

## **THE TYPES OF FATHER FIGURES IN LITERATURE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

**Sotvoldiyeva Mohinur Xazratullo qizi**

O‘zbekiston davlat jahon tillari universiteti,

1-bosqich tayanch doktoranti

E-mail: [mohinurqodirova97@gmail.com](mailto:mohinurqodirova97@gmail.com)

Tel: (95) 003 77 11

### **ABSTRACT**

The father figure has long been a central theme in world literature, reflecting not only family relations but also social, cultural, and moral values. Literary depictions of fathers can be classified into positive, negative, and substitute types. Positive fathers are portrayed as caring and supportive, negative fathers as authoritarian or indifferent, and substitute fathers as mentors or non-biological figures fulfilling paternal roles. This paper examines the functions and aesthetic significance of father images across different literary traditions, showing how such representations influence both narrative structures and the moral upbringing of readers. [1][2][3].

**Keywords:** father figure, literature, positive fathers, negative fathers, substitute fathers, poetics, upbringing

### **Аннотация**

Образ отца издавна занимает центральное место в мировой литературе, отражая не только семейные отношения, но и социальные, культурные и нравственные ценности. Литературные изображения отцов можно классифицировать на положительные, отрицательные и заменяющие типы. Положительные отцы изображаются заботливыми и поддерживающими, отрицательные — авторитарными или безразличными, а заменяющие — наставниками или небіологическими фигурами, выполняющими роль отца. В статье рассматриваются функции и эстетическое значение образа отца в различных литературных традициях, показывается, как такие представления влияют на повествовательные структуры и моральное воспитание читателей. [4][5].

**Ключевые слова:** образ отца, литература, положительные отцы, отрицательные отцы, заменяющие отцы, поэтика, воспитание

### **Annotatsiya**

Ota obrazi qadimdan jahon adabiyotida markaziy mavzulardan biri bo‘lib, u nafaqat oilaviy munosabatlarni, balki ijtimoiy, madaniy va axloqiy qadriyatlarni ham aks ettiradi. Adabiyotdagi otalar ijobiy, salbiy va o‘rinbosar turlarga ajratilishi mumkin.

Ijobiy otalar mehribon va qo'llab-quvvatlovchi, salbiy otalar avtoritar yoki befarq, o'rinbosar otalar esa murabbiy yoki biologik bo'lmagan shaxslar sifatida tasvirlanadi. Ushbu maqolada ota obrazining turli adabiy an'analardagi funksiyasi va estetik ahamiyati tahlil qilinib, uning syujet qurilishiga hamda kitobxonning axloqiy tarbiyasiga ta'siri ochib beriladi. [6][7].

**Kalit so'zlar:** ota obrazi, adabiyot, ijobiy otalar, salbiy otalar, o'rinbosar otalar, poetika, tarbiya

## INTRODUCTION

The father figure occupies a prominent place in world literature, serving as a complex symbol of authority, morality, and identity. [1][2]. classical epics to modern novels, the image of the father has been represented with remarkable diversity, embodying ideals of protection, guidance, and moral strength, as well as authoritarianism, indifference, or absence. [3].

### Literature review

Scholarly works have increasingly focused on categorizing and interpreting these diverse depictions. For instance, *KU News* ("Types of Fathers in Literature: Good, Bad and Substitute") identifies three dominant types of fathers: positive, negative, and substitute. [10]. Similarly, the ERIC database publication *Images of Fathers by Younger Generation in Modern Fiction* demonstrates that father figures in contemporary Russian and international children's literature significantly shape young readers' worldviews and value systems. [10].

This paper builds on such typological approaches by systematically analyzing the literary roles of positive, negative, and substitute father figures. The study argues that these types not only reveal psychological and familial realities but also function as cultural archetypes, [2][4], reflecting society's evolving perception of fatherhood.

### Research Methodology

The research applies comparative literary analysis as its primary methodology. This approach combines close reading of texts with an examination of secondary scholarship [5][6].

Sources of data included:

- *KU News* and ERIC research reports [10].
- Selected literary texts from different traditions (European, Russian, and modern children's fiction).
- Theoretical works on fatherhood and child development (Bettelheim, 1976; Lamb, 2010) [4].

Analytical framework:

- Positive fathers = caring, supportive, morally instructive [7].
- Negative fathers = authoritarian, neglectful, destructive [1][3].
- Substitute fathers = mentors, teachers, guardians [8].

By combining literary analysis with sociocultural interpretation, the study seeks to highlight the multifaceted significance of paternal imagery [9].

### **Analysis and results**

#### **Positive Fathers**

Positive father figures often serve as moral anchors in literature. [7] They represent compassion, wisdom, and self-sacrifice. In children's fiction, for example, fathers are portrayed as educators and role models, offering guidance in moments of crisis. Their role extends beyond the private family setting, symbolizing societal ideals of responsibility and ethical leadership.

**Negative Fathers.** Authoritarian or indifferent figures often become sources of psychological conflict [1][2]. They highlight both familial dysfunction and critiques of patriarchal authority [3].

**Substitute Fathers.** These appear as mentors, teachers, or leaders [8]. They provide essential moral guidance when the biological father is absent or inadequate [9]. Substitute fathers frequently appear in both classical and modern texts, taking the form of mentors, teachers, or community leaders. In narratives where the biological father is absent or inadequate, substitute figures provide essential emotional and moral guidance. This category reflects changing social realities, including single-parent households and alternative family structures.

### **Discussion**

The findings suggest that the tripartite classification of fathers — positive, negative, and substitute — provides a useful lens for analyzing literary texts across cultures. Positive fathers reinforce the ideal of harmony within the family and society, whereas negative fathers expose the destructive consequences of neglect and abuse of power. Substitute fathers, on the other hand, emphasize the resilience of human relationships, showing how paternal functions can be fulfilled by figures outside biological ties.

The tripartite classification of fathers provides a useful analytical tool [2][5]. Positive fathers reinforce harmony, negative fathers expose destructive consequences, substitute fathers emphasize resilience [7][8]. Modern children's literature especially highlights nurturing fathers [10], contrasting authoritarian models [1]. This evolution parallels societal changes in family and gender ideals [3][6].

Furthermore, these categories reveal how literature acts as a mirror of cultural transformation. For instance, modern children's literature emphasizes nurturing and communicative fathers, contrasting with earlier authoritarian models. This evolution parallels real-world changes in parenting ideals, where emotional presence is increasingly valued alongside traditional authority.

By studying father figures through this typology, scholars gain insights into the shifting nature of masculinity, family dynamics, and intergenerational relations. Moreover, the literary father emerges not merely as a character but as a cultural symbol of continuity, conflict, and adaptation.

### **Conclusion**

Father figures in literature embody cultural ideals, social conflicts, and universal human concerns [2][4].

This research shows that:

- Positive fathers = care, responsibility [7]
- Negative fathers = dangers of authoritarianism [1][3]
- Substitute fathers = adaptability of familial roles [8][9]

Future research may extend this analysis by cross-cultural studies and interdisciplinary approaches [5][6].

Father figures in literature represent far more than individual family roles; they embody cultural ideals, social conflicts, and universal human concerns. The classification of fathers into positive, negative, and substitute types provides a systematic framework for comparative literary analysis.

This research demonstrates that positive fathers reinforce values of care and responsibility, negative fathers highlight the dangers of authoritarianism and absence, while substitute fathers illustrate the adaptability of social and familial roles. As literature continues to evolve, so too will the representations of fatherhood, reflecting ongoing transformations in family, society, and culture.

Future research may extend this analysis by incorporating cross-cultural studies, gender perspectives, and interdisciplinary approaches, thus broadening our understanding of paternal imagery in world literature.

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