



Available online at [www.jlls.org](http://www.jlls.org)

---

## JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTIC STUDIES

---

ISSN: 1305-578X

*Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(1), 675-679; 2021

# Psychological Trauma In Stephen King's Novel The Shining: A Study

Mr. A. Muthukannan<sup>1</sup>, Dr. A. Sheeba Princess<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D-Research Scholar, PG & Research Department of English, Bishop Heber College (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University), Trichy. Email: [muthuknnn338@gmail.com](mailto:muthuknnn338@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Research Supervisor and Assistant Professor, PG & Research Department of English, Bishop Heber College (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University), Trichy.

Mr. A. Muthukannan, Dr. A. Sheeba Princess (2021). Psychological Trauma In Stephen King's Novel The Shining: A Study, *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(1), 675-679, 2021.

Submission Date: 15/10/2021

Acceptance Date: 17/12/2021

---

### Abstract

The term Psychological Trauma was actually a mental breakdown, which its cause due to stress or the emotions involved due to long term negative consequences. Stephen King's novels are the combination of trauma and fear with psychopathic characters. He crafted his novels with the background of psychopathic combination of the Jung's tradition. The research paper aims to bring out the characteristics of Claustrophobia formally called as Cabin Fever, an element of the Psychological Trauma in Stephen King's novel The Shining.

**Keywords:** Psychological Trauma, Claustrophobia, Cabin Fever and Psychopathic.

---

### Introduction

Stephen King's novels have the combination of fearful elements with psychopathic characters. The research paper aims to bring out characters with abnormalism especially nervous debility, choric fear, spatial phobia or other emotional imbalances happen due to cabin fever an element of severe trauma. Emotional and psychological trauma was a result of overwhelming stressful events that smash once sense of security, make them feel helpless. It leaves them stressed with upsetting emotions, horrible past memories, and anxiety. Traumatic experiences involves life threat, the situation of isolation can also result in trauma. It's not the objective circumstances that determine whether an event is traumatic, but once subjective emotional experience of the event. The more frightened and helpless situation one can feel, the more likely they are to be traumatized.

Corresponding author.

E-mail address: Email: [muthuknnn338@gmail.com](mailto:muthuknnn338@gmail.com)

### **Cabin fever an element of Psychological Trauma**

Stephen King points out, that the transformation is made by its own shapes and focuses in its craftsmanship with contemporary socio-cultural anxieties.

Thus the emotional & psychological symptoms of a person may cause due to shock, confusion, difficulty concentrating, anger, irritability, mood swings, anxiety, fear, guilt, shame, self-blame, feeling disconnected or numb. It also has some symptoms physical symptoms of insomnia or nightmares, fatigue are the cause of trauma.

With gloom, terror, thoughts of suffocation and lack of control, irrationality, hysteria, the novel *Shining* undoubtedly troops carry an unsettling similarity to psychiatric concepts of fear and phobia, which stress the irrationality, loss of control and the possible insanity of the sufferer from cover to cover. The *Shining* deals with claustrophobia – the fear of being struck up with physical structures which are mostly criticized here.

“claustrophobia” as “a state of mind in which there was a morbid fear of closed spaces . . . apparently different from, but in reality similar to, agoraphobia or the dread of open spaces” (Ball 18)

It is mentioned as a serious phobia which leads to chronic fear and other dangerous consequences. Alexander further describes claustrophobia as

“...unable to bear the feeling of enclosure. . . suffocating sensation overcomes them often combined with palpitation of the heart, and they break into a cold sweat. In fact, they become panic- stricken, uncertain, and unable to reason” (Alexander1)

The fear of enclosed spaces is claustrophobia. Many scenarios or triggers, like elevators, may cause it, particularly when overloaded to capacity, windowless rooms, and shuttered hotel rooms and sealed windows. In those with claustrophobia, even bedrooms with such a locking on the outside, small vehicles, and tight necked clothes may trigger a reaction. Typically, it is categorized as an anxiety disorder, often resulting in panic attacks. The initial stage of claustrophobia has been recognized by many factors, which causes the decrease in the size of amygdala, a part of brain associated with emotions. It occurs due to some classical conditions of hereditary. Claustrophobia means having fear of small spaces due to their genetic predisposition.

The *Shining* centers the life of a struggling writer Jack Torrance, a recovering alcoholic. He accepts a winter caretaker position in the Overlook hotel along with his family, to managing the financial situation. He stays their along with his wife Wendy and son Danny. There are some evil forces in the hotel. Jack got influenced by evil powers and tries to kill his wife and son. Jack was an extremely sympathetic character, in *Shining*. In spite of his power as a protagonist lies in his deep desire, and great potential, to be a good person. He is a good father, a good husband, and a good writer. Jack as a tragic figure occupied with demons like his temper, his liquor addiction, and the remembrance of his abusive father.

“It's a slang term for the claustrophobic reaction that can occur when people are shut in together

over long periods of time. The feeling of claustrophobia is externalized as dislike for the people you happen to be shut in with. In extreme cases it can result in hallucinations and violence — murder has been done over such minor things as a burned meal or an argument about whose turn it is to do the dishes.” (King 78)

Ullman the present owner of Overlook hotel seemed very nonplussed, which made a good world for Jack. He explains about the past tragic history of the hotel and about claustrophobia.

"I suspect you did make a mistake at that. Did he hurt them?"

"He killed them, Mr. Torrance, and then committed suicide. He murdered the little girls with a hatchet, his wife with a shotgun, and himself the same way. His leg was broken. Undoubtedly so drunk he fell downstairs." (King 10)

In the tragic history of Overlook has encountered many murders in that the most significant one was the previous winter caretaker Delberd Greedy. He killed his entire family due to claustrophobia.

“Hallorann had probed at the boy's father and he just didn't know. It wasn't like meeting someone who had the shine, or someone who definitely did not. Poking at Danny's father had been...strange, as if Jack Torrance had something... something... he was holding in so deeply submerged in himself that it was impossible to get to.” (King 105)

Hallorann the head chef of Overlook hotel had the telepathic ability that he calls as “the Shining”. He identified that Danny also has the same power of telepathy. Halloran suspects that Jack possessed something with him. Cabin Fever may have the symptoms of sleep walk, as Jung mentioned, Jack and Danny had encounter bizarre experience with the clock in the ballroom. Both Jack and Danny join in room no 217 of Overlook hotel, they have a frightening time; both of them have the nightmares of Jack killing Danny and Wendy. As part of the syndrome both having sleepwalk they meet the hedge animals and Roger, the dog man. The paranormal activity blocked the ability from consciousness, or never knew it was there in the first place experienced by both Jack and Danny. The isolating ability of Danny is not recognized in the due course of the novel because it makes him to look like there is something wrong with him. But the same time, Jack’s anxiety and abnormalism was expressed.

In another situation, Jack goes into a state of complete mental breakdown due to cabin fever and breaks the wireless radio which is the only source of communication. Jack loves isolation so he damaged the radio and the snow cad. This incident also prevents Danny and Wendy escaping from Overlook. While referring the documents of Overlook hotel it’s clearly mentions that Jack stays in the cellar of the hotel. Spending time in isolation, that too in cellar leads jack to cabin fever.

“The receipts slipped from his relaxing hand ... his eyelids, which had settled shut with his father's image tattooed on their backs ... opened a little bit and then slipped back down again. He twitched a little. Consciousness... seesawed lazily downward.” (King 154)

The unavailability of alcohol leads to mental destruction. Jack’s strangling of Danny at the Overlook is not an isolated incident. Wendy explains that her husband dislodged Danny’s shoulder in a drunken fit to spread his work paper across the room while Danny is seen by a doctor at the outset of the book. She states that Jack told her then that he was never going to consume another drop of alcohol

and that in five months he had kept his promise and had not had a beer. This timescale of five months is more significant in the novel because after a month passes in the hotel, Jack becomes insane. So, this would mean he had been, not consumed alcohol for nearly six or seven months. It is really hard to brush off this massive mismatch in time as a script mistake.

“It was an accident. I lost my temper.

Listen, hey, come on, please, just an accident” (King 32)

It was Jack who strangled Danny and a clear truth is uncovered. Jack Torrance was a physically abusive parent. There is no doubt Danny was literally scared in the hotel, had the bad dream of nightmares.

“... you’d never hurt Mommy, would you Daddy?”(King 89)

The Danny’s idea of spending the whole winter alone with his parents is a prescription for Jack’s violence to intensify. Jack and Wendy’s dispute over Danny’s injury is a traditional parenting argument in which the infant is abused by one partner. Jack tries to justify that Danny had did it to himself. Wendy asked for other explanation, she was scared that Jack might have done it like before. Jack then storms out of the flat, closing the door on his path out, giving a resentful look at Danny’s bedroom.

The Overlook hotel symbolizes the concept of hell. Jack's ethos as a working- class man, and his overall negative image on managerial types, make him to see the manager as a devil. The Overlook as a hotel it needs a manager to take care of it. Jack thinks pretty humorous too, much like a joke in a book. After he reads the history of the hotel, finds the reason for the Overlook’s failure in the past, in spite of the huge amount spent on it.

"The management must have been spectacularly bad"(King 107).

The hotel was filled with all negative things as alcoholic and the paid lover’s suicide in bathtub. In another incident some mobsters stayed in Overlook had given drinks to another gangster and his bodyguards then they killed them. The image of the scrapbook can be compared with the books on black magic, and Jack's books are burned up with the hotel. The novel *Shining*, contains many anxieties related to reading and writing, it also has the influence of narratives on the collective imagination.

In literature, the problematic concept of father-son ties is recurrent. In specific, Jack explains playing the game “Elevator” as it acts as a reminder of a classical poem by Theodore Roethke. Considering it, expresses something of Jack's relationship with his father, at least when he was Danny's age. Elevator is a game where Jack's father picks him up and spins him around. Often, he drops Jack on the floor while the guy is drunk.

“On other nights his father would only sweep him into a giggling ecstasy, through the zone of air where beer hung around his father's face like a mist of raindrops, to be twisted and turned and shaken like a laughing rag” (King 154).

Jack thinks that isolation is the way to regain sanity, to finish his play, and make some money

in the process. Still inside him, he can't escape from demons-isolation just makes it harder, and no one can search him. In addition, the solitude is an expansion of the often deeply isolated inner life of Jack. The alcoholism leads to his temper, and as his father's gift he lives an abnormal worldly life of complete isolation. The identification of Jack with them seems to open up all of the evil of the Overlook.

Jack and Wendy are also far from their homes, which are unstable. The greatest causes in the alienation of his extended family are undoubtedly Jack's drinking and poor temper. For him the ability of Danny to read minds and see what could happen in the future is extremely isolating. At five, Danny must deal with something within his society that is not given credence. When he meets Dick Halloran the cook in Overlook, who has similar abilities, this sense of isolation is eased somewhat, because Danny has found another of his kind. While the book focuses on isolation, it also looks at how isolation can be broken through with love and courage.

Moreover, in firmly linking claustrophobia with its conceptual opposite, agoraphobia, in the description of the modern metropolis, the novel contemporary medical analyses that identified the sensation of phobia, and particularly of agoraphobia, as symptomatic of modernity itself. It is not by accident that the chief characters suffering from spatial phobias.

### Conclusion

All of these characters of Stephen King are products of the psychological trauma. The novel *The Shining* has the settings of psychological conflicts. In novel *Shining* the influence of claustrophobia, alcoholism, sleepwalk, mismanagement, temper, frustration, isolation and abusive parental care are the reasons of tragedy. According to Morse Stephen King's protagonists are, subjected to the constant excitation and irritation, which King saw as conducive to abnormal states of morbid fear, the characters provokes a phobic experience, whether by its emptiness as in *The Shining*. A representative horror writer of the period, Stephen King was not a medical man. Nevertheless, his fiction provides us with phobic readings of monstrosity. Also, it closely linked to the spatial experience of contemporary style of horror.

### Works Cited

1. Alexander, Frederic William. *Claustrophobia: Cause and Cure*, 2020.  
[www.netmeds.com/health-library/post/claustrophobia-causes-symptoms-and-treatment](http://www.netmeds.com/health-library/post/claustrophobia-causes-symptoms-and-treatment). Accessed on 22 July 2020.
2. Ball, Benjamin. "On Claustrophobia." *British Medical Journal* 2 (1879): p371.
3. Campbell, Harry. *Claustrophobia*. *British Medical Journal*, 1893. pp. 463-472
4. *Claustrophobia*.  
[www.healthline.com/health/claustrophobia#:~:text=Claustrophobia%20is%20a%20situation%20phobia,of%20the%20most%20common%20phobias](http://www.healthline.com/health/claustrophobia#:~:text=Claustrophobia%20is%20a%20situation%20phobia,of%20the%20most%20common%20phobias).
5. Jung, Carl Gustav, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (London 1996).
6. Jung, Carl Gustav: *the development of personality*. 1991 ed. London Routledge.
7. King, Stephen. *The Shining*. Doubleday publishers, 1977. p78,p10,p105,p89,p107,p154,p32
8. Robinson, L. (2018, November 2). Emotional and psychological trauma. *HelpGuide.org*.  
<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/ptsd-trauma/coping-with-emotional-and-psychological-trauma>.