



## Comparison of Existence Concept in the Works of Jean-Paul Sartre and Hemingway with Emphasis on the Educational Views of Existentialism

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: 26 May 2020            Revised: 03 July 2020            Accepted: 07 November 2020            Online: 20 September 2021</p>	<p>The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre may have inadvertently bridged the gap between the philosophy of literature and education to show Existentialism does not follow the insipid method of other philosophical schools in presenting its basic ideas and concepts. The social consequences of World War II and the expectations of the young generation after the war in Europe also paved the way for the entry of the philosophical views of existentialist philosophers into literature and education. On the other hand, authors became interested in philosophical topics and subconsciously incorporated them into their stories. In the meantime, the educational implications of existentialist ideas drew the attention of educational philosophers to both the fields of philosophy and literature. Accordingly, the aim of the present researcher is to study and compare the concept of existence in the works of the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre and the American writer Ernest Hemingway with emphasis on the educational views of the school of existentialism. The method of the present study is a qualitatively comparative with the philosophical approach. The research population includes all the works of two selected authors along with books, articles and related works. The research sample was purposefully selected and the data analysis method is thematic content analysis. The research findings show that there are similarities between Sartre and Hemingway's works in terms of attention to issues such as the concept of existence, choice and responsibility, human freedom, and mental illnesses like anxiety and depression. The findings also show that from an educational perspective, Sartre's view is based on pessimism and Hemingway's view is based on optimism.</p>
<p><b>KEYWORDS</b></p> <p>Existence            Identity            Philosophy of Education            Hemingway            Sartre</p>	

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## 1. Introduction

The philosophy of education in the system of the Islamic Republic of Iran is strongly influenced by Islam and its educational philosophy. However, in the theoretical field, the presence and role of other philosophical schools cannot be denied. In fact, many Iranian specialists in the philosophy of education have shown great interest in teaching the ideas and theories of philosophers in the philosophical schools of the contemporary world and teach them to students in specialized university courses (Naghizadeh, 2019). Also, the similarities or differences between the ideas and basic principles of these schools and the educational philosophy of Islam provide a suitable ground for discussion, because Iranians - like other nations- during the last century have been strongly influenced by the developments of modern civilization (Boroujerdi, 2017).

In addition to the theoretical and academic aspects, familiarity with contemporary philosophical schools is important for Iranian educational philosophers in two ways: First, Iran's society has been greatly influenced by modern world culture during the last half century and especially due to the expansion of mass media (Abdollahyan, 2004). In this regard, in addition to the philosophical system, the political, religious and educational systems of Iran are also sensitive to the developments of this civilization and try to be aware of the philosophical currents that govern it. Second, Iran is a young country in terms of population structure. The youth of the population, along with the increase in the level of literacy, provided a good ground for the interest in becoming aware of the intellectual currents by studying the works of famous philosophers such as Sartre, Russell, Foucault, Derrida, and Karl Jaspers.

It is clear that the connection of the young generation with the manifestations of the new civilization is not limited to the study of philosophical books. Contemporary civilization expands its power of influence in various ways such as humanities, art, music, and especially literature (Hassan, 2016). In the meantime, modern literature in the form of novels, poems, short stories, etc. has taken on one of the most enduring roles in conveying philosophical ideas. Thus, the young generation of Iran is also very interested in studying the works of great writers such as Albert Camus, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Vladimir Nabokov and Ernest Hemingway. Therefore, today, educational philosophers in Iran feel that it is their duty and mission to find out how close there is between the theories of these thinkers and the educational philosophy accepted by the Islamic Republic (Beheshti, 1998).

One of the topics of interest for education philosophers is the concept of identity and existence in the school of existentialism and its educational effects. This interest stems from the fact that existentialism, as one of the newest and most fascinating philosophical schools, has introduced famous philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre to the world. Also, one of the distinguishing features of existentialism was the reconciliation of philosophy with literature (Oaklander, 1996). In fact, after World War II, people like Sartre, by avoiding the use of mere philosophical mechanisms and embracing literary language, had a profound effect on both philosophy and literature (Sharifani & Qomi, 2010). Of course, the presentation of existential theories through storytelling greatly increased the influence of this philosophical school. In the process, educational philosophers became interested in discovering how literature could be used to teach philosophy, and how educational philosophies passed on their ideas to the younger generation through various forms of literature. Based on what has been said, the purpose of this study is to compare the concept of existence in the works of Jean-Paul Sartre with the works of Ernest Hemingway - with emphasis on the educational views of the school of existentialism. The sub-objectives of the research are:

- Identifying and explaining the concept of existence in the works of Jean-Paul Sartre
- Identifying and explaining the concept of existence in the works of Ernest Hemingway
- Identifying and explaining the similarities and differences between Sartre and Hemingway's view of the concept of existence according to the educational views of existentialism

In the next section, the research literature in the world and Iran will be briefly reviewed.

## **2. Research literature**

This section is divided into three sections: The first section is devoted to examining the social context of the emergence of the philosophy of existentialism and the role of literature. The second part provides a brief description of the philosophy of existentialism. The third section contains important findings of previous research related to the philosophy of existentialism in different countries of the world and Iran. From the perspective of social and literary developments, the emergence and fame of the philosophy of existentialism can be examined. After the Second World War, with the emphasis of existentialist philosophers on the avoidance of mere philosophical criteria and mechanisms and the use of art and especially literature to express philosophical concepts, existentialism became an all-encompassing philosophical-literary movement that had a profound effect on both philosophy and literature (Pamerleau, 2009). In this way, the re-reading of

the works of people like Nietzsche and Dostoevsky - who portrayed human psychological contradictions in the most artistic way - flourished again. The works of Heidegger, Sartre, Kafka, and Camus, who have explained and analyzed the position of man and what his relation to existence is, have also become popular (Francis & Prahaladaiah, 2019).

Thus, existentialism as a protest movement against other philosophical schools had a lasting impact on the literature, psychology, and philosophy of education of the contemporary world. Of course, this protest movement was an intellectual reaction to the unpleasant political and social events of the international community, especially in areas such as the United States and Europe (Pamerleau, 2009). Affected by the unpleasant consequences of the two world wars, and the bitterness of capitalist civilization, these societies were afflicted with general depression, which manifested itself in Kierkegaard's fear, Dostoevsky's suffering, Kafka's despair, and Sartre's sense of belonging. In this situation, the emergence and fame of the philosophy of existentialism can be considered as a thoughtful response to the concerns of modern man. Accordingly, the main axis of the school of existentialism is the concept of the originality of existence and its precedence over human nature, an idea that was initially inspired by the theories of Martin Heidegger of Germany and Søren Kierkegaard of Denmark and later by the French philosophers Jean-Paul Sartre and Gabriel Marcel (Siuli, 2017). The philosophy of existentialism raises its fundamental questions about existence, the meaning of life, the status of man, and the existence of God.

Epistemologically, according to the followers of existentialism, one acquires knowledge through experience, although experience has different levels. When one becomes aware of the existence of objects and beings as they are, one attains the highest level of experience - which is the level of "consciousness" (Hoffman, 2009). Existentialists also believe that truth depends on one's judgment and is relative. There are no absolute truths, and each person must decide for himself about "what truth is and what is important to him" (Narasimhan, Bhaskar & Prakhya, 2010). According to existentialism, values are neither absolute nor determined by external criteria, but each value is determined by one's free choice. The fundamental value for any person is his existence. Important values for each individual depend on their circumstances and are relative (Hitlin, 2003). However, the fascinations of the school of existentialism have aroused great interest among philosophers of education over the last half century. For example, recent studies by Baird and Kaufmann (2008), Chukwu (2011), Flynn (2006), Kauka (2018), Koerrenz (2017), Taneja (2005), and Magrini (2012) show that the theories of existentialist philosophers It has a new

perspective on learning psychology, inclusive personality, student-teacher relationships, teaching methods, curricula, and the role of educational systems. According to Magrini (2012):

“Existentialism in education offers a corrective and alternative to behaviorism, social efficiency, ideas of conservative scholar academics, and vocationalism and the banking-model of education. The “existential” aims of education are grounded in the notion that the students and their unique possibilities are paramount to the task of teaching. We are more than merely “rational animals with speech,” we are also feeling, emoting, intuiting beings – which create and re-create our world through free choices. Importantly, for education and its various institutional manifestations (most particularly for “reform”), our world and ideas are not given, they are not indelibly etched-in-stone, and change to both the world and our ideas is possible through united, ecumenical activity” (p.3).

Research on existentialism has also been conducted in Iran. Most of these studies have compared the theories of existentialism and Islam about human beings. For example, Valizadeh, Dehghan, & Farzi (2018), comparing the place of man in Islamic mysticism and existentialism, found that both schools call on man to turn his back on material life in order to attain the transcendent level of human existence. Khoshbaf Torqabeh (2015) by comparing the basic anthropological concepts of existentialism and Islam believes that Islam values community and the collective interest, while existentialism is individualistic and considers the pursuit of individual interests as a principle. Farajzadeh & Sarmadi (2019) in the study of educational methods from the perspective of Islam and existentialism emphasize that the material aspect of human existence in existentialism is colorful, while Islam considers man to have a material-spiritual existence. Research on the content analysis of the works of existentialist philosophers, especially Sartre's books, has also been conducted by Iranian scholars. Examples include Nazarzadeh (2001), Zeinali and SharAiynee (2014), and Turk Ladani & Moradi (2015). Despite the richness of research, so far no research has been done on comparing the concept of existence in the works of Sartre and Hemingway, while the common denominator between the two can be considered the concept of existence and explanation of human views about themselves.

### 3. Research Method

The study is a qualitatively comparative using philosophical approach. As Kauka (2018) points out that “from its Greek etymology, analysis is the breaking down of a complex entity into constituent elements with the aim of unfolding the clarity of its functions and the nature of both the parts and the whole. Philosophical analysis is a purely abstract endeavor involving rational investigation as opposed to Empirical procedures” (p. 228). This method fits this study because it is entirely a philosophical research. The research population includes all the works of the selected authors along with books, and articles available in information databases and specialized sites. The research sample is equal to 44 books and articles that have been purposefully selected and the data analysis method was thematic content analysis.

### 4. Findings

This Content analysis of selected works of Sartre and Ernest Hemingway can be presented in three stages: In the first stage, the concept of existence in the works of Jean-Paul Sartre is examined. The second stage is devoted to Hemingway's works and his view of the existence concept. In the third stage, a brief comparison is made between opinions of Sartre and Hemingway.

#### *4-1) Concept of existence in the works of Jean-Paul Sartre*

The name Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) is reminiscent of the philosophy of existentialism and a leading literary movement. In addition to Sartre's philosophical treatises, his plays and novels also reflect his philosophical views. In the novel "Nausea", Sartre reflects the most original human questions as well as the philosophical theme of his works. Topics and concepts such as human existence, non-existence, identity and existence are the main themes of his conversations, descriptions and narratives. According to him, the most fundamental component is the precedence of existence over nature, which means that it is only human beings who have to build their existence after physical and natural existence and birth (Sartre, 2013). According to Sartre, man first exists, realizes existence, rises in the world, and then identifies himself, that is, gives a definition of himself”(Hoffman 2009). Also, the basis of Sartre's philosophical view is that man is an independent being. He believes that freedom is at the heart of all human experience and that it is what distinguishes man from all other types of beings (Oyeshile, 2004). In addition, man is always defining his meaning or becoming by being in a state of choice. According to Sartre, man is not only

the concept he has of himself, but also what he wants from himself (Catalano, 1985). However, this distinction is not always pleasant. Autonomous human beings must take responsibility for their choices, and this is where apprehension and anxiety arise (Sartre, 2013). According to Sartre, if man was immortal, then he had ample opportunity to measure the possibilities before him, and therefore he had no reason to hasten his choice, and he was not overwhelmed by apprehension and anxiety.

In "Flies" (1943), Sartre outlines the foundations of existentialist aesthetics in his first major play. In this play, Sartre calls on human beings to act freely and urges them to think responsibly about their words and deeds, away from religious beliefs and feelings of guilt. According to Sartre, man's freedom in understanding the distinction between his existence and essence is understandable because man's existence takes precedence over his essence. In "The Existence and Non-Existence", he states that only by accepting the fact that man does not have a fixed and definite nature can one understand the "autonomous dynamics" of man for "self-creation." In this way, the way is provided for man to design and recreate. In other words, man is an "open project" that he defines and carries on. Therefore, man is nothing but what he makes of himself. This is the first principle of existentialism (Sartre, 1993). In the play "Dirty Hands", Sartre focuses all his attention on moral actions and judgments (Archard, 2013). In this book, surprisingly, there is a conflict between two moral approaches - one based on intention and the other based on responsibility. Sartre leaves no doubt that a character who pursues moral responsibility and is not afraid to contaminate his hands in an emergency is the champion of this moral competition. In "Satan and God", Sartre emphasizes that good and evil cannot be easily separated, and that the two are intertwined (Bird, 2009).

#### *4-2) Concept of existence in the works of Ernest Hemingway*

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1991), like many writers used literature to depict his life and ideas. Although his view on the existence of man is evident in all his books, but especially in his great work "The Old Man and the Sea" has been more manifested (Ghasemi & Shahidi, 2005). In this book, which contains Hemingway's ideas about life, hope, responsibility, freedom, effort and belief, the nature and existence of human beings are examined more carefully. The main character of the story is Santiago, an old Cuban fisherman who has spent eighty-four days at sea without success, but with strength and energy, in search of his lost identity and pride. Most of the events of the story take place in and around the sea because in literature, the sea is a manifestation of life and effort. The sea, with its infinity and endless depth, is like life, calm, generous, wide, and happy (Sehati, Shokravi

& Nowruzian, 2008). But the same sea can sometimes be stormy, roaring, destructive and deadly. For the old man, the sea is a opportunity to restore dignity and find lost fortune, a ground for reviving identity and returning meaning to life. For Hemingway, the sea becomes a philosophical idea that despite the evil creatures blocking the way to revive human existence; gives an understanding of the nature of life (Sandamali, 2015). By creating Santiago as a hero, Hemingway has tried to show his human qualities and struggle for life (Octova, 2019). Existence, in Hemingway's view, represents a special kind of individualism; That is, a person who tries, considers various solutions, chooses, makes decisions, and most importantly, devotes himself to being. This Santiago is a character who resists life for eighty days without result but without surrender. What is clear is that Santiago is doing his best in the search for existence, after a long period of failure in fishing - which represents a period of great depression. Therefore, for Hemingway, passionate love, passionate killing, courageous death and perfect life are important components in life.

#### *4-3) Comparison of the works of Sartre and Hemingway according to the educational philosophy of existentialism*

The educational philosophy of existentialism went beyond the conventional definitions of man in psychology and sociology, as well as earlier philosophical schools. In the former view, man was a material, spiritual, or material-spiritual being. Man was also defined as an individual or social being. What distinguishes existentialism is its emphasis on the active role of man in its definition (Valizadeh, Dehgan & Farzi, 2018). Some of the earlier philosophical schools took a deterministic view, while philosophers such as Sartre sought to emphasize aspects such as responsibility and autonomy, freedom from social constraints, anxiety and crisis, self-creation and re-creation of character, and moral judgments and values. They, the people themselves, play the main role. Hemingway also shared concerns with Sartre (Stoltzfus, 2005). He also emphasizes the role of elements such as love, pride, effort, generosity and happiness, destructive ability, human power, forthcoming choices and depression in the evolution of human existence. These similarities can be explored in more detail:

From the perspective of educational philosophy, each of the two authors points to aspects that make the role of education more and more important. As shown in Figure 1, while Sartre emphasizes the primacy of existence over nature, the beauty of life is important to Hemingway, regardless of whether the role of existence is important or the role of nature. Accordingly, Hemingway has freed himself from the recurring story of "Chicken and Egg." Also, both authors

have emphasized the role of human choice and free will in the process of human education (Octova 2019). Therefore, fate-based education is a reprehensible subject for both authors. In the process of human education and the formation of existence, Sartre emphasizes the ability of human self-creation and re-creation, while Hemingway shows the concept of self-creation by emphasizing the efforts of stories' heroes (Stoltzfus, 2010). Another common feature of these two writers, which are expressed in different terms, is the emphasis on the power of human choice in the formation of existence. While Sartre insists on choice and responsibility, Hemingway praises individualism. Of course, in the path of identity formation, human beings face challenges. These challenges form the basis of the differences between the two intellectuals. Sartre's protagonists suffer from anxiety, while Hemingway praises overcoming depression (Octova, 2019). From the perspective of education philosophy, Hemingway's education is more valuable because it negates depression. The last point is that both authors believe in moral judgments, values, and good and bad neighborliness, while also Hemingway emphasizing the role of pride in the process of education.

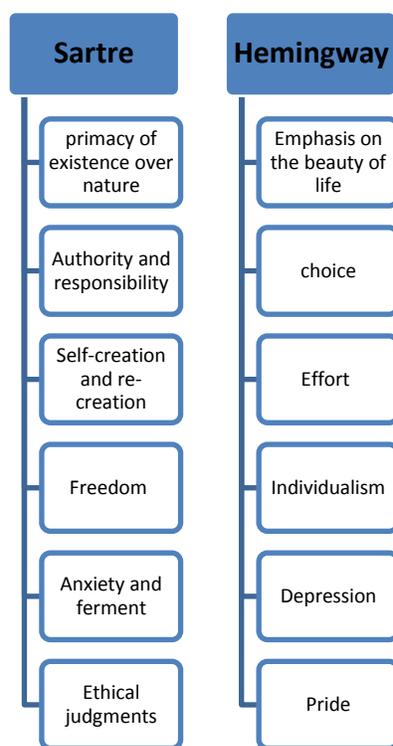


Figure 1: The main elements of Sartre and Hemingway's ideas

## 5. Conclusion

The first point is that the main characters of the works of both authors are involved in the issue of human existence and identity. These concepts, while appealing to human beings, are ambiguous and have been studied differently by different thinkers throughout history. The issue of life has been a dominant theme that has shown its semantic effects in literary works (Aras 2015). The second point is that both authors apply their own language and characterization by choosing appropriate spaces (Culpeper & Fernandez-Quintanilla, 2016). The third point is that the main characters of Sartre and Hemingway's stories are suffering from meaningless suffering in life. Hence, in addition to the emptiness of life, they face rejection from society and disruption of intellectual turmoil about their identity. The protagonists of Sartre and Hemingway's stories have a deep sense of the futility of life, although Hemingway's fictional characters show a stronger belief in the face of difficult social conditions in the search for their vital identity. Hemingway tries to show problems and at the same time offers solutions to share with the readers the characters of the story, their sense of self-likeness, empathy and courage in dealing with vital dilemmas (Debata 2013). The fourth point is that both writers stir the characters of their story spiritually, psychologically disturb the atmosphere of society, language seeks words, and the existential theme guides social conditions. Both novelists have created heroes whose circumstances are deteriorating, while their past is uncertain and their present circumstances do not allow for an accurate definition of their existence. The living conditions and experiences of Sartre and Hemingway all reflect the common vital concerns of modern human life. Apparently, people in every era have a lot in common. The way both authors have reflected ideas in their novels and the way they have put those ideas in the minds of the protagonists is almost identical to the fluid flow of the mind. This shows that man is indefatigable in his search for the existence and nature of his being. There is also a period of depression; Depression due to the oppression of the existing system, failure in family matters, inability to cope with problems, lack of choice in life and social phenomena. Despite all these similarities, Hemingway has an optimistic view and Sartre has a pessimistic view of man. Hemingway's heroes are not tired and hope for salvation after overcoming depression, while Sartre's heroes are suffering from anxiety and nausea.

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