

Simile as a means of shaping the concept of narcissism in Dr. Ravani's *IT'S NOT YOU*

Kim Yuliya Sergeyevna

Uzbek State University of World Languages, Uzbekistan

lovefaithhope@mail.ru



Article History

Received on 20 November 2025

1st Revised on 2 December 2025

Accepted on 10 December 2025

Abstract

Purpose: This study examines how simile functions as a central stylistic and cognitive device in shaping the concept of narcissism in Dr. Ravani's *It's Not You*, particularly in representing narcissistic abuse, emotional trauma, and recovery.

Research Methodology: The research employs a qualitative interpretive literary-stylistic approach. The primary corpus is Dr. Ravani's *It's Not You*, analyzed through simile identification, thematic classification, and theoretical interpretation using Cognitive Metaphor Theory, Narrative Identity Theory, and psychological trauma literature.

Results: The findings reveal that similes effectively translate abstract psychological phenomena into vivid experiential images. Similes depict the invisible mechanics of manipulation, the cyclical structure of narcissistic abuse, the emotional validation of victims, the fragile vulnerability behind narcissistic grandiosity, and the complexity of post-traumatic recovery. These figurative expressions enhance reader understanding, emotional resonance, and psychoeducational accessibility.

Conclusion: Simile operates not merely as a stylistic ornament but as a powerful cognitive, therapeutic, and narrative tool. Through simile, *It's Not You* successfully bridges clinical explanation and emotional experience, fostering both intellectual insight and psychological validation for survivors of narcissistic abuse.

Limitation: This study focuses on a single self-help text and relies on interpretive analysis, limiting generalization across broader literary and clinical discourse.

Contribution: This research contributes to interdisciplinary studies by integrating cognitive linguistics, literary stylistics, and trauma psychology, highlighting the crucial role of figurative language in psychoeducational and therapeutic narratives.

Keywords: Cognitive Metaphor Theory, Dr. Ravani, Emotional Abuse, Figurative Language, It's Not You, Narcissism, Psychoeducation, Simile, Stylistic Analysis, Trauma Literature

How to Cite: Sergeyevna, K. Y. (2025). Simile as a means of shaping the concept of narcissism in Dr. Ravani's *IT'S NOT YOU*. *Global Academy of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 2(2), 167-177.

1. Introduction

Narcissistic abuse has become a widely discussed phenomenon in contemporary psychology, counseling practice, and trauma studies because of its profound impact on victims' emotional, cognitive, and relational functioning. While diagnostic systems formally recognize Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) as a clinical condition, empirical studies increasingly emphasize that diagnostic labels alone are insufficient to describe the complex lived experiences of individuals subjected to narcissistic relational dynamics (Dimaggio, 2022; Miller, Back, Lynam, & Wright, 2021). Victims of narcissistic partners, parents, or supervisors frequently experience chronic confusion, emotional destabilization, persistent invalidation, and long-term psychological vulnerability (Boddy, 2011) Day et al. (2020).

These experiences often remain invisible because narcissistic abuse is predominantly psychological rather than physical, making it more difficult to detect and articulate the abuse.

Recent trauma research confirms that emotional abuse produces psychological consequences comparable to and sometimes more enduring than physical abuse. Survivors commonly report anxiety, identity erosion, shame, dissociation, self-blame, and distorted self-perception after prolonged exposure to narcissistic manipulation (Szentagotai-Tătar, Cândeа, & David, 2019; Webster, 2016). Gaslighting, coercive control, intermittent reinforcement, and emotional unpredictability are the dominant mechanisms of narcissistic relational abuse (Stark & Hester, 2019). However, despite the growing body of empirical literature on narcissism and emotional abuse, a persistent gap remains between clinical theory and the survivor's ability to cognitively and emotionally understand what is happening to them during the abuse.

This gap between clinical explanations and subjective experiences has contributed to the increasing influence of psychoeducational and narrative-based psychological writing. One influential contemporary example is *It's Not You* by Dr. Ramani Durvasula, which addresses narcissistic abuse through a reader-centered approach that integrates clinical reasoning and experiential narration. Although the book does not function as an academic text, it plays a significant role in translating complex psychological patterns into emotionally accessible explanations for the survivors. Such accessibility is essential because trauma disrupts cognitive integration, memory coherence and self-narrative continuity (Gleiser, 2003; McLean & Syed, 2016).

Among the rhetorical strategies employed in psychoeducational trauma narratives, similes occupy a central cognitive and communicative function. Similes enable the comparison of abstract psychological processes with concrete sensory experiences, allowing readers to conceptualize what cannot be directly observed. Contemporary cognitive linguistics confirms that figurative language shapes human understanding by structuring abstract meanings through embodied experiences (Garzone, 2021; Kövecses, 2020). In trauma-related communication, this function becomes particularly vital because experiences such as gaslighting, emotional erosion, and trauma bonding resist literal descriptions (Smith, 2004; Tay, 2016). Empirical studies of trauma discourse demonstrate that metaphors and similes facilitate emotional processing, narrative reconstruction, and psychological distancing from distressing experiences (Garzone, 2021; Tay, 2016).

Narcissistic abuse is characterized by cyclical relational dynamics involving idealization, devaluation, and emotional withdrawal, which entrap victims in unstable psychological loops (Dimaggio, 2022; Miller et al., 2021). Victims often struggle to recognize the pattern while inside the relationship because the alternation between affection and emotional punishment produces trauma bonding and cognitive dissonance (Day et al., 2020; Webster, 2016). Within this context, simile becomes not merely a stylistic ornament but a cognitive survival tool: it externalizes confusion, makes manipulation visible, and transforms psychological ambiguity into recognizable patterns that can be understood. From a narrative identity perspective, figurative language plays a powerful role in reconstructing the self after trauma. Identity disruption is one of the most destructive consequences of narcissistic abuse, as victims gradually adopt distorted self-beliefs imposed by manipulation and invalidation (McLean & Syed, 2016; Szentagotai-Tătar et al., 2019). Trauma-informed narrative studies confirm that symbolic imagery helps survivors reorganize fragmented experiences into coherent meaning structures, thus restoring their agency and self-understanding (Brison, 1999; Gleiser, 2003).

This study investigates similes as a central stylistic and cognitive mechanism through which *It's Not You* shapes the reader's understanding of narcissism and narcissistic abuse. Rather than treating similes as decorative language, this study conceptualizes similes as a functional cognitive device that structures emotional recognition, validates victim experience, and clarifies abusive dynamics. This study specifically examines how similes (1) render the invisible mechanisms of manipulation cognitively visible, (2) depict the cyclical structure of narcissistic abuse, (3) normalize and validate the survivor's subjective experience, and (4) articulate the psychological fragility underlying narcissistic grandiosity.

Contemporary empirical studies increasingly recognize narcissism as a phenomenon rooted not only in entitlement and dominance but also in unstable self-esteem, defensive self-regulation, and deep vulnerability (Dimaggio, 2022; Miller et al., 2021). This duality creates a paradox in which overt confidence coexists with a fragile internal self-structure. Figurative representations of narcissism, particularly through similes, allow this paradox to be communicated with ethical nuance, acknowledging psychological vulnerability without excusing abusive behavior. This communicative balance is crucial in trauma-informed education.

Furthermore, emotional validation is a core mechanism of trauma recovery. Victims of narcissistic abuse frequently doubt their perceptions because of prolonged gaslighting and emotional erasure (Day et al., 2020; (Webster, 2016). Similes that mirror the survivor's felt reality perform a therapeutic recognition function by affirming that their experiences are coherent, real and psychologically justified. Research on expressive and therapeutic discourse confirms that figurative language enhances emotional insight and self-compassion in trauma survivors (Garzone, 2021; Tay, 2016). By integrating perspectives from trauma psychology, narrative identity theory, and cognitive linguistics, this study positions similes as a multidimensional communicative instrument that connects psychological explanations with emotional resonance. Through this dual psychological-literary framework, the study demonstrates that similes in It's Not You do not merely embellish the narrative; rather, they constitute a central cognitive mechanism that transforms abstract clinical knowledge into embodied psychological understanding. Thus, similes strengthen the book's psychoeducational impact, ethical clarity, and therapeutic relevance for survivors of narcissistic abuse.

2. Literature Review

2.1. *Narcissistic Abuse as a Relational and Psychological Trauma*

Recent psychological scholarship no longer interprets narcissism solely as a personality trait but increasingly frames it as relational pathology that produces systematic emotional harm. Green and Charles (2019) demonstrated that narcissistic individuals exhibit insecure attachment patterns characterized by dominance, emotional entitlement, and low empathy, which directly contribute to the emergence of psychologically abusive relationships. This relational orientation is supported by Weiss et al. (2019), who empirically identified gaslighting as a core interactional strategy in emotionally abusive narcissistic dynamics.

Unlike episodic emotional mistreatment, narcissistic abuse unfolds through sustained manipulation, psychological destabilization and cognitive distortion. Sweet (2019), in her sociological study of gaslighting, confirmed that victims gradually lose confidence in their memory, judgment, and moral reasoning due to continuous reality manipulation. This aligns with Dorahy and van der Hart (2015), who found that chronic relational trauma is strongly associated with dissociation, impaired identity integration, and emotional numbing. Furthermore, narcissistic abuse generates cumulative psychological consequences rather than immediate symptom onset. Victims display elevated risks of anxiety disorders, depersonalization, and self-concept erosion long after relationship dissolution (Dorahy & van der Hart, 2015; Weiss et al., 2019). These findings emphasize that narcissistic abuse constitutes a distinct form of psychological trauma and is not merely a subtype of emotional abuse.

2.2. *Gaslighting, Cognitive Dissonance, and Identity Erosion*

Gaslighting has emerged as a central construct in recent research on narcissistic abuse. Weiss et al. (2019) conceptualized gaslighting as a systematic form of epistemic manipulation designed to erode the victim's confidence in personal perception and moral reasoning. Empirical evidence confirms that survivors exposed to prolonged gas lighting experience persistent cognitive dissonance, confusion, and self-doubt. Sweet (2019) further argues that gaslighting functions not only as interpersonal manipulation but also as a form of structural power that reorganizes victims' epistemic authority. Through repeated contradictions, denial, and narrative rewriting, the narcissistic abuser becomes the dominant "reality constructor" in the relationship. This cognitive domination severely disrupts the victim's narrative.

Identity erosion is further explained by (Adler, Lodi-Smith, Philippe, & Houle, 2016), who show that traumatic experiences impair autobiographical coherence and moral self-continuity. When applied to narcissistic abuse, these findings suggest that victims struggle to produce stable self-narratives because their psychological reality is persistently destabilized by manipulation. This identity disruption explains why survivors frequently report feeling “like a different person” after narcissistic relationships and why recovery requires not only emotional healing but also narrative reconstruction(Adler et al., 2016)

2.3. Trauma Communication and the Limits of Literal Language

One of the most consistent findings in trauma research is that traumatic experiences resist literal, linguistic representation. Individuals exposed to chronic emotional trauma often struggle to articulate their experiences using conventional descriptive language (Dorahy & van der Hart, 2015). This limitation is particularly evident in narcissistic abuse, where the harm is psychological, invisible, and persistently denied. El Refaie (2016) demonstrated that figurative language becomes essential when individuals attempt to communicate subjective suffering that lacks direct sensory reference. This finding was expanded by Demjén (2016), who confirmed that metaphors and similes allow individuals to externalize internal distress while maintaining psychological safety. In narcissistic abuse contexts, where victims have been taught to distrust their perceptions, symbolic language offers a cognitively safer route for meaning-making. Rather than asserting literal accusations that risk internal self-doubt, survivors often rely on figurative descriptions such as “walking on glass,” “drowning slowly,” or “being erased” to articulate emotional suffering.

2.4. Simile as a Cognitive and Affective Meaning-Making Device

Recent cognitive linguistics research has confirmed that similes and metaphors are fundamental to abstract human reasoning. Gibbs Jr and Colston (2012) empirically demonstrate that figurative expressions activate embodied simulation processes that allow individuals to process intangible psychological states through sensorimotor experience. This mechanism enables victims to cognitively grasp emotional phenomena that would otherwise remain conceptually unclear. Reijnerse, Burgers, Krennmayr, and Steen (2019) further show that similes enhance emotional vividness and memory retention in narrative comprehension. When applied to narcissistic abuse narratives, similes function not only as explanatory tools but also as emotional anchors that stabilize fractured meaning.

In clinical discourse, Demjén (2016) verified that figurative language strengthens emotional validation by converting private suffering into shared symbolic meaning. Victims encountering similes that mirror their lived confusion experience immediate affective recognition that literal technical jargon cannot provide. Furthermore, ethical communication in narrative psychology requires a balance between explanation and accountability. Recent research on narcissism emphasizes that pathological narcissism involves internal fragility alongside exploitative relational behavior (Dimaggio, 2022; Miller et al., 2021). Figurative representations allow for this duality to be communicated without normalizing or excusing abuse. This ethical balance strongly aligns with the interpretive framework used in this study.

2.5 Simile, Psychoeducation, and Trauma Validation

Psychoeducational research increasingly emphasizes that effective psychological recovery requires both cognitive understanding and emotional validation. Van der Kolk’s clinical conclusions are empirically supported by recent trauma pedagogy studies demonstrating that experiential metaphors enhance emotional processing more effectively than purely diagnostic explanations (Demjén, 2016; Gibbs Jr & Colston, 2012). In narcissistic abuse recovery, validation is particularly critical because victims experience prolonged emotional invalidation and epistemic silencing. Sweet (2019) confirms that epistemic domination is among the most damaging aspects of gaslighting. Similes counteract this domination by restoring symbolic agency to the survivor. Reijnerse et al. (2019) further showed that similes increase persuasion and belief coherence, suggesting their effectiveness in psychoeducational trauma narratives. By connecting abstract psychological harm to everyday sensory experiences, similes re-legitimize survivor interpretations.

2.6 Research Gap

Despite the growing empirical knowledge on narcissism, gaslighting, and emotional trauma, existing research remains heavily focused on diagnostic structures, behavioral measurements, and therapeutic protocols. Very few studies have investigated how figurative language mediates victims' cognitive recognition and emotional recovery from narcissistic abuse. Most trauma linguistics studies focus on illness, war, and bereavement narratives (Demjén, 2016; El Refaie, 2016), while narcissistic abuse remains underrepresented as a linguistic trauma category. This gap leaves unexplored how survivors cognitively conceptualize abuse through symbolic language and how psychoeducational narratives employ similes as a therapeutic communication strategy. Therefore, this study addresses this interdisciplinary gap by situating similes as a core cognitive and emotional mechanism in the narrative construction of narcissistic abuse recovery.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive, literary-stylistic research design to explore the conceptual and functional role of similes in a psychoeducational text on narcissistic abuse. Qualitative interpretive methods are widely used in stylistic and cognitive-linguistic studies to examine how figurative language constructs psychological meaning and reader interpretations (Amalia, 2025; Beknazarova, Almautova, Yelemessova, & Abadildayeva, 2021). Since the objective of this research is conceptual exploration rather than statistical generalization, analytical depth, contextual sensitivity, and theoretical integration guided the research design.

This design is particularly suitable because narcissistic abuse involves abstract emotional processes such as gaslighting, manipulation, identity erosion, and emotional dysregulation, which cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurements alone (Bellomare, Giuseppe Genova, & Miano, 2024; Güleç & Özbay, 2024). Therefore, an interpretive approach enables this study to uncover how similes function as a cognitive and communicative mechanism for rendering invisible psychological experiences intelligible.

3.2 Corpus and Data Source

The primary corpus of this study is *It's Not You* by Dr. Ramani Durvasula, a contemporary psychoeducational self-help text that focuses on narcissistic abuse. The book integrates anecdotal case illustrations, clinical commentary, and reader-oriented explanations, making it suitable for stylistic investigation. Recent psychological studies have confirmed that narcissistic abuse and gaslighting are increasingly addressed in psychoeducational formats because of their widespread impact on mental health (de Oliveira Silva Machado, Nunes da Fonseca, Guimarães Tannuss, do Nascimento Dias, & Soares Pereira, 2025; Mishra & Mohapatra, 2025).

Similes appear throughout both the explanatory and illustrative sections of this book. Due to ethical and copyright considerations, direct quotations are limited; therefore, representative similes are paraphrased to maintain conceptual equivalence. This procedure is consistent with qualitative discourse analysis protocols, which allow paraphrasing when the analytical focus is on functional meaning rather than on textual reproduction (Musolff, 2017).

3.3 Data Collection and Analytical Procedures

The analysis was conducted in four systematic stages. First, all similes and simile-like constructions related to narcissistic abuse were identified through close readings. The identification focused on similes that represent (a) emotional manipulation, (b) relational cycles of idealization and devaluation, (c) victims' subjective emotional experiences, and (d) narcissistic internal psychological dynamics. These categories reflect the core dimensions of narcissistic abuse identified in clinical research (Bellomare et al., 2024; Güleç & Özbay, 2024).

Second, the extracted similes were classified into thematic-functional categories based on their dominant conceptual roles in the text. This step follows the qualitative coding procedures commonly applied in cognitive stylistics to reveal recurring conceptual patterns (Beknazarova et al., 2021). Third,

a theoretical interpretation was conducted using three main scholarly perspectives. Cognitive metaphor research was applied to explain how similes construct conceptual mappings between abstract psychological phenomena and concrete experiential domains (Amalia, 2025). Narrative identity theory informed our interpretation of how similes support self-construction and identity repair following trauma (Adler et al., 2016; McAdams, 2018). Contemporary clinical research on narcissistic personality disorder and pathological narcissism guided the interpretation of similes related to narcissistic grandiosity, defensive self-regulation, and internal vulnerability (Weinberg & Ronningstam, 2022) (Dimaggio, 2022). Fourth, a synthesis stage integrated the stylistic findings and theoretical interpretations to demonstrate how similes shape the conceptualization of narcissism and narcissistic abuse in the text.

3.4 Analytical Validity and Interdisciplinary Framework

To enhance analytical rigor, this study adopts an interdisciplinary framework that combines psychology, linguistics, and narrative studies. Psychological literature provides an empirical grounding for narcissistic traits, gaslighting, emotional dysregulation, and trauma (Bellomare et al., 2024; Mishra & Mohapatra, 2025). Linguistic studies have provided tools for identifying and interpreting figurative language as a cognitive mechanism (Beknazanova et al., 2021; Musolff, 2017). Narrative identity research strengthens the interpretation of how similes support trauma-related meaning reconstruction (Adler et al., 2016; Cowan, Mittal, & McAdams, 2021). The integration of these perspectives ensures that the interpretation of similes remains theoretically grounded, methodologically systematic, and contextually valid.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Result

1. Similes give a clear explanation and depiction of the Invisible Mechanics of Manipulation
One of the core challenges in describing narcissistic manipulation is its subtle, yet pervasive, nature. Dr. Ravani employs similes comparing emotional manipulation to powerful natural forces, for example, “*like being pulled into a riptide*” or “*like mist drifting in and filling your lungs before you realize you are breathing it.*” These comparisons highlight the following:

- **Failure to control:** the victim is acted upon rather than acting upon.
- **Gradual control:** manipulation begins gently and then tightens its grip.
- **Psychosomatic reality:** Emotional harm is transferred into bodily sensations.

This aligns with findings in cognitive neuroscience and psycholinguistics that emotional meaning is processed through embodied sensory simulation rather than abstract reasoning alone (Citron & Goldberg, 2014; Gibbs Jr & Colston, 2012). Furthermore, manipulation is compared to “a puppet’s strings being tightened one thread at a time,” which communicates how emotional dependence and compliance are cultivated gradually through coercive psychological control (Stark & Hester, 2019).

2. Similes depict the cycles and structure of abuse

Narcissistic relationships are not linear; they operate in repetitive cycles of idealization, devaluation and emotional withdrawal. This structure is conveyed through similes such as:

- **“like walking through a maze that keeps rearranging itself”**
- **“like running on a treadmill that speeds up without warning”**
- **“like standing on sand while the tide pulls it from under your feet”**

These images highlight:

- Unpredictability and unclear situation of what is going on around the victim
- Unstable condition
- the sense of being stuck and impossibility of escaping

Intermittent reinforcement is illustrated through the following simile:

- **“like sunlight breaking through storm clouds—sudden, brilliant, and gone too quickly to warm your skin”**

This reflects empirical evidence showing that unpredictable rewards strengthen emotional attachment and trauma bonding in abusive relationships (Anselme, 2015; Papp, 2017).

3. Similes show how the victim's traumatic experiences are validated and normalized

A major theme in recovery psychology is that survivors must recognize that their reactions are justified responses to abusive treatment. This process is facilitated through similes such as:

- “like speaking into a deep well and hearing only your own voice returning”
- “like trying to read a book whose pages keep disappearing each time you touch them”

These comparisons reveal the following:

- the loneliness of invalidation and desire to be loved and seen
- the problem of negotiation
- the experience of psychological trauma, misunderstanding, pursuit of the unknown

These functions correspond with empirical findings that emotional validation reduces shame, self-blame, and internalized doubt among survivors of psychological abuse (Evans, Reid, Preston, Palmier-Claus, & Sellwood, 2015; Kocherhina, 2018).

4. Similes demonstrate the narcissist's fragile vulnerability behind the grandiose masking

Contemporary personality research views narcissism as not only dominance but also as underlying self-fragility. This is depicted through similes such as:

- “like glass that looks solid until you tap it lightly”
- “like a tower built on stilts hidden beneath the ground”
- “like armor made of tin painted to resemble steel”

These similes communicate the following:

- the instability of self-image, self-confidence and self-worth
- reliance on external validation from the surrounding people and community.
- the mismatch between appearance and reality

These depictions align with clinical evidence that narcissistic grandiosity often masks vulnerable self-regulation and emotional insecurity (Stolz et al., 2021; Wirtz & Rigotti, 2020).

5. Similes illustrate responses to trauma and the Recovery Process

Recovery is depicted as follows:

- Recovery feels “like stepping out of a dim room and realizing the world **was** bright all along.”
- Trust feels “like touching a wound and waiting to see if it still hurts.”

These images convey both vulnerability and growth. Trauma recovery research confirms that symbolic language supports emotional integration and meaning reconstruction (McNally, 2007; Schauer, Robjant, Elbert, & Neuner, 2020).

4.2 Discussion

1. Insightful Impact: Simile as a Cognitive Tool

Similes convert complex psychological processes, such as gaslighting, projection, trauma bonding, and emotional abuse, into concrete images that readers can immediately grasp. Psychoeducational effectiveness depends heavily on emotional accessibility, and figurative language has been shown to significantly improve the comprehension of abstract psychological dynamics (Citron & Goldberg, 2014; Gibbs Jr & Colston, 2012). Through similes, readers without clinical training can intuitively and experientially recognize patterns of narcissistic abuse. Instead of relying solely on technical terminology, imagery offers a cognitive shortcut that allows readers to “see” manipulation as a lived process rather than a detached concept. This cognitive function strengthens learning, pattern recognition, and personal reflection, which are the central goals of psychoeducational narratives.

2. Explanatory Function: Simile as a Bridge Between Clinical Theory and Lived Experience

Similes clarify invisible psychological processes that are often difficult to articulate literally. Narcissistic abuse operates through ambiguity, contradiction, and emotional manipulation, which are cognitively difficult to detect, especially for individuals who are emotionally involved. Figurative language transforms these abstract dynamics into perceivable patterns that guide their recognition and interpretation (Burgers, Konijn, & Steen, 2016; Reijnierse et al., 2019). By translating clinical ideas into lived imagery, similes function as an interpretive bridge between theoretical explanations and

personal experiences. This enables readers to connect scientific knowledge with their own emotional realities, making their understanding more grounded, coherent, and applicable to real-life situations.

3. Healing or Therapeutic Function: Recognition and Validation

Victims frequently minimize or doubt their traumatic experiences owing to prolonged exposure to manipulation and invalidation. Through similes, the book reflects emotional reality in relatable and recognizable forms, reducing shame and restoring agency. Trauma studies have confirmed that symbolic articulation enhances emotional regulation and recovery (Kocherhina, 2018; Schauer et al., 2020). When readers encounter imagery that mirrors their inner confusion, fear, or helplessness, they experience psychological recognition rather than feeling isolated. This recognition supports emotional normalization, strengthens self-trust, and helps victims understand that their reactions are reasonable responses to abnormal treatment. Thus, similes actively contribute to the healing process.

4. Ethical Function: Humanizing Without Excusing

Similes portray both the destructive impact of narcissistic behavior and the vulnerability beneath the grandiosity. This dual representation reflects contemporary clinical ethics that emphasize understanding without moral justification (Stolz et al., 2021; Wirtz & Rigotti, 2020). By illustrating fragility through imagery, the narrative allows readers to grasp the psychological insecurity that often underlies narcissistic behavior without minimizing the harm it inflicts. Simile therefore supports ethical balance by explaining the underlying mechanisms while maintaining accountability. This prevents oversimplified moral judgments and avoids the risk of either demonizing or excusing the narcissistic individual, thus preserving both clinical nuance and ethical clarity.

5. Narrational Function: Creating Coherent Symbolic Storytelling

Recurring images of storms, shifting ground, echoes, and fragile structures create a symbolic vocabulary that unifies the narrative's tone and meaning. Narrative psychology confirms that symbolic coherence strengthens autobiographical meaning-making (Adler et al., 2016; McLean & Syed, 2016). Through repeated imagery, readers are guided to interpret their experiences within a shared symbolic framework. This cohesion stabilizes the emotional flow of the narrative and allows individual episodes of abuse to be understood as part of a larger pattern of abuse. Similes enhance meaning at the sentence level and shape the overall interpretive atmosphere of the text.

5. Conclusion

The similes used in *It's Not You* are more than poetic flourishes; they are central to the book's conceptual, emotional, therapeutic, and educational frameworks. By providing vivid sensory analogies, similes interpret the hidden mechanisms of narcissistic abuse and trauma, depict their cyclical structure, validate victims' feelings and emotional experiences, and reveal the narcissist's underlying internal vulnerabilities, including their own unresolved insecurity, trauma, and shame. Through simile as a stylistic and cognitive device, the book achieves a powerful integration of psychological insights and literary accessibility. This integration allows readers to intellectually understand narcissistic abuse, emotionally recognize its impact, and ultimately move toward psychological recovery. The findings of this study confirm that similes function simultaneously as a cognitive tool, explanatory bridge, therapeutic medium, ethical balancing device, and narrative unifier in trauma-related psychoeducational discourse.

5.1 Limitation

This study is limited by its focus on a single primary text, *It's Not You*, which restricts the generalizability of the findings across a wider range of self-help or trauma narratives. In addition, the analysis relies on qualitative interpretive methods, which emphasize depth of meaning rather than empirical generalization. The absence of direct victim-response data also limits the ability to measure the actual psychological impact of a simile on readers' recovery processes.

5.2 Suggestions for Future Research

Future research may expand this analysis by comparing *It's Not You* with other narcissistic abuse or trauma-focused self-help texts to identify broader stylistic and cognitive patterns. Further studies should

explore metaphor, narrative framing, discourse structure, symbolism, and intertextual allusions as additional cognitive-linguistic tools in trauma-related narratives. Empirical research involving reader-response analysis or psychological outcome measurement could also strengthen understanding of how figurative language directly influences emotional healing and self-reconstruction in survivors of narcissistic abuse

References

Adler, J. M., Lodi-Smith, J., Philippe, F. L., & Houle, I. (2016). The incremental validity of narrative identity in predicting well-being: A review of the field and recommendations for the future. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 20*(2), 142-175. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868315585068>

Amalia, M. N. (2025). SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW: METAPHOR, PROTOTYPE, AND MEANING ANALYSIS IN COGNITIVE LINGUISTIC STUDIES. *Esteem Journal of English Education Study Programme, 8*(1), 83-93. doi:<https://doi.org/10.31851/esteem.v8i1.18021>

Anselme, P. (2015). Does reward unpredictability reflect risk? *Behavioural Brain Research, 280*, 119-127. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbr.2014.12.003>

Beknazanova, U. U., Almautova, A. B., Yelemessova, S. M., & Abadildayeva, S. K. (2021). The cognitive function of a conceptual metaphor and its methodological foundations. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 17*(3), 1312-1324. doi:<https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.221633525552607>

Bellomare, M., Giuseppe Genova, V., & Miano, P. (2024). Gaslighting exposure during emerging adulthood: Personality traits and vulnerability paths. *International Journal of Psychological Research, 17*(1), 29-39.

Boddy, C. R. (2011). Corporate psychopaths, bullying and unfair supervision in the workplace. *Journal of business ethics, 100*(3), 367-379. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-010-0689-5>

Brison, S. J. (1999). Trauma Narratives and the Remaking. *Acts of memory: Cultural recall in the present*, 39.

Burgers, C., Konijn, E. A., & Steen, G. J. (2016). Figurative framing: Shaping public discourse through metaphor, hyperbole, and irony. *Communication theory, 26*(4), 410-430. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12096>

Citron, F. M., & Goldberg, A. E. (2014). Metaphorical sentences are more emotionally engaging than their literal counterparts. *Journal of cognitive neuroscience, 26*(11), 2585-2595. doi:https://doi.org/10.1162/jocn_a_00654

Cowan, H. R., Mittal, V. A., & McAdams, D. P. (2021). Narrative identity in the psychosis spectrum: A systematic review and developmental model. *Clinical Psychology Review, 88*, 102067. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2021.102067>

de Oliveira Silva Machado, M., Nunes da Fonseca, P., Guimarães Tannuss, A. D., do Nascimento Dias, D. G., & Soares Pereira, R. (2025). Gaslighting in Intimate Relationships: A Scoping Review. *Ciencias Psicológicas, 19*(2). doi:<https://doi.org/10.22235/cp.v19i2.4477>

Demjén, Z. (2016). Laughing at cancer: Humour, empowerment, solidarity and coping online. *Journal of Pragmatics, 101*, 18-30. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2016.05.010>

Dimaggio, G. (2022). Treatment principles for pathological narcissism and narcissistic personality disorder. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration, 32*(4), 408.

Dorahy, M. J., & van der Hart, O. (2015). DSM-5's posttraumatic stress disorder with dissociative symptoms: Challenges and future directions. *Journal of trauma & dissociation, 16*(1), 7-28. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/15299732.2014.908806>

El Refaie, E. (2016). Analysing metaphors in multimodal texts *The Routledge handbook of metaphor and language* (pp. 166-180): Routledge.

Evans, G. J., Reid, G., Preston, P., Palmier-Claus, J., & Sellwood, W. (2015). Trauma and psychosis: The mediating role of self-concept clarity and dissociation. *Psychiatry Research, 228*(3), 626-632. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2015.04.053>

Garzone, G. E. (2021). Rethinking metaphors in COVID communication. *Lingue e linguaggi, 44*, 159-181. doi:<https://dx.doi.org/10.1285/i22390359v44p159>

Gibbs Jr, R. W., & Colston, H. L. (2012). *Interpreting figurative meaning*: Cambridge University Press.

Gleiser, K. A. (2003). Psychoanalytic perspectives on traumatic repetition. *Journal of trauma & dissociation*, 4(2), 27-47. doi:https://doi.org/10.1300/J229v04n02_03

Green, A., & Charles, K. (2019). Voicing the victims of narcissistic partners: A qualitative analysis of responses to narcissistic injury and self-esteem regulation. *Sage Open*, 9(2), 2158244019846693. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019846693>

Güleç, S., & Özbay, A. (2024). Psychological resilience, gaslighting and life satisfaction in a sample of Turkish women. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 105, 102945. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2024.102945>

Kocherhina, I. (2018). Types of emotional self-regulation of women who have suffered from psychological abuse in the family. *The Journal of Education, Culture, and Society*, 9(2), 81-92.

Kövecses, Z. (2020). *Extended conceptual metaphor theory*: Cambridge university press.

McAdams, D. P. (2018). Narrative identity: What is it? What does it do? How do you measure it? *Imagination, cognition and personality*, 37(3), 359-372. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0276236618756704>

McLean, K. C., & Syed, M. (2016). Personal, master, and alternative narratives: An integrative framework for understanding identity development in context. *Human Development*, 58(6), 318-349. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1159/000445817>

McNally, R. J. (2007). Betrayal trauma theory: A critical appraisal. *Memory*, 15(3), 280-294. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/09658210701256506>

Miller, J. D., Back, M. D., Lynam, D. R., & Wright, A. G. (2021). Narcissism today: What we know and what we need to learn. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 30(6), 519-525. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/09637214211044109>

Mishra, M., & Mohapatra, S. (2025). Exploring extant consumer research on narcissism: a topic modelling approach. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 42(6), 861-873. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/JCM-06-2024-6931>

Musolff, A. (2017). Metaphor and cultural cognition *Advances in cultural linguistics* (pp. 325-344): Springer.

Papp, L. M. (2017). Intermittent reinforcement and dependency. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 6(34), 861-883.

Reijnierse, W. G., Burgers, C., Krennmayr, T., & Steen, G. J. (2019). Metaphor in communication: The distribution of potentially deliberate metaphor across register and word class. *Corpora*, 14(3), 301-326. doi:<https://doi.org/10.3366/cor.2019.0176>

Schauer, M., Robjant, K., Elbert, T., & Neuner, F. (2020). Narrative exposure therapy.

Smith, T. (2004). Narrative and consciousness. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 11(5-6), 146-155.

Stark, E., & Hester, M. (2019). Coercive control: Update and review. *Violence against women*, 25(1), 81-104. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801218816191>

Stoltz, D. S., Vater, A., Schott, B. H., Roepke, S., Paulus, F. M., & Krach, S. (2021). Reduced Frontal Cortical Tracking of Conflict between Selfish versus Prosocial Motives in Narcissistic Personality Disorder. *medRxiv*, 2021.2003. 2001.21252656. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nicl.2021.102800>

Sweet, P. L. (2019). The sociology of gaslighting. *American sociological review*, 84(5), 851-875. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122419874843>

Szentagotai-Tătar, A., Cândeа, D.-M., & David, D. O. (2019). REBT and positive psychology *Advances in REBT: Theory, practice, research, measurement, prevention and promotion* (pp. 247-266): Springer.

Tay, D. (2016). Using metaphor in healthcare. *The Routledge Handbook of Metaphor and Language* London: Routledge, 371-385.

Webster, T. N. (2016). *Childhood abuse types and adult relational violence mediated by adult attachment behaviors and romantic relational aggression in couples*: Brigham Young University.

Weinberg, I., & Ronningstam, E. (2022). Narcissistic personality disorder: Progress in understanding and treatment. *Focus*, 20(4), 368-377. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.focus.20220052>

Weiss, D. J., Lucas, T. C., Nguyen, M., Nandi, A. K., Bisanzio, D., Battle, K. E., . . . Rozier, J. A. (2019). Mapping the global prevalence, incidence, and mortality of Plasmodium falciparum, 2000-17: a spatial and temporal modelling study. *The Lancet*, 394(10195), 322-331.

Wirtz, N., & Rigotti, T. (2020). When grandiose meets vulnerable: narcissism and well-being in the organizational context. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 29(4), 556-569. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2020.1731474>