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Running Towards the Inner Self: A Psychological Exploration of Haruki Murakami's "What I Talk About When I Talk About Running" with a Mind-Body Approach

Manijeh Firoozi ¹ 0000-0003-1368-7545 Elahe Karimi Riabi ² 0000-0002-8366-0754

1. Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: mfiroozy@ut.ac.ir

2. Department of Russian Studies, Faculty of World Studies (FWS), University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: ekarimi@ut.ac.ir

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Extended Abstract

In the present study, we continue the psychological explorations of previous critics by examining Haruki Murakami's work "What I Talk About When I Talk About Running" from a new perspective. Our chosen approach is multifaceted, addressing various aspects of this work. Specifically, we focused on mind-body theories. In our view, in this book, the mind and body are considered as two separate entities that ultimately converge to form a unified whole. An indispensable aspect of this analysis is the Lacanian perspective, which adds greater depth to the work. By leveraging health psychology, of which mind-body theories are a part, we illustrated a framework that the runner navigates to overcome challenges; three pivotal stops that every runner inevitably faces: success and failure, coping with life challenges, and aging. In the end, we paid attention to the influence of Japanese culture on this work and its hidden connection to Iranian mystical culture. This study demonstrates how Murakami uses running as a tool for discipline and structure, contributing to his identity as both a writer and an individual, and how it creates a profound connection between physical activities and mental creativity.

Haruki Murakami is a modern writer in a modern era. His concerns and characterizations are derived from everyday life. In his view, routine is not a sign of superficiality; on the contrary, he possesses a unique ability to perceive profound concepts within the seemingly mundane and trivial aspects of life. One of the characteristics of Murakami's characters is their duality, which gradually integrates and reaches unity throughout the course of life. This feature is showcased in the *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running*. Here, the main actors are the mind and body. In this thrilling narrative, these two aspects of our lives merge and become unified. The cruel modern life has fragmented these two selves, and Murakami, like a skilled mender, binds them together. Writing wears out the body, and Murakami, using magical tools like immersing himself in music (with an old Walkman), self-discipline, and goal-setting, ties it to running. Murakami's experiences also align with the theory of embodied cognition, which suggests that cognitive processes are deeply rooted in the body's interactions with the world. This theory supports the notion that our mental capacities are influenced by our physical states and may even be enhanced by them. In Murakami's memoirs, running is not merely a physical activity but a reflective practice that shapes patterns of thought and emotional resilience, creating a dynamic and reciprocal relationship between the physical state of running and cognitive processes, endurance, and personal growth. Thus, Murakami's narrative serves as a clear example of how physical discipline transforms into intellectual and philosophical insights.

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