



LINKING CHOICES WITH BEHAVIORAL CHANGE: A STUDY OF MOENUDDIN'S *NAWABDIN ELECTRICIAN* THROUGH GLASSER'S CHOICE THEORY

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Abstract

The current study utilizes Glasser's (1998) theory of choices to explore the different choices taken by the protagonist, Nawabdin, the Electrician, and its effects on his personal and social sphere of life. The study proceeds through qualitative research approach while adopting the technique of close reading to critically analyze the selected short story allowing the readers to focus on minute details. The study finds out that Nawab's major decisions were informed by the three elements highlighted in Glasser's theory which are power, survival and belonging. Nawab took several decisions for the accomplishment of the above three elements including the acquisition of motor bike, meter tampering and his fight with the robber for the protection of his asset. These choices made by Nawabdin functioned as a double-edged sword by making both positive and negative effects on his personal and social life. Furthermore, the decisions he took made remarkable contributions to his personality as he was called 'uncle,' and his opinions were considered worthy even though he knew nothing. Hence, the decisions had left numerous effects on his social and personal life.

Key Words: Nawabdin, Belonging, struggle, survival, motor bike and power.

Introduction

Decisions and choices are needed based, conscious, and containing free will (Wubbolding, 2017). People make decisions based on what they need, what they hope for, and what kind of life they want to create for themselves. These decisions are often influenced by the world around them like money, power, family, and society but also come from inside, from human needs and desires. In literature, characters also make choices. Sometimes, they are shown as helpless people who are

shaped by society, class, or culture. But sometimes, we can look more closely and see how these characters are trying to take control of their lives, even in small ways. Psychology gives us tools to understand why people act the way they do. One of these tools is Choice Theory, developed by Glasser (1998). This theory says that all human behavior is a choice and is driven by five basic needs: survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun.

In Other Rooms, Other Wonders is a collection of short stories written by Daniyal Mueenuddin and published in 2009. The stories are set in Pakistan and offer vivid glimpses into the lives of both landowners and workers which shows the deep gaps between social classes, poverty, and the daily struggles of ordinary people. Critics praise Mueenuddin's writing for its honesty and its ability to show how people from different classes, upper, middle, and lower, interact in a changing society (Umashankar, 2013). The story "Nawabdin Electrician," the first in the collection, introduces Nawabdin, a skilled electrician who collaborates with a wealthy landlord, K.K. Harouni, and supports his large family through resourcefulness and subtle defiance.

Many scholars have looked at this story from social or political angles, often focusing on class and power. But this paper takes a different approach. It tries to understand why Nawabdin makes the choices he makes by looking at his actions through Glasser's Choice Theory.

Research Question

- How does Glasser's Choice Theory help us understand Nawabdin's behavior and decisions in the short story "Nawabdin Electrician?"

Literature Review

Daniyal Mueenuddin's short story collection *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* (2009) has received a lot of attention for the way it shows everyday life in Pakistan, especially the gap between the rich and the poor. His stories highlight how people struggle with poverty, class differences, and survival. Many researchers have looked at these stories through different lenses, like Marxism, postcolonialism, and social theory to understand how power and wealth affect the lives of ordinary people. Sahito et al. (2021), for example, use a Marxist approach to study *Nawabdin Electrician*, showing how Nawabdin's small acts, like cheating electric meters shows his struggle within an unfair economic system. In an analogous way, Baloch (2021) explains how class difference is clearly seen in the story: Nawab is rewarded with a motorcycle for his loyalty, but the poor man who tries to rob him is treated harshly and has no safety net.

Similarity, in rural Punjab women are considered lower to men and are thus marginalized and ruined. In this regard, Bashir et al. (2025) have conducted Eco-feminist study on the said novel and have stated that "Patriarchy as a socio-political system entails the subjugation of women and other vulnerable groups in an analogous way with regards to the subjugation of natural resources and the environment" (p. 214). Further, their paper focuses on how women and environment both have been brutally destroyed by the capitalist regime. K. K Harouni, Chaudry Jaglani (his manager) and even the lower servants have equally contributed to spoil their natural environment and women folk. Thus, they argue that in rural Punjab the harmonious connection between their inhabitants and their environment has been badly disturbed. And the women folks are treated as lifeless and feelingless entity meant for destruction.

Mueenuddin discussed the rural Punjab in his collection of short stories which brought about a change in the social, political, and even economic sphere. People became aware of their customs, rituals, strengths, and weaknesses of their society. The eight stories based on rural Punjab

(Pakistan) have been widely criticized and explored the different dimensions of the society. In this regard, Afzal, and Imran (2023) have talked about gender role, power dynamics and masculinity in the short story *Provide Provide*. Chaudry Jagglani has been depicted as a wealthy manager of the Landlord, K K Harouni. He exercised all his power on his servants, seniors and his mistress turned wife. Hence, he depicts a typically rural landlord who destroys everyone who came in his way. He tried to maintain his masculinity and power on his servants, women, and the poor farmers.

Other researchers concentrate on Moeenuddin's style of writing and his authentic depiction of Rural life. Barat (2007) compares his work to Premchand and describes Nawabdin as a clever man who finds ways to survive within the limits of society. Hai (2014) offers a relevant perspective on the postcolonial servitude through the context of the domestic workers in these narratives, who frequently assume the status of shadowy annexes of the elite, having no personal agency and being relegated to the duties. Waheed (2017) provides a Marxist reading of Mueenuddin fiction, focusing on the idea of economic dependence that causes characters to be stuck in a system of obedience and survival. Similarly, Tariq's (2018) work deals with feudal control and its grasp over the lives of lower-class characters, where land ownership means the power to control lives, identities, and destinies.

Expanding upon this discussion, Nasrullah. et al. (2024) use the notion of false consciousness as its role in these narratives. They show the way in which characters, such as Nawabdin, are manipulated in terms of ideology within a capitalist society, the way the ruling classes have exploited material incentives and psychological strategies to gain allegiance and subordination through the working class. As in the case of *Nawabdin Electrician*, where a simple gesture of gifting a motorcycle is not kindness, but a device of control.

Choice Theory, developed by Glasser in 1998, focuses on the idea that all human behavior is chosen and driven by five basic needs: *survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun* (Keon, 2025). According to Glasser, every person builds a personal "Quality World"—an inner picture of the people, values, and goals that matter most to them. We act in ways that help us bring our real life closer to this ideal image (Glasser, 1998). Glasser explains that behavior is made up of four parts: doing, thinking, feeling, and physical reactions. Of these, people have the most control over what they do and think, which then affects how they feel (Glasser, 1998). This theory has been widely used in therapy and education, where it helps people take responsibility for their actions and make healthier choices.

Some researchers have also applied Choice Theory to literature and children's stories. A study in Iran, for example, looked at how characters in children's books make decisions to meet their need for freedom and belonging (Nikoobakht et al., 2020). In schools, teachers have used Choice Theory to help students feel more motivated and independent. Still, some critics argue that Choice Theory may oversimplify behavior and ignore outside pressures like poverty or culture. While it focuses on personal responsibility, it doesn't always account for the limits people face in real life (Keon, 2025).

Choice theory relies on conscious efforts for self-reliant behavioral pattern. Ahmad et al. (2025) have stated about self-determined role of the theory as: "our behavior is chosen. We choose certain types of behavior and then we behave in accordance with our chosen behavioral pattern" Ahmad et al., 2025, p. 495. They have argued that our behavioral outcome is chosen. Decisions are consciously taken and then the decisions taken mold our behavior. In the current context Nawab

has been observed taking conscious decisions for his survival and gaining power. His conscious decisions have lifelong consequences on his personal and social being. Thus, our decisions are conscious carrying our free will and consent.

While concluding the current discussion the present study can be excluded in terms of theoretical framework, subject matter and the problem being raised. Further, Glasser's choice theory (1998) has not been applied in the previous research either, the current research problem which is to explore the protagonist's inner state of mind behind his decisions is raised in the said study. Thus, the current study is conducted to probe the protagonist's decisions and its effects on his personality and social positioning.

Research Gap

Although many scholars have studied *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* by looking at social class, poverty, and power, very few have focused on the inner thoughts and choices of the characters. Most research explains how society controls the characters, but not how the characters try to take control of their own lives. There is a lack of psychological studies in this collection, especially using William Glasser's Choice Theory. This study fills that gap by showing how Nawab, the main character in *Nawabdin Electrician*, makes personal choices to meet his needs, even within a difficult and unfair system.

Research Methodology

This research uses a qualitative approach, which is helpful when studying human behavior, experiences, and meaning in literature (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The method chosen is textual analysis, which means closely reading a text to explore how meaning is created through language, character, and setting (McKee, 2003). The story *Nawabdin Electrician* is analyzed using the close reading technique, which allows the reader to focus on small details such as word choice, repetition, and character behavior to better understand deeper messages and patterns (Greenham, 2018). The study uses William Glasser's Choice Theory to examine the character "Nawabdin" and his choices. The goal is to link psychological ideas with the events in the story to show how Nawabdin's actions can be understood as meaningful decisions.

Theoretical Framework

This study focuses on Glasser's (1998) Choice Theory, which helps us understand human behavior and examines what people need and how they work to satisfy those needs. Glasser (1998) believed that everything we do is a choice made to fulfill certain basic needs. These needs are present from birth and influence all our actions in various ways. Glasser talked about five basic human needs:

1. **Survival** – This is the most basic need. It includes things like food, shelter, safety, and staying alive.
2. **Love and Belonging** – This is our need to feel close to others, to be loved, and to feel like we are part of a group or family. Glasser said this is the most important need for good mental health.
3. **Power** – This doesn't just mean control. It also means feeling important, achieving goals, and being respected by others.
4. **Freedom** – This is the need to make our own choices and have control over our lives.
5. **Fun** – Glasser believed that having fun, enjoying life, and learning new things are just as important as the other needs.



These five needs are always influencing us, even if we don't realize it. Some people may care more about freedom, while others care more about love or power, but everyone is guided by these needs in some way. Since they are part of who we are, we can't turn them off or ignore them.

Glasser also talks about ideas like the Quality World (which is like a personal picture in our minds of the people, things, and goals that matter most to us), the Perceived World (how we see what is going around us), and Total Behavior (what we do, think, feel, and how our bodies react). But for this study, the focus is only on the five basic needs, because they help us clearly see why people act the way they do.

This theory helps in understanding the main character, Nawabdin, in the short story *Nawabdin Electrician*. Instead of seeing him only as someone stuck in poverty or shaped by society, the study looks at how his actions are also based on his personal needs and what he wants from life. This gives us a deeper look into his choices and behavior.

Analysis and Discussion

Nawabdin Electrician is the first among the eight short stories narrating the life of Nawab on the farms of K.K. Harouni and his concern for the wellbeing of his family. His initial success at creating multiple avenues of earning revenue and compelling his master to buy a motorbike for him was met with the unexpected danger of giving ride to a young man who tried to rob him of his valuable possession. Nawab was rescued by the timely intervention of the villagers who came to the fight scene after hearing the gun shots. Both Nawab and the robber landed in hospital where Nawab survived but the robber lost his life.

The current study tries to explore the three elements of Glasser's choice theory in the story of *Nawabdin Electrician*. These components include *survival*, *power* and *belonging*. Nawab's choices during the short story reflected his conscious decisions to subscribe to these three elements.

Nawab is shown as a typical example of the harsh realities of the rural Punjabi society mirroring subjugation, obedience, and corruption. His decisions within the context of the Punjabi society have far reaching implications affecting not only his personal life but also of the individuals associated closely with him. The choices made by Nawabdin drastically altered his social standing, propelling him to the ranks of well-respected individuals and was consulted on critical political and social issues after the acquisition of a motor bike. This newfound recognition provides him with a sense of competence feeding his psychological need of power as envisioned by Glasser. His possession grants him power and prestige in his social circle. He was valued and considered an important figure in his village.

Nawab's willingness to tamper the electricity meters reflects his innate desire to exploit his technical acumen for the betterment of himself. He was forced to make such illegal decisions by the financial hardship he was facing in taking care of his expanded family comprising twelve daughters and a son. "And all daughters, one after another after another, until finally came the looked-for son, leaving Nawab with a complete set of twelve girls, ranging from infant to age eleven, and then one odd piece. If he had been governor of the Punjab, their dowries would have beggared him" (Muenuddin, 2009, p.11). Muenuddin talks about the so called dowry system in rural Punjabi society. It's a taboo which has ruined the Punjabi society. In the context of choice theory, Nawab selection of the illegal mean of tampering the meter is the vital reason behind his choice. He tried hard to manage dowry for his twelve daughters compelling him to go for the wrong means. It is obvious that Nawabdin wants to accomplish his social obligations of marrying



his daughters. As he was aged and deprived of means of production that's why he was compelled to adopt the wrong means.

Nawab was a skilled electrician who knew how to accomplish his demands. He knows the tactics of how to convince his master. He bowed down and surrendered to his master continuing his duty in the farms, but the fact of the matter was that he wanted to get the privilege of getting motor bike that's why he went for refusal to his duty.

I've eaten your salt for all my years. But sir, on the bicycle now, with my old legs, and with the many injuries I've received when heavy machinery fell on me – I cannot any longer bicycle about like a bridegroom from farm to farm. (Mueenuddin, 2009, p.12)

Hence, Nawab went for personal favor and privilege instead of toiling himself to get the bike. Thus, Glasser (1998) is of the view that whatever we choose for will have greater consequences in our lives.

One of the major hallmarks of Glasser's choice theory is quest for belonging and a basic need to possess objects vital for survival in an intrinsically feudal and materialistic society. In the current context, as we have observed, the protagonist strives hard for material gains. He utilized a variety of tactics to manipulate K.K. Harouni to make him buy the prized motorbike for Nawab. Nawab tactically grabs his attention to his need as such: "Well, sir, if I had a motorcycle, then I could somehow limp along, at least until I train up some younger man" (Mueenuddin, 2009, p.12). Here, a glimpse of Nawab's tactics for the attainment of his basic need of a bike necessary for making him survive in a harsh terrain is starkly visible as envisioned by Glasser. Glasser opines that one must take numerous decisions to maintain a social status which has enormous effects on one's personality. Although Nawabdin had many choices for the accomplishment of his material gains, he opted sycophancy to compel K. K. Harouni to buy a bike for him, ignoring all the other available choices like personal struggle. He could have struggled hard to buy a motorbike for himself but eventually he went for personal favor. He knew that he could easily convince K. K Harouni because of his affiliation with him.

Glasser (1998) is of the view that material gains creating sense of belonging can change one's status in a society and even a dispossessed man can achieve lofty status after acquiring material possessions. Nawab, although an ordinary servant in a landlord's farm attained unmatched respect and honor in his locality as thus stated in the text:

The motorcycle increased his status, gave him weight, so that people began calling him 'Uncle,' and asking his opinion on world affairs, about which he knew absolutely nothing. He could now range further, doing a much wider business. Best of all, now he could spend every night with his wife, who had begged to live not on the farm but near her family in Firoza, where also they could educate at least the two eldest daughters. (Muneuddin, 2009, p. 13)

Here, the close reading technique makes it vivid that Nawab's belonging brought numerous changes in his personality and his social positioning. Firstly, it uplifts his social standing by assigning the title 'uncle' to him making him more respectable and privileged in his social circle. Secondly, his opinions were valued and were socially acknowledged even though Nawabdin's

possessed ignorance about the concerned subject matter. Thirdly, it enabled him to expand his business and spend more time with his family while also making efforts to educate his daughters. Consequently, he was privileged both in his family as well as social circle. Thus, Glasser's views about belonging and love made it clear that it brought numerous changes to his family and their social standing. Earlier, Nawabdin belongs to the lower family background did not secure any respect and honor but with the advent of material gains (motorbike) changes his world view and social positioning. He was called 'uncle', which is more prestigious and appealing than his own name. Moreover, his opinions about politics were also valued although he knew very little about it. These were the major changes brought about with the buying of motorbike.

Nawab has a multidimensional personality, having multiple skills. He primarily utilized his skills for his survival. He works as a tube well operator at K. K Harouni farms. Simultaneously, he would also work at other farms and sugar mills to get some privileges for his survival. As Glasser (1998) has stated that survival is one of the fundamental aspects of our lives. People mostly strive hard and make crucial decisions for their survival. Similarly, in the current context Nawab also took certain decisions for his own survival. He works at his master farms for his household expenses. Likewise, he would also work at some other mills for some privileges as thus he stated that:

In the pocket of the greasy vest that he wore under his kurta she found a wrapped-up newspaper holding chunks of raw brown sugar. 'I've got lots more,' he said. 'Look at that. None of this junk you buy in the bazaar. The Dashtis gave me five kilos for repairing their sugarcane press. I'll sell it tomorrow. Come on, make us some parathas. For all of us? Pretty please? . (Muneuddin, 2009, p. 15)

In the above extract Nawab got some materials gained in the form of brown sugars for the labor he had done in the sugar mill. This decision was taken to accomplish his basic needs for his family wellbeing. The effect of his labor was to attain some benefits in the form of money that he would utilize on his family. Further, the dowry system is also present in rural Punjab society. Hence, he toiled hard to manage dowry for his twelve daughters.

Subsequently, Nawab's choices had greater consequences on his personal and social sphere of life. On the one hand he enjoyed its privileges but on the other hand it brought evils to his life which Glasser (1998) referred to as the consequences of one's choices on their personality. Similarly, Nawab on one side enjoys the privileges and social positioning brought by his new motorbike but on the other side he must face its worse consequences as mentioned:

The man jabbed something hard into his ribs. 'I've got a gun, I'll shoot you.' Panicked, Nawab skidded to a stop and jumped to one side, pushing the motorcycle away from him, so that it tipped over, knocking the robber to the ground . (Muneuddin, 2009, p. 17)

This extract shows the worse effect of his choice of motorbike. He almost faced his death by the hand of robber. While having deep analysis of the extract, the researcher suggested that Nawab goes for material gains which although benefited him, it has great effects on his life. As he was the sole person responsible for accomplishing his familial needs. If he were killed in the said accident, the whole family would have to face its consequences. Not only Nawab's survival but also his



family depended on his wellbeing and safety. Also, Nawab's willingness to fight for his life and bike reflects a conscious choice embedded in his desire to protect and provide for his family.

Conclusion

The Choice theory proposed by William Glasser states that human behavior is governed by the urge to satisfy five basic needs mentioned in the theoretical framework. Glasser opines that all human actions are conscious choices made by an individual to fulfill one or more of these needs. In the selected story "Nawabdin Electrician" the protagonist makes several choices that mirror his efforts to fulfill these needs, notably survival, power and belonging. All the decisions taken by Nawab coupled with adopting a variety of professions are the results of his conscious choices made to meet these basic requirements. These choices served both for the betterment and destruction of Nawabdin. Subsequently, Nawabdin went for the motorbike which changes his personal and social life. Although it uplifts his social standing and was considered important personality among his villagers but on the other hand, it brought evils on him in the form of a robber. Furthermore, choices theory also proposed numerous ways through which we mostly attain an object. As Nawabdin wants to get personal favor from his master in the shape of a motorbike, he started complaining and making excuses for his job in the farms for the attainment of his aim. This also reflects his innate desire for survival in a feudal and class conscious society. Also, he adopted several professions for survival and attaining some semblance of power- another element highlighted by Glasser in choice theory. Similarly, among other motives behind the acquisition of bike was his longing for spending time with his wife and children which clearly subscribe to Glasser's notion of belonging.

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