



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section(s): *Literature, Linguistics & Criticism***Psychological adaptation of the disabled in Sharon Draper's *Out of My Mind* and Raquel Palacio's *Wonder*: A comparative post-traumatic study**Majed Alenezi¹, Ayman Elhalafawy², Samir Khalifa³, Sara Ismail⁴, Obaid Alwethairi⁵, Faiz Algobaei*⁶, Abeer A. Alrefai⁷¹Department of Languages and Translation, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Northern Border University, Arar, Saudi Arabia²⁻⁴⁻⁷Department of English Language and Literature at Faculty of Arts, Kafrelsheikh University, Egypt⁶Sciences and General Studies Department, Al-Fayha Private College, Jubail, Saudi Arabia³⁻⁵Medical Sciences and Preparatory Year Department, North Private College of Nursing, Arar, Saudi Arabia*Correspondence: faiz.a@fayha.edu.sa**ABSTRACT**

Referring to a post-traumatic study, the paper deals with the psychological adaptation of children with disabilities in Sharon Draper's *Out of My Mind* (2010) and Raquel Palacio's *Wonder* (2012). Post-Traumatic challenges the idea of idealism and tries to transform the negative perception of the idea of disability. Therefore, the study aims to examine the psychological adaptation of children with disabilities through a post-traumatic perspective. It claims that the stimulus of trauma in such stories is not a physical disability but a social marginalization, misidentification, and marginalization of feelings. The study determines the depiction of trauma, coping mechanisms, family support, and identity reconstruction process in each of the novels through a comparative literary analysis. Both novels break the stereotypes and move towards emotional regeneration as opposed to physical change. Focusing on how characters develop emotionally and oppose the normative expectations, Draper and Palacio re-establish disability literature as the place of agency, identity formation and narrative resistance. These conclusions imply that literature may transform cultural attitudes to disability by cultivating compassion, disrupting normative beliefs, and creating emotionally rich and multi-dimensional disabled characters.

KEYWORDS: Cerebral Palsy, disability, *Out of My Mind*, post-traumatic, psychological adaptation, resilience, *Wonder*

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1. Introduction

Children with disabilities always have an emotional trauma, in most cases, which does not come as a result of their disability, but rather the way they are treated by society. The literature concentrates on children with disabilities by shedding light on their dilemma, their resistance, and their mental adaptation. In a post-trauma approach, the present study analyzes the psychological adjustment of children with disabilities discussed by two American authors: Sharon Draper (1948-) and Raquel Palacio (1963-). It particularly deals with the novels *Out of My Mind* by Draper (2010) and *Wonder* by Palacio (2012). The study shows the way Draper and Palacio bring out the psychological adjustment of the children with disabilities in their novels. The two novels have been chosen based on the interrelated concepts between them (Khater, M. 2024b; Adel, M. A., et al. 2024). Moreover, Draper and Palacio are similar in that they portray the psychological adaptation of children with disabilities using their novels. The two works mention the social, medical, and psychological barriers concerning children with disabilities. They raise the question of the life and pain of children with disabilities during their various periods of time, and their views on the issue of disability (Abou Adel et al., 2025; Abouelnour M., et al. 2024a).

The study is based on the methods of analysis and comparison and consists of four major sections and a conclusion. The first part of which, *Disability in a Post-traumatic Frame*, is more theoretical in nature. It is split into two sections: The first section concentrates on the relationship of post-traumatic studies with disability examinations. In this section, the historical context of disability studies and its connection with post-traumatic stress disorder are considered. The latter section brings out the contribution of disability literature in illustrating the psychological adjustment of disabled children. It also gives an overview of two authors, the American writer, Sharon M. Draper (1948-), and the American writer, Raquel Palacio (1963-). In the second part, *The Psychological Adaptation of Children with Disabilities in the Draper out of my mind*, it has two sections. The first gives a summary of *Out of My Mind* by Draper. The second illustrates the way Draper shapes the psychological adjustment of the children with disabilities in her novel from a post-traumatic perspective. Likewise, the third section, *Psychological Adaptation of Children with Disabilities in Palacio Wonder*, has two sections. The first section gives a summary of *Wonder*. The second one describes the way Palacio deals with the psychological adjustment of children with disabilities in her novel through the post-traumatic lens. Likewise, the fourth part, *Comparative Discussion of Psychological Adaptation in Out of My Mind and Wonder*. This part draws the comparison between the way in which a child with a disability is portrayed in the psychological adaptation in the two books, *Out of My Mind* and *Wonder*. It is concerned with the emotional reactions, coping mechanisms, and social dynamics of the main characters in the context of trauma and marginalization in their lives. Lastly, the findings of the study are summarized in the conclusion. In presenting and analyzing the chosen novels, we discover numerous similarities and differences in how each novelist depicted the psychological adjustment of children with disabilities (Khalifa et al., 2025; Abouelnour, M. M., et al. 2024b; Adel, M. A. A. 2023).

2. Literature review

The recent research on disability and resilience highlights the interplay between individual, social and systemic elements of the experience of children with disabilities. Based on the social model of disability, researchers state that exclusion is mainly caused by social barriers and not necessarily impairment (Oliver, 1990b; Alenzi et al., 2026a). Modern research builds upon this perspective by theorizing resilience as a multi-layered process that is shaped by the family, school, and community contexts (Zukerman et al., 2024). It has also been shown that children with disabilities are more susceptible to psychological pressure because of stigmas, marginalization, and a low level of inclusion as opposed to their disabilities (Biggs et al., 2024; Alhourani et al 2025a; Alenzi et al., 2026b). Also, positive social interactions, especially in families, are crucial in promoting emotional health and adaptive coping, which strengthens the relevance of attachment and environmental support in the development of children (Ban and Sun, 2024; Alhourani et al 2025b; Elhalafawy et al., 2025).

From a psychological perspective, Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) theory of stress and coping remains central to understanding how individuals respond to adversity through emotion-focused and problem-focused strategies. Similarly, Erikson's (1969) theory of psychosocial development highlights the importance of social validation in identity formation, especially during childhood. While these frameworks have been widely applied in clinical and developmental studies, their integration into literary analysis remains limited. Existing literary

scholarship, such as Mitchell and Snyder's (2000) concept of narrative prosthesis, explores how disability is represented in texts; however, it often overlooks the psychological processes of trauma and adaptation.

Accordingly, a significant research gap persists in the lack of comparative literary studies that combine disability studies with post-traumatic and psychological frameworks, particularly in children's literature. Although *Out of My Mind* and *Wonder* have received individual critical attention, few studies examine them comparatively in relation to psychological adaptation shaped by different types of disabilities. This study addresses this gap by offering a comparative post-traumatic analysis of both novels. Its significance lies in bridging literary criticism with psychological theory to provide a deeper understanding of resilience and adaptation, while also highlighting how such narratives can challenge stereotypes and promote more inclusive and empathetic perspectives on disability.

3. Methodology

This paper will use a qualitative comparative research approach to study the psychological adaptation of children with disabilities in *Wonder* and *Out of My Mind*. It is based on close textual analysis, paying attention to the main narrative components, including characterization, dialogue, and internal monologue, to reveal how each of the main characters can be affected by trauma, marginalization, and resilience. It is analyzed based on an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that combines the social model of disability that focuses on the contribution of societal barriers to the generation of exclusion with psychological theories of coping and development, especially the stress and coping model of Lazarus and Folkman, as well as the psychosocial development model developed by Erikson. In this manner, the research can determine trends in emotional reaction, coping strategies, and identity construction as evident in the two texts.

The comparative aspect of the methodology permits the study of the similarities and differences between Melody Brooks and August Pullman rather subtly, especially with regard to the ways in which their respective disabilities influence their adaptive mechanisms. The study reveals that the mediation of psychological adaptation by both external support systems and internal resilience is through the study of narrative structure, perspective, and family and school environment. This method allows a deeper understanding of the construction of disability in children's literature beyond the condition as a medical state to the intricate social and psychological experience, thus adding to the larger debates in disability studies and post-traumatic literature.

4. Discussion and Results

4.1 Disability in a Post-traumatic Frame

The following section has two parts. The first part aims to provide a theoretical framework of post-traumatic, disability studies and the intersection of disability and post-traumatic. It also intends to provide a background of the history of disability studies. Further, it provides an overview of the types of disability, models and factors of disability (Adel, M A 2019; Alhourani, M. I., et al. 2025c; Asif, M., et al. 2025). The second section is about the function of disabled literature in depicting the psychological adaptation of the disabled. In addition, it introduces the two American authors. The purpose of this part is to understand the notion of disability from the point of view of post-traumatic stress disorder. It attempts to humanise the disabled person, therefore gaining insight into the concept of disability.

Disability is an important term in social and literary studies. It doesn't just describe physical or cognitive impairment, but also a social category and response. Disability studies argue against the medical model, which defines disability as an impairment in the individual, and emphasize the social model. This model views disability as caused by social discrimination, such as inaccessibility, discrimination, and exclusion, rather than impairment (Nggilu, N. M., et al. 2025; Khater, M. 2023; Abou Adel, M. A., et al. 2026). Literature can also deal with disability in metaphorical or stereotypical ways. It can be used as a metaphor for weakness, failure or isolation, or to elicit a response of pity or inspiration. These representations uphold negative notions and perpetuate limited ideas of normalcy (Ayrım, O., et al., 2026; Abou Adel et al., 2025).

Alice Hall (2012) says disability is not an insignificant subject in literature. It is major to a person's ideas of identity, representation and power. She explains that disability is a topic that often appears repeatedly in literature, as a metaphor or shorthand. Whiteness, able-bodiedness and heterosexuality are seen as the default. Hall suggests that literature is part of a cultural system that can influence societal attitudes, even more than

policies or education. We need to read and think about novels, plays and poems that reinforce stereotypes. But some contemporary literature, written by both disabled and non-disabled writers, opposes these trends. They offer nuanced characters and reject stereotypes, inviting readers to explore the complexity of disability (Hall, 2012, p. 457).

This study examines disability in *Out of My Mind* and *Wonder*. It explores how they depict disability not as a deficit, but rather a psychological space for growth and development. Using these two novels, the study explores how literature can contest social expectations, explore definitions of strength, and represent the inner life of characters with disabilities (Lahiani, H., et al., 2026; Khater, M. 2024a).

Traumatic experience for the disabled is not always the result of a single traumatic event. It can be an accumulation of exclusion, stigma and emotional disrespect. In *Out of My Mind* and *Wonder*, trauma is a build-up of emotional injuries rather than a single event. Melody in *Out of My Mind* experiences trauma in the form of not being heard. She has been considered mentally retarded for years because she can't speak. She becomes frustrated that she can understand everything, but is trapped in her own body. This lack of communication has a traumatic effect. As she eventually receives a communication device, it is not only a physical but also an emotional release. She regains her voice, but also experiences the trauma of being silenced. August (Auggie) in *Wonder* experiences another type of trauma. His facial difference makes him stand out. He has been homeschooled for many years, shielded from the outside world. He is ill-equipped to deal with bullying. The trauma appears in layers – avoidance, staring, and teasing. Even the kind acts are significant because they are so different from the past. Trauma is stored in the body and mind, according to Bessel van der Kolk (2015). It affects their sense of safety, self-worth and belonging. Each character in these books copes internally. Melody builds fantasies of words she can't speak. Auggie embraces family love and humour to cushion the world's cruelty. Both examples demonstrate how trauma does not always break a person down - sometimes it leads a person to develop stronger inner worlds. In both novels, emotional healing doesn't appear from wiping out trauma. It comes from acknowledging it, talking about it, and moving on. Melody doesn't stop being frustrated, but she can express it. Auggie can't stop being different, but he insists on being accepted by others without hiding. There are times that it takes a while, but it happens. This is what gives these stories their emotional truth.

A critical understanding of disability in literature needs an obvious theoretical foundation. Disability is not just a physical or cognitive impairment; it is also a social phenomenon and experience of misrecognition and marginalisation. Lennard J. Davis (2025) suggests that disability is more a product of culture and norms than biology. In this vein, literary characters with disabilities are not simply bodies with malformations, but rather characters struggling to navigate their identities in the face of social pressure.

Post-traumatic theory offers one way of considering how people respond to these pressures. Kathy Caruth (1996) defined trauma as an injury that cannot be represented directly and repeated occasionally through time. Disability trauma is not always the result of a discrete event, but often of repeated rejection and misunderstanding. Michelle Balaev (2012) builds on this to consider posttraumatic growth, which highlights how some people build resilience and change their identities after trauma.

Out of My Mind and *Wonder* indicate that the trauma is not caused by violence, but by exclusion, bullying, and self-expression. These novels show how young children with disabilities are forced to continue in a world that always reminds them of their limitations. In these texts, psychological adjustment does not go back to pre-trauma, but instead, it is an identity's reconstruction through inner resilience and empathy.

Both novels have been used by researchers, especially in educational and psychological settings. A study by Patricia Dunn (2015) investigates how *Wonder* promotes inclusive education. With a normalization of physical differences and an emphasis on emotional literacy, few comparative studies have examined these two novels side-by-side through the lens of trauma theory. The majority of studies focus on educational value or social integration, rather than on mental healing and adjustment. At the same time, narrative form has been shown to function as a mechanism of resistance. Building on Bakhtinian criticism, Algobaei et al. (2025) highlights that literary meaning is not only conveyed through thematic content but also constructed through narrative strategies, emphasizing the role of voice and structure in shaping representation. This is the reason why a post-traumatic reading of both works is warranted to follow the way in which each of the protagonists builds their self-esteem, their strength, and their social bond. This study will explore disability and psychological adaptation in children's literature by offering a comparative lens on the topic through the lens of a shared analytical approach to the works of *Out of My Mind* and *Wonder*.

4.2 *The Psychological Adaptation of Children with Disabilities*

Disability literature gives a direct examination of the internal and external battles of children with disabilities. Instead of concentrating on the medical conditions of disability, this literature discusses the development of a sense of self by these children, their struggle with bullying and isolation and the resilience that they acquire. This genre switches the plot from passive victimhood to a psychological adaptation. Hall (2012) believes that literature is a key area in making sense of disability representation and experience. She says that “representations of disability in literature often reveal more social anxieties than the actual lives of people with disabilities” (p. 3). This implies that stereotypes can be upheld or subverted by the way characters are depicted. In children’s literature, especially, there is an increased move to lean more towards realistic and enabling representations.

Out of My Mind and *Wonder* are considered parts of this shift. Each novel has a protagonist who is either physically or developmentally challenged, and also suffers from tremendous psychological development. The stories revolve around the way children cope emotionally in situations that tend to reject or fail to understand them. The main characters do not fight their disabilities; they learn to live a good life with them. This is what is referred to as psychological adaptation.

Trauma is a very common occurrence in these novels, not only in medical events, but also in bullying, exclusion and misunderstanding. According to Bessel van der Kolk, “Trauma is not just an event that occurred sometime in the past; it is also the mark that that experience has on the mind, brain, and body” (2015, p. 21). This sign is common among children with disabilities in literature. Their traumas are not of their disabilities, but from the dealings of others. Through literature, the readers can experience the psychological process of these children. In *Out of My Mind*, Melody has cerebral palsy and is unable to speak, yet she creates a rich inner life and becomes more self-aware. Likewise, in *Wonder*, Auggie is socially rejected several times because of his facial differences, but he slowly gains his self-confidence with the help of his family and himself. Such images can be attributed to what Susan Wendell (1996) refers to as the “social construction of disability,” where the problem lies not with the person themselves, but with society’s responses (p. 65).

The two novels have a dual purpose as well. They help readers with disabilities to find some reflections of their experiences, and they also leave the non-disabled readers with a greater insight into how the psychological adaptation can occur. These books dispel the idea that disability is the same as incapacity, featuring instead problem-solving, emotional intelligence, and perseverance. These two stories are considered a “narrative resistance” - the belief that telling stories from marginalized voices brings about transformation. The literature on disability opposes erasure and tokenism through the presentation of complete human experiences. It shows that adaptation is not normal, but how to live as themselves. Disability literature is powerful because it humanizes and complicates. It is opposed to the account of one tragedy. Rather, it introduces children who reason, develop, suffer and recover, just like any other person. Their psychological adjustment is not necessarily linear and flawless, still, it is factual, multi-layered and deserves consideration.

In conclusion, the literature of disability is transformative as it helps to change the way society views children with disabilities by focusing on their psychological adaptability and not their disabilities. In books such as *Out of My Mind* and *Wonder*, Draper and Palacio break down the stereotypes and focus on resilience, self-acceptance and the social obstacles such children have to overcome. These novels do not accept pity or erasure, but rather disability is depicted as one of many aspects of a complex human experience. Finally, literature on disability brings to life the object of their study, providing subtle descriptions of development, suffering, and victory. It reminds the reader that psychological adaptation is not a linear process but a very individual one, and it should be the focus of attention, respect and celebration. With these tales, society is getting nearer to a place in which difference is not just accepted, but is seen as part of the human narrative.

4.3 *Psychological Adaptation in Sharon Draper’s Out of My Mind*

This section discusses an introduction to Draper’s *Out of My Mind* (2010) and how Draper shapes the psychological adaptation of children with disabilities in her novel from a post-traumatic perspective. *Out of My Mind* is a very strong and realistic portrayal of psychological adaptation by Draper, using the voice of a girl, Melody Brooks, who was eleven years old with cerebral palsy. Melody is mentally bright yet physically inexpressive and the failure of society to acknowledge her brilliance turns out to be the main conflict of the novel. Her narrative is a strong case study of how children with disabilities have to struggle with being marginalized,

finding coping strategies and struggling to be heard.

From the first pages of the novel, Melody shows her disappointment at not being able to communicate, saying, “Words have always swirled around me like snowflakes—each one delicate and different, each one melting untouched in my hands” (p. 6). This allegory not only reflects her deep inner life but also the agonizing truth that she is confined to a body that is viewed as incompetent by other people. This reveals a form of entrapment that aligns with Lazarus and Folkman’s concept of stress as a mismatch between internal capacity and external expression. Her mental condition is characterized by a strong inner feeling and thinking, which is in contrast to the opinion of others. Therefore, this exemplifies trauma not as a physical condition but as communicative exclusion. Melody’s psychological adaptation begins with awareness. “By the time I was two, all my memories had words, and all my words had meanings. But only in my head” (p. 6). In this quote, she discusses the fact that she is aware that she is different, yet she is also aware that she is intelligent. The result of this mental inconsistency between her inner being and the way the world is treating her is frustrating. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) state that stress occurs when a person thinks there is a disbalance between his/her internal resources and external demands (p. 141). Melody does not lack ability; only her environment denies her the opportunity to express herself.

Melody is further isolated at school, which only intensifies her psychological need to adapt. Melody feels highly socially isolated at school. “Kids who, for the most part, ignore kids like me” (p. 18). Even though she is in a mainstream classroom, she is regularly disregarded. Teachers talk to her instead of letting her talk or think that she does not comprehend. Her coping skills include talking to herself and envisioning reactions to events, as well as crying sprees that are mistaken by people as tantrums. These are reactions that psychologists refer to as emotion-focused coping, in which one tries to cope with the emotions that stress causes instead of altering the external environment. The uncompromising nature of her mother in believing in her abilities becomes one of her greatest sources of emotional support. In one of the most moving scenes, when a doctor recommends that Melody might be retarded, her mother says, “I think you’re wrong—I know you are! Melody has more brains hidden in her head than you’ll ever have, despite those fancy degrees from fancy schools you’ve got posted all over your walls!” (p. 17). It is a turning point in the novel and Melody’s development, proving that one of the psychological strengths is to have supporters who support the potential in a person.

The most significant milestone in Melody’s adaptation comes with the arrival of the Medi-Talker, a speech-generating device that finally gives her access to verbal communication. “Thanks, Mrs. V, the computer’s voice says” (p. 64). This is the first time Melody can actively participate in conversations, express her likes and dislikes, and even share jokes. This transition from passivity to expression marks a shift from emotion-focused coping to problem-focused coping, where Melody takes control of her environment. For the first time, she uses a device, indicating “When I think about it, I realize I have never, ever said any words directly to my parents. So I push a couple of buttons, and the machine speaks the words I’ve never been able to say. I love you.” (p. 65). It does not modify her intelligence, but it alters her relations with the world. It enables her to transform from being an object of pity to a subject with agency. Thus, her psychological adaptation embraces technological empowerment, which allows her to express herself, to be socially accepted, and to heal emotionally.

Although Melody is becoming more confident, the novel does not show her path to be a smooth sail. Through a major incident, her classmates denied her the opportunity to participate in a national quiz team competition, though she was the major contributor to their success. “Why did you leave me?” (p. 135). This is the question Melody poses to her classmates when she goes back to school and challenges them concerning what had happened to them, which depicts her understanding that they did not want to deal with her. Melody is devastated by this betrayal after she had thought that she was finally accepted. This is an emotional blow that is deep-rooted and reflects the weakness of disabled learners- being accepted only at convenient times or when it is useful to the majority. The reaction of Melody, however, is one of extraordinary strength. She goes back to school with her head held high, though hurt, she decides to proceed with her education and tell her truth. The progress of Melody at this age, according to Erikson (1969), indicates that there has been an increasing sense of industry and identity (p. 253). She understands that it does not need to be accepted by others to have value. Instead of taking the rejection on board, she reinterprets it by showing that it is not her shortcoming, but that of other people.

Melody has never conquered her disability in the conventional narrative sense by the end of the novel.

Rather, she has made disability a part of who she is in a manner that makes her feel empowered. “I have spastic bilateral quadriplegia, also known as cerebral palsy. It limits my body, but not my mind” (p. 79). This declares that she understands her value, accepts her communication style and does not allow other people to define her. This is what disability studies scholars refer to as positive identity formation, whereby individuals are taught to oppose stereotypes and assert their humanity in society (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 42). Thus, Melody’s mental adjustment is not a story of sympathy or encouragement, but of survival, dominance, assertion and change. Draper does not want to romanticize disability; rather, she creates a more realistic and subtle image of how a child becomes psychologically adjusted in a world that both inhibits and at times supports her.

4.4 Psychological Adaptation in Raquel Palacio’s Wonder

This section highlights a brief introduction to *Wonder* (2012) and how Palacio tries to resolve the psychological adaptation of children with disabilities in her novel through the post-traumatic perspective. *Wonder* is an emotionally expressive psychological adaptation by the character of August (Auggie) Pullman, a ten-year-old boy, who has a rare genetic disorder known as “Treacher Collins Syndrome”, which leads to severe facial deformities. Being homeschooled because of his illness and looks, the admission to a typical school becomes an important emotional and psychological milestone in Auggie’s life. The novel examines how he deals with stigma, social anxiety, and bullying, and slowly forms self-acceptance, resilience, and identity.

At the very start of the novel, Auggie is very conscious of his difference. In an eye-opening section, he says, “I won’t describe what I look like. Whatever you’re thinking, it’s probably worse” (p. 11). This admission predetermines the psychological troubles he faces. He further adds, “I don’t even know how I got so mad. I wasn’t really mad at the beginning of dinner. I wasn’t even sad. But then all of a sudden it all kind of just exploded out of me. I knew Via didn’t want me to go to her stupid play. And I knew why” (p. 152). This indicates that he understands his challenges, unlike a number of main characters in stories of disability. Auggie is not blind; on the contrary, he has assimilated how the world responds to his appearance. Folkman (1986) suggests that this anticipation of rejection may cause chronic stress and form coping behaviors (p. 153).

One of the initial coping strategies of Auggie is his emotional shield, which he develops prematurely. He tends to react either humorously, self-deprecatingly or evasively to minimize the discomfort of others. Such reactions are typical of emotional coping mechanisms that enable him to manage the pressure of being continuously observed or judged. In one instance, he makes a joke about his face before other people can respond to control and reduce social anxiety. He says, “Funny how sometimes you worry a lot about something and it becomes nothing after all (p. 150).

Being at a new school, Auggie finds it to be one of the main settings where adaptation is under constant test. His introduction into the social world is characterized by being isolated, whispering, “plague” game—where touching him is seen as contaminating. “I told Maya I thought that was really dumb and she agreed, but she still wouldn’t touch a ball that August just touched, not if she could help it”. (p. 88). This shows the students’ attitude towards Auggie as an infectious person, not to touch anything he has touched. This action is indicative of an unreasonable societal fear and indicates that the issue is not Auggie himself, but the social perception and marginalization of him. These dehumanizing cases are manifestations of the social model of disability in which the stigma and ignorance of others cause more pain than the disability (Oliver, 2009a, p. 104).

Although the narrative does not stop at the stage of victimhood. He says, “I have some friends in my new school,” he told me. “A kid named Jack and a girl named Summer” (p.167). Slowly, Auggie learns to recognize and foster protective relationships, especially with Summer and Jack Will, his peers who treat him with respect and empathy. These relationships are support systems, which make him reframe his experiences and gain confidence. According to Erikson’s theory, social acceptance in middle childhood is key in forming a sense of industry and self-worth (p. 253). The successive friendship with Auggie helps him to move beyond emotional reactivity to problem-solving, such as addressing the betrayal by Jack and forgiving him later on. The psychological adaptation of Auggie, to a great extent, comes from his family support. His parents and his elder sister play a vital role in confirming his identity to him, away from what he looks like. His mother keeps telling him, “You really are a wonder, Auggie. You are a wonder” (p. 213).

This emotionally validating climate is in line with what Lazarus and Folkman term as resource-based adaptation- when people have the capacity to tap into external sources of emotion to boost their inner strength.

Although Auggie has some issues with self-image, the love and the feeling of security he gets at home enables him to be psychologically balanced again.

The school trip is one of the most transformative experiences in Auggie's life as he is temporarily lost in the forest and is saved by his classmates, who once ignored or made fun of him. In that moment of danger, Auggie is perceived as he is, a courageous and nice kid. "Aug-gie! Aug-gie! Aug-gie!" I looked back and saw Jack leading the chant, fist in the air, smiling and signaling for me to keep going, and Amos shouting through his hands: "Woo-hoo, little dude!" (p. 211). Auggie is welcomed and admired by his colleagues. Jack and Amos accept him and he feels valued and a part of them. His later awarding of the Henry Ward Beecher Medal of Courage is the reward of the people, but more to the point, inward development. Even after being awarded, Auggie reflects with a very high level of emotional maturity: "Everyone in the world should get a standing ovation at least once in their life because we all overcome the world" (p. 215). This is one of those lines that summarizes not only the emotional trajectory of the story but also the sense of mental adaptation to the misfortune, the way of coping with suffering and restoring the voice and identity in the world.

It is not about being seen and changing his appearance, but about being seen and accepted the way Auggie is: "In fact, and I don't mean to brag here, but it kind of felt like everyone wanted to get close to me" (p. 213). This line concludes by claiming that he has not changed into another person, nor has he been fixed. What is different is how he perceives himself and how he is confident enough not to apologize for taking up space. Palacio does not fall into the cliché of magical transformation; she confirms the heterogeneity of disability and the difference as something dignified.

In terms of disability studies, Auggie's adaptation reflects what Garland-Thomson (2002) calls "resisting compulsory able-bodiedness"—refusing to conform to normative ideals of appearance or function (p. 45). Auggie's growth is not a rejection of his identity, but an embrace of it, grounded in authenticity, kindness, and emotional strength. Disability-wise, the adaptation displayed by Auggie can be seen as what Garland-Thomson describes as "resisting compulsory able-bodiedness"—refusing to conform to normative ideals of appearance or function (p. 45). The development of Auggie is not turning his back on who he is, but rather an acceptance of it based on the concepts of authenticity, kindness, and emotional resilience.

4.5 Comparative Discussion: Psychological Adaptation in Out of My Mind and Wonder

This part will compare the portrayal of psychological adaptations of children with disabilities in *Out of My Mind* and *Wonder*. It revolves around feelings, coping mechanisms and socialization of the main characters in response to their trauma and marginalization. Both *Out of My Mind* by Sharon Draper and *Wonder* by Raelle Cannonball describe the main characters with physical disabilities who experience profound psychological growth. Although the circumstances, characters, and settings of the two characters are dissimilar, Melody Brooks and August Pullman are all challenged by the main issues of stigma, misidentification, and emotional exclusion. Their trips bring forward various aspects of psychological adjustment influenced by family support, school, and their inner strength. The social isolation of both lead characters is one of the most obvious parallels between these two characters. Both Melody and Auggie are considered outcasts not due to their intellectual or emotional deficiencies, but due to the attitudes of the people who see them as physically different. Melody is unable to speak, to walk, to eat, or to go to the bathroom, and that is why people think that she is not intelligent (p. 7). Similarly, Auggie wonders, "I know ordinary kids don't make other ordinary kids run away screaming in playgrounds. I know ordinary kids don't get stared at wherever they go." (P. 10).

The two characters suffer emotionally as they attempt to fit into environments that they never belonged to. The school turns out to be the main source of psychological stress to the two and exclusion can be apparent and unobtrusive, such as being left out during group activities and bullying. These encounters reflect the social model of disability that suggests that disability is not the problem but the society that isolates people (Oliver, 2009a, 104). Although their struggles are similar, the two characters come up with different coping strategies. Melody, in her turn, has to rely mostly on the internal means, i.e. the bright imagination and deep reflections, as she is not able to express herself in words. Her turning point is when she is given access to the Medi-Talker, allowing her to move her coping style to more active problem-centered coping, asserting herself and attending classes. Auggie, on the other hand, is prone to dealing with humor, withdrawal and relationships. His emotional adjustment is slow and assisted by other people who normalize his presence. He never acquires a technological

aid such as Melody; however, he relies on emotional scaffolding, especially that of his family and his significant friendships, to help him cope with stressors. Adaptation in Auggie is therefore more socially mediated and in Melody, it is technologically and cognitively mediated. Both the coping paths correspond to the stress and coping theory of Lazarus and Folkman: Melody starts with emotion-oriented responses and acquires problem-solving tools gradually, whereas Auggie combines both the coping styles in various situations (p. 145). The other similarity in their adaptation is the aspect of family support. The mother of Melody becomes her supporter, and she struggles to get doctors and educators to perceive her daughter. Likewise, the parents of Auggie provide him with a positive, supportive atmosphere that does not reject his feelings and helps him feel good about himself. The growth of identity in childhood, as postulated by Erik Erikson (1993), needs to be reinforced with emotion, particularly when one is confronted with rejection in society (p. 255). The emotional availability of family is, however, slightly different in the two novels. In *Wonder*, the story is allowed to contemplate the impact of disability on the whole family, in particular, Via, the sister of Auggie, who experiences feelings of invisibility. In *Out of My Mind*, attention is tightly held around Melody, with the family support serving to enhance her personal development.

There is a slight significant distinction in the character of the disabilities of the main characters. The disability affects the communication with Melody as she is unable to express her thoughts due to the disability, though she is really clever. Auggie has a disability that impacts him physiologically, making him perceived and treated differently by others. Such contrast determines the way each child is read by society and the psychological cost of such a misreading. The main adaptation of Melody focuses on acquiring a voice, both literal and figurative. By using the Medi-Talker, she can re-take agency and disrupt ableist assumptions. "I have spastic bilateral quadriplegia, also known as cerebral palsy. It limits my body, but not my mind" (p. 79). This is why she is disabled and this proves that her mind is unlimited. Auggie, on the other hand, wants to be known beyond the face. His voyage is about being regarded as an entire person and not a deformity. "I won't describe what I look like. Whatever you're thinking, it's probably worse" (p. 11). The consciousness of Auggie shows that he is diminished by his physical appearance to people. He is aware that understanding comes before perception. In their own ways, these two characters call on society to examine further: to the mind, to the heart, to the human being behind the label. At the conclusion of both novels, Melody and Auggie are empowered in a way by integrating with their identities. They do not conquer their disabilities in the usual, inspirational manner. Instead, they are taught to embrace themselves, declare their dignity and not to allow others to define them. Melody goes back to school after being painfully betrayed by her classmates and decides to keep on attending it even after being ostracized. Having gained recognition in society, Auggie understands the inner nature of self-worth, which is not based on awards or appearances. "If every single person in this room made it a rule that wherever you are, whenever you can, you will try to act a little kinder than is necessary—the world would really be a better place" (p. 208). This concept of compassion and empathy is transformed into the emotional centre of both stories. Although the *Out of My Mind* and *Wonder* vary in terms of their narration and experience of their characters, they all come down to one common fact: that psychological adaptation of disabled children is not merely about the adaptation to impairment, but rather to the world that does not necessarily accept them. Melody and Auggie teach young readers with their stories a great lesson on strength, vulnerability, and the unspoken courage of being all that one can be.

5. Conclusion

We conclude that Draper and Palacio show the psychological adaptation of the disabled through a post-traumatic perspective. This paper explored the places of psychological adaptation in *Out of My Mind* and *Wonder*, using a post-traumatic approach. The two novels portray disability not as a physical impairment but more as a social exclusion. The main characters, Melody and Auggie, remain physically unchanged. Instead, they make their way through emotional trauma, face stigmatization and develop resilient identities. The comparative analysis showed that parallels of emotional experiences, family support, and coping mechanisms were strong. The two characters suffer bullying, marginalization and social misrecognition. They find strength within themselves and rely on help outside themselves to reinvent themselves. The right to be heard is the issue of Melody. Auggie focuses on the right of visibility. These trips indicate that psychological adjustment is personal as well as contextual.

The study bridged the research gap by applying the theory of trauma to both novels in a comparative manner. In addition, this paper concentrated on emotional growth in a trauma framework. Theories such as Lazarus, Folkman, Van der Kolk, and Garland-Thomson were applied in analyzing the emotional and psychological changes of the two characters. The results enhance knowledge of the experiences that children with disabilities go through in the surrounding world. Draper and Palacio defy stereotypes and do not use simplistic depictions by making disabled children heard. They develop complex, complete-fledged characters that cannot be marginalized and demand the right to be persons. Their storytelling motivates readers to go beyond assumptions and rethink the established standards of ability.

Draper and Palacio defy stereotypes and do not use simplistic depictions by giving voice to disabled children. They develop complex, complete-fledged characters that cannot be marginalized and demand the right to be such as normal persons. Their storytelling motivates readers to go beyond assumptions and rethink the established standards of ability. Disability Literature on disability reforms cultural narratives. It fosters kindness, enhances inclusion, and supports the importance of all children. Psychological adaptation in *Out of My Mind* and *Wonder* does not represent a one-time event but a continuous process of self-identification, strength, and emotional perseverance. The stories by Melody and Auggie lack the solution in the form of a cure or conformity. They provide the meaning with sincerity, intricacy and real-life truth. Their voices remain. Their journeys matter.

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Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethical Approval

There are no studies involving human subjects in this article by any of the authors.

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