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## Alienation in Families and the Breakdown in Children's Educational Process: Ann Tyler's *Teenage Wasteland* (1983)

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### Abstract

This research article highlights that postmodern era after the modern period causes fragmentation because of the existence of alienation and isolation senses in family units and ends up undesirable failure in children's educational process as reflected in American writer Ann Tyler's *Teenage Wasteland*. Thereby, these are concurrently the basics of modernism that destructs human lives. Similar to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Tyler emphasizes the existence of a dramatic monologue deriving from the disillusionment in the infertile land and the alienation in social living. Tyler specifies the presence of a meaningless life and alienation for children. At the same time, Tyler concerns how parents become unable to deal with their children in their intensive working life. She hints that children become unsuccessful in their educational process due to their parents' intensive working. Therefore, the teenager and his parents have mutual lack of communication in their alienated worlds. A "wasteland" in the target short story implies having the sense of loneliness which causes failure in children's educational world and rises the disturbance in family units. Accordingly, family members are the victims of their working life and embrace the senses of alienation and isolation in their inner worlds. Therefore, this article will pursue a psychoanalytical consideration in the selected short story.

**Keywords:** Disorganization, meaninglessness, lack of communication, trauma, alienation.

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## Ailelerde Yabancılaşma ve Çocukların Eğitim Yaşantısındaki Bozulma: Ann Tyler'ın *Teenage Wasteland* adlı Kısa Hikâyesi (1983)

### Öz

Bu araştırma makalesi, modern dünyadan sonra postmodern dünya içerisinde aile bireylerinin birbirlerinden uzaklaşma ve yalnızlık yolu ile parçalanma yaşadıklarının altını çizerek çocukların eğitim yaşantısında istenmeyen başarısızlık sonucuna sebep olduğunu Amerikalı yazar Ann Tyler'ın *Teenage Wasteland* adlı kısa hikâyesini ele alarak vurgulamaktadır. Bu özellikler, aynı zamanda insan yaşantısını mahveden modernizmde sahip olduğu özelliklerdir. Tyler, T. S. Eliot'un *The Waste Land* adlı uzun şiir çalışmasına benzer bir şekilde hem verimsiz topraklardaki hayal kırıklığını hem de sosyal yaşamda görülen yabancılaşmayı ve anlamsız yaşantının sebep olduğu dramatik monoloğu sergiler. Aynı zamanda, ebeveynlerin ve çocukların yoğun çalışma hayatından dolayı karşılıklı iletişim kopukluğuna sahip olduklarını belirtmektedir. Çocuklar ailelerinin çalışma hayatlarındaki yoğunluktan dolayı eğitim yaşantılarında başarısızlık yaşadıklarını ortaya koyarlar. Dolayısıyla, bu hikâyedeki genç ve ebeveynleri yabancılaşmış dünyalarında karşılıklı iletişim kopukluğuna

sahiptirler. Seçilmiş olan kısa hikâyeki bu çorak toprak aslında gençlerin hayatlarında yaşadığı anlamsızlık ve amaçsızlığı vurgular: Tyler, yaşanan boşluğun ise çocukların başarısızlığına ve ailelerindeki huzursuzluğa sebep olduğunu belirtir. Aslında, aile bireyleri artık çalışma dünyalarının kurbanı olmuşlardır: Yalnızlık ve yabancılaşma hissini böylece iç dünyalarında kucaklamışlardır. Dolayısıyla, bu makale belirtilen kısa hikâye içerisinde bir psikoanalitik izlenim takip edecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Düzensizlik, anlamsızlık, iletişimsizlik, travma, yabancılaşma.

## INTRODUCTION

*We accept and welcome, therefore, as conditions to which we must accommodate ourselves, great inequality of environment, the concentration of business, industrial and commercial, in the hands of a few, and the law of competition between these, as being not only beneficial but essential for the future progress of the race.*

*Andrew Carnegie, The Gospel of Wealth*

*We struggle through any pain or darkness in nothing but the hope that wemay receive it and through any term of work in the prayer to keep it.*

*Eudora Welty, One Time, One Place*

As Andrew Carnegie expresses in the epigraph, humanity is terribly affected from competitive working life. The educational world in social life is, thereby, influenced by the rushing working life. In addition to Carnegie, Eudora Welty hints how individuals are in pain or darkness in their psychological worlds. They are influenced from the competitive world and the unwanted circumstances that generate in family units. Ann Tyler's *Teenage Wasteland* (1983) fundamentally expresses that the postmodern literary characteristics are affectual for family members. Especially, parents who devote themselves to the pursuit of working life in the rushing world compulsorily become unable to deal with their children's educational process.

This article highlights that individuals, thereby, transform psychologically and behaviorally within their social lives as depicted in Ann Tyler's *Teenage Wasteland*. Tyler concerns the pain that individuals have lack of communication because of their alienation and isolation. Thus, this article profounds a lack of interaction that causes a decline in the educational process of teenagers as in Tyler's *Teenage Wasteland* in which family members have alienation among themselves. Parents have to neglect their family relationships when they substantially concern about their working life. Their children stay at home as parents conform themselves to their working life and are unable to deal with their domestic responsibilities. They do not deal with their children's educational world because of devoting themselves to their working lives. In this case, parents are unable to pursue their interrelations in their family units. However, a lack of interaction ends up a decline in mutual responsibilities and a fragmentation in family units causes the sense of alienation and isolation as T. S. Eliot signifies in *The Waste Land*. Therefore, a comparative outlook will be requisite both for *The Waste Land* and *Teenage Wasteland*.

While analyzing Tyler's selected short story, it is requisite to concentrate on postmodernism: Because in *Teenage Wasteland*, postmodernism is influential with its characteristics of alienation and isolation in social life. In postmodernism, there is difficulty to have social unities in family organizations as in Donny's life. This means that fragmented lives emerge with the senses of alienation and isolation: "Postmodernism appreciates the modernist nostalgia for the sublime, but it is not satisfied with feeling nostalgic for it. Postmodernism tries to get initiated into the secrets of the universe, the sublime, which remains as enigma and unexpected" (Kantarcioğlu, 1997, p. 195). The nostalgic case is about caring for unities in families. The nostalgia for unities in families disappears in postmodern world. There are frustrations of family members at the end of their indifference to each other. "While for instance modernism is defined by

rationality, transcendence, continuity, and depth, postmodernism is said to be characterized by irrationality, immanence, discontinuity or surface" (Hoffmann, 2005, p. 35). In this case, there is meaninglessness in life: There is discontinuity in the same attitudes and behaviours in social life. Individuals, especially parents become indifferent to each other because of the rushing working life. In the selected studied text, Donny feels the sense of having parental indifference as a result of their devoting themselves to working life. Accordingly, Tyler is critical of the lack of unity in Donny's family unit. While criticizing the social fragmentation, indicating the existence of postmodernism, the aim is to hint how the literary genre intends for family unification. Although a psychological balance in the family and unification is significant in the family in postmodernism (Kantarcioglu, 2009, p. 274), it is difficult to actualize in social living. Therefore, an integrated life is utopic to have in the postmodern world. Discontinuous family unity exists in postmodernism. Therefore, postmodernism is antimodernist and changes in time process. In the postmodern period, there are fragmented families in their social lives. However, the unexpected structure is how family members become irrelevant to each other and they have retrospectivity to have an integrated social organization and unity in families:

*As for postmodernism, it is an attempt at creating a perfectly integrated society, just like the attempt at unified sensibility made by the XIX. century romantics. A postmodernist rejects the modernist ideals such as autonomy and purity and wants to be an integral part of the society in which he lives. Postmodernism is a revolutionary movement that is against modern rationalism, humanism, and intellectual aristocracy. That is, it is against the idea of reforming society from without. Postmodernism is against the monolithic organic wholeness of modernism, it tries to foreground the suppressed or marginalized differences and to establish a pluralistic organic wholeness (Kantarcioglu, 1997, p. 196).*

Postmodernism concerns the existence of differences, confusions, frustrations, irrationality, and discontinuity. As the quotation hints, postmodernists wish for an integrated social life. However, opposite to what they desire, they cannot acquire a unified sensibility. Contrary to modernism, they reject rationalistic and humanistic values and intellectual considerations (Forghani 2015, p. 98). In most cases, postmodernists are against values and moralities, because they differentiate from culture to culture. In a way, they are confused and irrelevant to each other. The senses of alienation and isolation is confronted because of confusions, frustrations and differences in Donny's educational world. To illustrate, T. S. Eliot emphasizes how individuals experience this fragmented life:

*Eliot depicts an individual's fragmented soul . . . , meaninglessness, isolation, and disillusionment as a result of the social void that surrounds him/her; similarly, complex mental structures exist in Tyler's Teenage Wasteland. Most importantly, in both works behind the negative outlook on contemporary life lies a The Fisher King Myth in T. S. Eliot's Waste Land and Anne Tyler's Teenage Wasteland longing for spiritual awakening. Although much scholarly attention has been given to the implementation of the Fisher King myth —an allegory of the process of fertile self recovery as cure for the illness of sterile alienation (Köseman, 2020, p. 72-73).*

Similar to T. S. Eliot, the previous quotation concurrently reflects that Ann Tyler deals with the teenage world psychoanalytically and concerns how teenagers feel themselves alienated and isolated because of the experience of indifference when their parents devote themselves to their working lives. Mutual lack of interaction appears in their family units.

Focusing on child and parents incompatibility, the reasons of the problem is related to how the lack of interaction because of intensive working in families ends up family disorders in social life. As Sarah Beth Estes reflects committing time more on labor market causes tremendous matters within families (2005, p. 293). The connection between child and parents is affected from work life and responsibilities decline in family organization. Parents become less friendly towards their children so

that they deal with their school duties slightly. This circumstance causes a breakdowns in school and child incompatibility that revolves around the reasons for educational failure. As a result of this, the marital conflicts inspire the generation of a lack of interaction in the family.

While concerning on incompatibility, George Simmel hints the lack of interaction among individuals so that families experience the decline of it. Children depict a failure in their educational process and the success in their schooling ends up when they are disinterested in their lessons.

*Simmel thought of society (or unity) as something that existed and was produced wherever several individuals are engaged in reciprocal relationships, or Wechselwirkungen (Simmel 1909: 296). According to Simmel, reciprocity between individuals is generated by specific impulses—of a sexual or religious nature, or arising out of specific purposes or interests such as defense, attack, gain, or instruction—that lead individuals to act for or against each other, or more generally bring them to various forms of “being-together.” (Keel, 2016, p. 1)*

Reciprocity generates at the end of interaction discrepancies. This hints the necessity of a psychoanalytical outlook for the family in *Teenage Wasteland*: Donny is alone and needs a well-organized living in which his family communicates with him and concerns about his lessons. The child (Donny) in *Teenage Wasteland* is indifferent to his lessons and deals with other things in his life. Thus, he reflects the complexity in his life since his parents do not concern about him, but care about their working life. Therefore, he is far from his instruction and does not regard anything in his social life. He has a strong departure from his family interaction. He is hardly affected from his parents' work lives' influence on his social life. This indicates that there is a psychoanalytical consideration in this article as child parent incompatibility became as a longstanding study in the post-industrial consumer society which is bound to hard work in its competitive life style:

*This new period (1940 to 1965) was characterized, among other things, by the fact that alongside machine-made industrial consumer goods (as from the early 19th century) and machinemade, machines (as from the mid-19th century), we now find machine-produced raw materials and foodstuffs. Late capitalism, far from representing a post-industrial society, thus appears as the period in which all branches of the economy are fully industrialized for the first time; to which one could further add the increasing period in which all branches of the economy are fully industrialized for the first time; to which one could further add the increasing mechanization of the sphere of circulation (with the exception of pure repair services) and the increasing mechanization of the superstructure. (Lyotard, 1985, p. xiv-xv)*

Jameson in the Foreword of the *Postmodern Condition* hints how social life is affected from mechanized and industrialized world so that individuals in the post-industrial world have to change their life styles according to the hard work ethic. They spend most of their time for their working environment. Their lives in the competitive world, thereby, influence their family relations, however, the relations among family members weaken. Their interaction between themselves and their children becomes fragmented as seen through Donny who experiences failure in his educational system.

### **Alienated Worlds in Families and Children's Educational Process**

While correlating T. S. Eliot with Ann Tyler, the presence of complex living in modern social life should be hinted: “Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results” (Eliot, 1986, p. 2171). This complexity in life inspires disorganization and creates fragmentation in families: Children's educational process is thereby affected from this unrest. Tyler's short story is entitled *Teenage Wasteland* to sign how teenagers experience complexity, disorganization and fragmentation in their family lives and social worlds.

Tyler is critical of the disruption in their inner worlds and hints that there should be an organization in their family unit. Missing their organized family structure hints the Fisher King's legend. Both Eliot and Tyler reshape it to have a revival. Eliot wants the creation of a regular social life and Tyler wants the end of a lack of interaction between parents and their children that creates disturbance in educational world of children. To illustrate, Donny, the protagonist in *Teenage Wasteland*, expresses the complexity of his inner world and accuses his parents not to deal entirely with him. Accordingly, Donny has a feeling of darkness in his heart and reflects his dark inner monologue because of feeling the sense of alienation and isolation (Köseman, 2013, p. 88). Hinting the psychological darkness in Tyler's and Eliot's literary works reminds the darkness in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Individuals' psychological worlds are confused: They express the fragmentation in social lives as the reason for disorganization in family units. As Cox expresses "*It is not surprising that T. S. Eliot was so much influenced by Heart of Darkness when he was writing The Waste Land* (1971, p. 13). Likely, Tyler explains about her inner world's darkness in her life. Daisy, the mother, is a teacher and fails to deal with his son because of her busy working life. The center of their complex relationship is essential for Donny's educational world. Donny is alone and alienated and cannot concentrate on his educational process. He disregards his educational world and does not focus on it but concerns in a psychoanalytic sense how Donny's family life is fragmented because of their busy working life. To illustrate, Donny's father is quite indifferent for his family relationships because of his busy business life. On the other hand, although his mother is interested in her son's educational life, she cannot change her son's activities and behaviors to pursue a regular study process. Donny's lack of interest in his lessons causes the mother to worry about her son and drives her to choose a psychiatrist for him to find the reasons of his lack of interest in his lessons. When the disorder in family is considered, they are psychologically fragmented due to isolation and alienation. However, Donny prefers to be lost from view ultimately and runs away from his house due to the state of alienation and isolation in his family relations. Yet, his parents become worried about Donny's absence: What they care is to find him in any case.

In the postmodern world, individuals experience fragmentation within their family units as reflected in Donny's life. He and his family has lack of interaction. Therefore, he has a sense of meaninglessness in his inner world. This emphasizes that individuals like Donny and his parents feel pain and psychological darkness in their inner worlds because of not having a well organized family unit. Their aspiration for an organized living is their essential expectation when parents intend to conform themselves to the requirements of the rushing world. Thereby, most children feel themselves free for not concerning about their educational system's assignments as in Ann Tyler's elected short story. When parents solemnly care about their working life, undesirable mutual indifference emerges as an inevitable ethical value between them and their children:

*An ethics of indifference is an ethics of a variety of possible orientations characterized by not being concerned about something, such as not caring about it or not being interested in it. The flip side of at least some forms of indifference is caring about things, or feeling empathy or sympathy towards them. It is therefore natural to think that an ethics of indifference would be closely related to what has come to be known as 'the ethics of care' (Lillehammer, 2017, p. 31).*

Mutual lack of concern or empathy is considerable when there is indifference in a family organization. "*Ethics of care*" becomes a retrospective sympathetic issue as parents devote themselves to their working lives. Individuals become alienated to each other in their families. They long for caring about their children: Lack of interaction causes alienation and isolation among family members. Children, thereby, experience failure in their educational process due to the lack of interaction. To illustrate, the interpretation of educational life in *Teenage Wasteland* manifests how children feel pain due to failure in their educational process. Therefore, this article will concern a psychoanalytical outlook

in literary basis by analyzing Ann Tyler's *Teenage Wasteland* as depicted in the Introduction of this study. It deals with how a teenage boy's educational life is distructed because of the depiction of considerable sense of indifference in his family unit in the postmodern rushing world. In this case, this study will concern the fragmentation in family units because of their lack of communication.

The characters in *Teenage Wasteland* are stereotypical. They represent how the individuals in the postmodern world become meaningless and senseless. The mother, Daisy, is called by her son's school tutor: Donny is complained to her because of not concerning about his lessons. Yet, the mother feels senseless and accuses the son because of his mistakes. A strong gap exists among the school management, the boy, and the boy's family. The mother regards herself inadequate to care for his son's educational life. She feels she is occupied with the boy's educational life and his environment. However, Daisy is informed that Donny acts out of his school training and hangs all around so that he becomes a disturbing student for his school management and his parents (Tyler, 1995, p. 112). This implies that Donny is a boy who does not care about his school education. Thus, Donny has a meaningless teenage life.

Hinting the meaninglessness in their lives, *Teenage Wasteland* has the same name of a song entitled *Baba O'Riley* by the Who in the United States (Tyler, 1995, p. 117). The song is symbolic for the boy's and the parents' social world in their postmodern life. Here, the parents and the teenage boy represent individuals who are living in social life full of meaninglessness and complexities. Donny listens to the song himself and feels relaxed at the end. Here, Donny actually borrows the album *Teenage Wasteland*. This symbolizes that he wants to free himself from his wasteland by that song. Daisy defines that "loud music would be spilling from Cal's [the tutor] windows. Once it was the Who, which Daisy recognized from the time that Donny had borrowed the album. *Teenage Wasteland*, she said aloud, identifying the song, and Matt [the father] gave a short, dry laugh" (Tyler, 1995, p. 117). This loud music voices the cry in Donny's inner world as a result of his suffering. Accordingly, the song can be accepted as his and his family's inner monologues. Noteworthy, Ann Tyler concerns about how family life is fragmented in the postmodern world and how children's educational world fails as observed through Donny in *Teenage Wasteland*.

As Tyler cares for the teenage world, then, it will be requisite to consider whether she has any problematic living due to reflecting a lifelike situation. To illustrate, Robertson expresses that focusing on her domestic dramas in her literary works, Tyler fundamentally correlates them to her own background. She experiences family complexity in her life:

*[Her] narrative vision of family disorder seems to have been derived from her own life's problems and patterns. The existence of domestic dramas can be illustrated through having a foreign husband. The fact that she is married to an Iranian is bound to have had some influence on the theme of difference* (Robertson, 1985, p. 140).

This implies that Tyler's personal experiences and her literary studies reflect her inner monologues as seen in a large number of various periodical writings (Petry, 1990, p. 5). Therefore, *Teenage Wasteland* is seen as a semi-biographical study because of depicting Tyler's own life. Tyler's literary works substantially exemplify her subjective qualities. Her literary pieces function as the voice of her inner world. For instance, Tyler manifests her own life in her writings and mentions about her own personal matters through expressing her emotions and feelings (Petry, 1990, p. 5). In this case, the conflicts within her family unit are the main sources to deal with in her literary works. She manifests them through her thoughts and feelings in her studies:

*The voice I 'hear' is that sort of neutral, neuter voice that your mind employs when it's thinking in actual words; it seems that when I'm really inside what I'm working on, my mind's voice sometimes begins*

*rolling ahead of its own accord. Most often, this occurs with dialogue, or with a character's internal monologue (Willrich, 1992, p. 516).*

The quotation implies that Tyler's inner world is complex. Her inner voice becomes an inspiration for her writing. It is possible to read her inner monologue and listen to her mind's voice. Her writings imply what kind of a person she is. Through the dialogues in her stories, she defines herself what kind of people are surrounding her. Yet, she is grateful to write everything she thinks safely in her literary world. She comments about her life as Willrich expresses that she is as if watching all the world behind a window: *It seems to me often that I'm sort of looking from a window at something at a great distance and wondering what it is. But I'm not willing to actually go into it. I would rather sit behind the window sit and write about it. So all my curiosity has to be answered within myself. . . .* (Willrich, 1992, p. 497). This hints that she is a really curious person and writes what she observes around her.

Written in the complex world of postmodernism, *Teenage Wasteland* reflects the main problem of the lack of communication that most family members have in their inner worlds. The sense of complexity generates because of the existence of disorders in social life. As Robert Wiebe expresses, rising industrialization, mechanization, and urbanization as well as materialism is the reason for the matters of social and economic disorders (1967, p. 42-43). Lack of interaction in this confused life becomes the substantial problem that most individuals face in the current world. Following, irrelevance to each other is a result of hard work in working centers. To illustrate, Robert Wiebe in *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* defines:

*Particularly with the mild depression between 1883-1885, the number of small-business failures increased sharply. . . . The basic distinction lay between individual enterprise and corporate wealth, between the scattered knights of private initiative and the soulless monsters of monopoly (Wiebe, 1967, p. 46).*

The problem of depression drove individuals for hard work to earn their lives as seen in *Teenage Wasteland* in which Daisy is in a rat-race for teaching and his husband has intensiveness in his business. In later phases, social and economic disorders play a significant role for individuals' competitive life while earning money. Especially with the rise of materialism, Darwin's "*the survival of the fittest*" reawakens. Each economic entrepreneur works hard for economic competitiveness. For example, for John D. Rockefeller, Jay Gould, J. P. Morgan, and Andrew Carnegie, the will for gaining money is more apparent. These businessmen depict an economic system in which there is inequality with the payments to the workers despite they work hard (Köseman, 2013, p. 62-65). The new socio-economic circumstances, thereby, result in a corruption of moral values. The new entrepreneurs in that competitive life play a significant role for the depravity in the social and economic lives (Cohen, 2002, p. 86). Especially with the later periods, those corruptions influence family organizations' as seen in Donny's family life in which there are fragmented interrelationships based on the sense of alienation.

Jean François Lyotard, a well-known philosopher and a highly formulator of postmodernism, expresses in *Postmodern Condition* that society is depraved due to progress realized through "*the scientific, technological, political and cultural changes of the late twentieth century.*" Therefore, technological improvements and developments are a means of social fragmentation. Those changes end up in the sense of nihilism in social life and affect social life as a whole. Moreover, everything even knowledge is influenced from postmodern life's capitalist life style that necessitates hard work. Lyotard states, "*both capitalist renewal and prosperity and the disorienting upsurge of technology would have an impact on the status of knowledge.*" (1984, p. 38). Therefore, everything in social life is influenced from this "*renewal and prosperity.*" Furthermore, in this capitalist system, most individuals are bound to competitive work as Carnegie expresses in the epigraph of this article so that it impacts their interrelationships in their social life.

Lyotard notes that “a self does not amount to much, but no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before. Young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, a person is always located at “nodal points” of specific communication circuits” (1984, p. 15). Having complex relationship in their current world implies that there are problems in their personal lives as Donny has in his educational world. His parental life suffers from lack of communication and encourages his failure in his schooling. Thus, the “nodal point” is having communication in daily life for every individual. Discrepancy creates problems in social life in the capitalist competitive world.

The communicative inability hints how individuals are painful in their inner worlds. In this case, lacking strong family interrelations is an inevitable reason for the problems of the postmodern world. To exemplify, this inability hints that children are neglected in their family organizations because of parents’ intensive working life. This emphasizes that there is a decline of unity in family units: Neglecting children undesirably exists in social living due to hard work ethics in working centers. “Negative impacts of it on children’s cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioral development can lead to psychological and physical problems in the future life of children” (Koçsoy, 2016, p. 452). This emphasizes that when children are neglected, unavoidable psychological and physical matters emerge in families. Being alone and isolated, Donny also experiences a psychological void because of his loneliness. Neglected children’s educational processes are influenced by the undesirable destructive conclusions of working life: It necessitates spending a great amount of time in working hours. Parents cannot be interested in their family matters wholeheartedly because of being dependent on their working life. Thus, the teenage boy’s educational life fails because of his alienation and isolation in *Teenage Wasteland*. He disregards his educational process at the end. Therefore, the wish of a recovery for educational inadequacy is the substantial problematic case for most families in social living. Here, the Fisher King’s Legend of revival should be reminded. A call for a regeneration is a call for refreshment. A new fresh living is desired in which there is a wish for unified living. They are desperate of their lives and have retrospectivity for their past to have a strong relationship in families. However, lack of unified living ends up in the destruction of children’s educational process.

Many social cases influence educational world as reflected in the following quotation. As Andrew Carnegie hints in the epigraph, when families are dependent on their working life, they cannot depart that competitive life. Their gospel of wealth significantly influences them. As a result, education becomes efficient and changes within social transformation. Mathias Urban states in Desjandis who focuses on the interaction among the family, the employment, and the environment:

*Urban approaches the theme of education and social transformation by critically analysing European and international policy approaches and strategies towards young children, their families and communities in a rapidly changing global context. The early childhood research and practice community has welcomed and even contributed to the idea that early childhood education is a good economic investment* (2015, p. 443).

As teenagers’ educational process change within social transformation, then it is better to correlate it with “economic investments.” Interacting with various institutions and social policies implies that the social variations strongly influence the teenage world and concurrently cause the existence of a change within family organizations as Donny has in *Teenage Wasteland*. As the title depicts, the teenage world turns out to be like a wasteland in a meaningless living. In this sense, being affected by other factors like family, employment and the environment, the educational phase is in great trouble in the social world.

Such a void living in which each individual treat as indifferent to each other brings into mind the inadequacy of educational studies held in schools and family lives. The educational phase manifests the pain of isolation and corruption of both the children and the parents. Ann Tyler’s *Teenage Wasteland*

depicts the fragmentation in educational world when each family member feels great pain due to the indifference they experience in their family unit: It is like a wasteland because of having no respect and interaction. Despite their lack of connection to each other, the tutor in the educational world of the teenage boy in the target story states that what is important is the child. His happiness, self-esteem, and grades at school follow his psychological situation (Tyler, 1995, p. 116). As a partner of the educational world, the tutor thinks about the boy's future. What she cares about is the psychology of the student.

However, inefficient interrelation reflects itself in various family units. It implies that individuals experience the state of fragmentation in their personal lives in *Teenage Wasteland*: Being alone and estranged become their indispensable senses. However, they inspire to release from their alienation and fragmentation and apply some psychological therapies for recovery, i.e., matters of mental cases generate as social problems in daily lives. Individuals experience disillusionment, senselessness, aimlessness, and alienation in family settings (Köseman, 2020, p. 72). Therefore, there is a lack of interaction in family units. This becomes clear in the educational process when the school management calls parents to let them learn about the realities in the boy's educational life. Parents, like Daisy, become disillusioned and worried when they learn about indispensable realities of failure and disinterest of the child for his educational process. Tyler's target short story depicts the complexities of family life: A teenage boy withdraws from his family because of his parents' controlling unit over him. He becomes interrelated with a tutor whose methods are questionable because of trying to find the causes of his psychological matters. The tutor comes to the conclusion that their lives are like the wasteland in which they are desperate to have a revival in their lives. There are complexities in their interrelationships, yet, they try to organize the circumstances they are disturbed of. As a matter of fact, they live in disillusionment, have alienation, senselessness, and have lack of meaningfulness in life (Rosetti, 2006, p. 174). Therefore, there is no unity in their family unit and, thereby, the teenage boy elopes from his family ultimately. The father, deals with his working life wholeheartedly. In a complex living, the mother is disturbed of not being entirely related to his son. This hints that the existence of three main characters, the mother, the father, and the teenage boy in *Teenage Wasteland* exemplify their lack of interaction: They are all unsatisfied with their living conditions. They are hungry for mutual interaction in their family unit. To illustrate, Daisy is aware of the fact that their lack of love and respect in her family and surrounding causes their destruction in the family structure. Donny's running away is a hint for their destruction. However, Daisy is unable to assist Donny for his recovery from psychological matters, and, substantially, he runs away to an unknown destination. Such a problematic situation disturbs Daisy's day and nights wholeheartedly:

*At night, Daisy lies awake and goes over Donny's life. She is trying to figure out what went wrong, where they made their first mistake. . . Then, at other times she excuses him, for, without him, Donny might have left earlier. Who really knows? In the end, she can only sigh and search for a cooler spot on the pillow (Tyler, 1995, p. 120).*

It is clear that Daisy accepts(accuses) themselves as the cause of Donny's departure from his family. She professes that their lack of interaction in the family is the substantial cause of his loneliness in his social life. Daisy cannot find the main reason why Donny prefers running away. His departure makes her really painful and causes her to have his absence emotionally.

The tutor directly explains that Donny and his family have the existence of meaningless and alienated life in the postmodern world. The father is occupied with his business world. The mother is busy with her teaching. Donny feels safe to hang around rather than dealing with his school programme. In such a circumstance, the discomfort of the family members is reflected through the mother's disturbance in their domestic world. When she has a therapy to recover from her disturbance, she expresses: *"I think this kid is hurting. Do you know? Here's a serious, sensitive kid telling you he'd like to*

take on some grown-up challenges, and you're giving him the message that he can't be trusted. Don't you understand how that hurts?" (Tyler, 1995, p. 289-230). It is clear that family members are unable to contact each other in the family unit. Their lack of relation wholeheartedly affects Donny's educational life. He becomes disinterested in his lessons and has an escape from from his family. The mother mentions that "the kid is hurting them." Hurting reflects how they are unhappy in their family unit. When they are alienated from each other, they have no time to care for their own problems. They are left alone in their own world. This emphasizes that the mother, the father, and the teenage boy are all alienated and become as "the other" to each other. Hence, time flows quickly and they are lost in the rat-race of their social living. However, referring to the teenage boy as the one who cannot be trusted in his daily life is a big problem that hurts the mother. When parents cannot trust their children, this emphasizes that they do not rely on each other. Therefore, they consider themselves as different and estranged to each other.

In addition to their estrangement, the parents are concurrently responsible for Donny's running away. They become a controlling machine over Donny to regulate his attitudes and behaviors in his life. Donny has a parents-directed family unit in which he cannot direct himself. Unfortunately, being unable to control and direct himself, he is not successful in his lessons. Since most individuals are mechanized in their working life, they devote themselves to their working life, which causes fragmented living in their family unit. The parents are busy in their working life and cannot entirely deal with their children. In that case, they change their state of affairs at home:

*It isn't that we're not concerned. Both of us are. And we have done what we could, whatever we could think of. We do not let him watch TV on school nights. We don't let him talk on the phone till he's finished his homework. But he tells us he does not have any homework or he did it all in study hall. How are we to know what to believe? (Tyler, 1995, p. 112).*

Having a mechanized life reflects the fragmentation in their inner worlds. As a whole, restrictions over Donny end up a significant challenge: No mutual respect and love exist in their lives. However, they have retrospectivity for their unity at home. They become like the other one to each other. Parents become like the controlling machine over their children. Ordering what to do is a sign for directing the children. As seen in the previous quotation, family behavior is depicted when they restrict the child in his actions. Such a control reflects a "parental hostility" toward children as in the following citation:

*Parental hostility is an internal or emotional reaction of anger, enmity, or resentment directed toward a child. Aggression is any overt act which is intended to hurt the child, physically or verbally. Parental aggression may be manifested by critical impatience, irritability, or antagonism about the child. Aggressive (hostile) parents may nag, scold, and ridicule their child, and they may say how the child gets on their nerves or express their frustration and irritation at the child's behavior in other ways (Rohner & Rohner, 1981, p. 249).*

Parental control over children causes a breakdown in their educational phases. Instead of having a psychological interaction with the children, parental frustration and irritation create enmity between parents and their children: As a result of parental impatience, children even elope from their houses at the end as Donny does in the target short story. As the quotation notes, parental emotional reaction of anger at children's unsuccessful cases becomes a void in most cases and creates unwanted conclusions. Donny, the teenage boy, feels that he has a teenage wasteland in his life when he has his family's control over him. He regards his life as a meaningless place to waste time. When Donny has the therapy, it is noted that he is not a problematic person, but an academic help is requisite for him:

*Donny said the psychologist was a jackass and the tests were really dumb, but he kept all three of his appointments, and when it was time for the follow-up conference with the psychologists and both parents, Donny combed his hair and seemed unusually sober and subdued. The psychologist said Donny had no serious*

*emotional problem. He was merely going through a difficult period in his life. He required some academic help and a better sense of self-worth* (Tyler, 1995, p. 113).

This quotation plays a significant role to regard who the guilty one is: Donny or the parents? Here, parents are indifferent to their son. They do not regard him as self-worthy as the psychologist expresses. The psychologist directly reflects that "*Donny has no serious emotional problem*" and adds that he has a difficult period in his life. No notable emotional statement exists with Donny. However, what is problematic is their family interaction: It causes a breakdown in Donny's educational term at school. This emphasizes that because of the parents' irrelevance to their son, there is a strong gap in their interrelations.

Despite the fact that the mother regards herself as being a model mother for Donny, accordingly, she cannot evaluate how she is away from his son. She is a teacher: however, she cannot deal with her own son's educational process because of the intensity of her own working life. To illustrate from Tyler's short story: "*she had always told Donny he had talent, was smart, was good with his hands, she had made a big to-do over every little gift he gave her. She had gone too far, although, Lord knows, she had meant every word. Was that his trouble?*" (Tyler, 1995, p. 113). Although she seems to be a model mother, she cannot satisfy herself because of Donny's problems in his educational life. She is not happy because she has no close connection with her son. She praises her son in all his actions and encourages him in his studies, yet, she and her son become alienated to each other. Although she is satisfied that she supports Donny in all his attitudes and behaviors, her controlling aspect reflects that she has two-dimensional aspects. That is, she concurrently accepts and rejects his attitudes and behaviors:

*Rejection and acceptance together form what we call the warmth dimension of parental behavior; permissiveness and strictness together form what we call the control dimension. Both warmth and control are bipolar dimensions where, for example, rejection or the absence of warmth and affection stands at one pole of the scale in opposition to acceptance at the other. Similarly, permissiveness or lax control (or alternatively, high autonomy-granting) stands at one pole of the scale in opposition to strictness or restrictive control at the other* (Rohner & Rohner, 1981, p. 245).

As she accepts and rejects Donny's behaviors and attitudes, Donny transforms himself and becomes a really complex and problematic individual. Permissiveness and strictness exist in Daisy's world: She both accepts and rejects Donny. Warmth and control are contrasting issues and, thereby, creates a distractive student. The psychologist undermines Donny's self-esteem, and he always warns the parents about Donny's youth. Daisy accepts that the psychologist is right for warning them. At the end of his warning, Daisy

*[...] saw Donny suddenly from a whole new angle. His pathetically poor posture, that slouch so forlorn that his shoulders seemed about to meet his chin... Oh, wasn't it awful being young? She had had miserable adolescence herself and had always sworn no child of hers would ever be that unhappy* (Tyler, 1995, p. 115-116).

As Anne Tyler experienced miserable adolescence because of poverty and hardships in her life in Baltimore, she feels pretty concerned about pathetic teenage living. Since she is from Baltimore, she writes about its backdrops. She "*like[s] the city's grittily, commically feisty personality. It makes writing a lot easier if your characters live in a place that has its own sense of self*" (Hastings, 2014, 128). Therefore, Tyler's characters depict the outcomes of effective partnership in educational phase of the child.

Donny's young psychological disorders cause problem in his academic life. Daisy acquires new perspectives regarding Donny. It helps her evaluate that there are other reasons behind his unhappiness: one of them is rushing working life and the other is their becoming a victim of their work life. As they all hurry in working life, each family member experiences becoming psychologically

problematic. They have mutual indifference. The case of miserable adolescence correlates Daisy's living with that of Donny's youth. Her miserable statement hints the reason for Donny's failure at school. Donny enters in a new public school and his tutoring sessions stops after that. Cal accepts his departure from the school because he thinks that Donny is disturbed and, therefore, probably a school change will be suitable solution for him:

*Donny went to his new school every morning, plodding off alone with his head down. He did his assignments and earned average grades, but he gathered no friends and joined no clubs. There was something exhausted and defeated about him. . . . The first week in June, during final exams, Donny vanished. He simply did not come home one afternoon, and no one at school remembered seeing him. The police were reassuring, and they worked hard for the first few days. They combed Donny's sad, messy room for clues; They visited Miriam and Cal. However, then they started talking about the number of kids who ran away every year. Hundreds, just in this city. "He'll show up if he wants to," they said. "If he doesn't, he won't" (Tyler, 1995, p. 119-120).*

Although the choice of a new school seems to be a good solution for Donny, his educational world is still problematic because of his wandering around instead of following his lessons. His complex mind has the same circumstances. The teenage boy's educational world cannot solely be regulated through his activities but again needs a well ordered family organization: Because, when the boy is happy in his family unit, his activities, attitudes, behaviors, and educational process will differ. He will become a new person in his social environment.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, this article reveals that two of the most important problems created by the competitive working life in societies are the destruction in family units and the failure in children's academic life. These negativities can lead to deep pain or darkness in the psychological world of individuals. In *Teenage Wasteland*, Ann Tyler focuses on the social, psychological and behavioral destruction of individuals due to the competitive life. Thereby, a reference for T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* is requisite while analyzing Tyler's target short story. Similar to Eliot, Tyler deals with the social problems: The loneliness of individuals, the pain of the lack of communication and fragmentation experienced in family units in postmodern literary features focusing on the disorders in organization.

This article finds out that a healthy society is created by a strong family structure in which the children of the family have regular and successful education. The bond between the family members makes up their family unit which is very important for children: Because the unity in the family organization directs individuals to fulfill their duties in business life and educational process. A strong family relationship creates success and happiness for children in the educational process. Strong relationships in a healthy family produce a healthy social future and a unified social life. These outcomes generates when there is integrity within the family. Children's academic achievement become much more affected from this integrity. Moreover, parents' educational processes are influential on their educational development. Parents has a significant role to encourage and to facilitate their children's learning and their improvement in academic success (Porumbu, 2013, p. 707; Wilson, 2018 , p. 323). However, a lack of interaction results in the decline of mutual responsibilities and creates a feeling of fragmentation, alienation and isolation in family units. However, only if parents and children can establish good mutual relations without alienation and isolation in the competitive world, all members of the family might be happy. Thereby, a "Fisher King Legend" longing for spiritual awakening lies in *The Waste Land* and *Teenage Wasteland*. The success in the educational life of teenagers largely depends on this revival. There will be a departure from meaninglessness, isolation and disappointment experienced by individuals in their family units.

In this article, it is aimed that social problems that exist behind the current social conditions should be exceeded by the help of psychological therapies, school process and family interrelations as well as the repair of family fragmentation through mutual interactions. In addition, failures, decay and disorder in educational life concurrently cause individuals to become worried. They feel themselves psychologically disrupted and disturbed due to the feelings of loneliness and alienation as well as fragmentation in their family units. Finally, Anne Tyler's *Teenage Wasteland* evaluates the teenagers' life in a social vacuum in a postmodern literary perspective and necessitates a critical outlook for the wasteland that surrounds individuals.

#### Article Information

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<b>Informed Consent:</b>	No participant.
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<b>Copyrights:</b>	No material subject to copyright is included.

**Ethical Statement:** It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited. (Zennure Köseman)

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