should be more natural or restricted.

The means of reproduction and the motivations for producing humans in this manner need to be redefined, particularly when it comes to developing savior babies, as the process of reproduction may continue to evolve and alter as a result of technology breakthroughs. This is in opposition to Murdock's (1949) conventional theory of human creation. Scientifically made children may experience physiological problems and unsettling ideas as they grow up. One such child is Anna, who claims

that her parents only want her for this purpose and that she would not be alive otherwise. This is implied by the remark from Anna that appears in the book's opening pages; "See, unlike the rest of the free world, I didn't get here by accident. And if your parents have you for a reason than that reason better exist. Because once it's gone, so are you" (Picoult, 2004, p. 8). From her parents' point of view, Anna believes that her only purpose in life is to be Kate's donor. Although it's unclear how long she will have to supply body parts, she feels that Brian and Sara wouldn't need her if something were to happen to Kate. Since Kate would no longer be able to live and survive on her own, Anna claims that this knowledge has had a profound impact on her brief existence and that Kate's passing would be among the best things to have happened to her. When it comes to scientifically producing a savior baby, ethics plays a big part. With the increased usage of this new technology, several moral and ethical questions have emerged that parents need to take into account.

Economic Issues

Economics becomes a significant issue for the Fitzgeralds as they grapple with the financial burden of Kate's medical treatment. When Sara discovers Kate's relapse and the need for a bone marrow transplant, their family insurance company refuses to cover the procedure, compounding their struggles. To cover the costs, Brian's colleagues at the fire station come together to raise the necessary funds for the transplant. This situation highlights the challenge of providing for the family's medical needs, even for a father who, according to traditional notions outlined by Murdock (1949), is expected to be the provider.

However, when the transplant does take place, it becomes apparent that emotional issues are more prevalent than financial problems. Sara, in her dedication to be by Kate's side during this critical time, inadvertently neglects Anna, who, at the age of seven, desperately needs her mother's love and attention.

Furthermore, a conflict arises when Sara's sister, Suzanne, offers to pay for Kate's treatment. While Sara is willing to accept this financial help, it causes tension between her and Brian. According to Murdock's traditional model (1949), the father is expected to be the primary provider for the family. This shift in financial

responsibility challenges Brian's sense of masculinity and his role as the family's provider. He reacts unfavorably to Suzzanne's offer and decides to withdraw money from Kate's college fund, believing that she may not live long enough to attend college. This impulsive decision raises questions about Brian's character as a father and provider within the family dynamic.

Socialization/Education

Being the donor in a family, as in Anna's case, is a profoundly challenging and emotionally taxing experience. It often means sacrificing one's own desires, dreams, and even a sense of normalcy for the sake of a family member's health and well-being. Anna's life revolved around Kate's health and survival, leaving her with little opportunity to engage in typical teenage activities and aspirations.

Education and socialization become exceptionally difficult for a donor like Anna (Foley, 1990; Heath, 1983; LaDousa, 2005). Anna's life is marked by constant medical procedures and the ever-present responsibility of supporting her sister. Even simple things like leaving a friend's birthday party to accompany Kate to the hospital highlight the extent to which Anna's life is entwined with her sister's well-being.

Assigning Roles to Family Members

The prospect of Kate's death, as perceived by both Anna and Kate herself, represents a complex and conflicting emotion. While it might liberate Anna from her role as a donor and allow her to pursue her own desires, it is a sobering reminder of the gravity of Kate's condition.

The differential treatment of Kate within the family dynamics is also evident. While Kate strives to be treated like a normal child without cancer, she is still the primary focus of her parents' attention. This imbalance inevitably takes a toll on Anna and Jesse, leading to self-destructive behaviors and emotional struggles for both of them.

The family's focus on Kate's illness also impacts the siblings' experiences during holidays and celebrations. Anna's desire for a "normal" family and her runaway attempt on Christmas illustrate her longing to find a place where she can truly fit in

and be valued for who she is, including those related to sexual norms and reproduction. Anna and her siblings are raised with a set of values and cultural norms that differ significantly from what they encounter in the broader society and learn in school (Magalhães & Carvalho, 2010).

Internal Conflicts

Anna's complex feelings toward Kate are indeed central to the narrative, as she grapples with conflicting emotions. Despite expressing hatred toward Kate, Anna loves her deeply and is driven by the desire to save her life. However, she also longs to be recognized as an individual, worthy of love and attention in her own right, separate from her role as Kate's donor.

Anna's yearning for attention and recognition is evident throughout the story. Even in hypothetical scenarios like thinking about their own deaths, she feels a twinge of jealousy at the thought of more people attending Kate's funeral (Mahastuti, 2014). Her lawsuit can be seen as a desperate and internal reaction to her need for love and attention from her parents. While Sara begins to give her more attention after the lawsuit, Anna remains committed to pursuing her own rights and interests.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This research provides a clear overview of the psychoanalytic reading of "My Sister's Keeper" by Jodi Lynn Picoult, using Murdock's universal framework of family functions. The paper delves into a comprehensive analysis of the novel, exploring the characters and their relationships within the context of this framework. It highlights the struggles faced by the Fitzgerald family throughout the story. The central theme of the paper seems to revolve around how each family member's strong dedication to fulfilling their respective roles, as outlined in Murdock's framework, results in the neglect of others' needs. This neglect of others' needs becomes a critical point of tension and conflict within the family dynamic. Overall, your summary effectively encapsulates the main points and findings of the psychoanalytic reading, providing a concise understanding of the analysis conducted in the research.

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