


Perseverance and Faith Play a Vital Role in One's Struggle in Life as Depicted in *The Old Man and The Sea*

Munish Kumar Thakur* 
Assistant Professor of English,
IEC University, Himachal Pradesh, India.

ABSTRACT

Perseverance and Faith are the two important qualities of any individual that help him to face any adversities in his life. No matter how difficult the situations are there in one's life if he has complete faith in his abilities. Perseverance is the secret booster behind the confidence one can have to face the adverse situations in his life as Santiago does in Earnest Hemingway's *The Old Man and The Sea*. Literature has always been the reflection of any society and it plays a very important role in the lives of people living in any society. Writers always try to discuss the realities of life through their works in order to impart a good message to the people of society. Earnest Hemingway also does the same in his novel *The Old Man and The Sea* by depicting the struggle in the life of the central character Santiago in his old age. The present article tries to analyse the role and importance of qualities like perseverance and faith that provides the courage to any individual to face the adversities in his life bravely.

Keywords: *Perseverance, Faith, Hemingway, Santiago, The Old Man and The Sea.*

Introduction

Ernest Hemingway's novella *The Old Man and The Sea* is a timeless portrayal of human resilience in the face of adversity. The protagonist, Santiago, exemplifies perseverance and faith as he battles the marlin and the relentless forces of nature. This research aims to delve into the themes of perseverance and faith as depicted in the novel, exploring their significance in shaping Santiago's character and his approach to life's challenges. Perseverance is “the quality of being someone who continues to make an effort to achieve their aims, even when this is difficult or takes a long time” (“Perseverance”). It is the “continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition” (“Definition of PERSEVERANCE”). Therefore, the word perseverance, though it seems complicated, actually refers to the quality of sticking with a task until it is completed, despite obstacles, setbacks, and

* Author: Munish Kumar Thakur

Email: munish10thakur@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8911-2356>

Received 21 June 2024; Accepted 12 June 2024. Available online: 25 July 2024.

Published by SAFE. (Society for Academic Facilitation and Extension)

[This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)



failures. It stands in contrast to becoming weary before we complete, becoming demoralized by obstacles, and crumbling up in hopelessness. In simple terms, patience and perseverance go hand in hand. Even though the opportunity is limited, we still need to wait for more favorable outcomes and finish the ongoing task since we are aware that in order to gain some, we also have to lose some. Although perfection is not required, it is crucial that we finish what we are working on. We must be persistent if we wish to achieve anything. No matter how long it takes, we have to finish the assignment we've been given. Even if we just read short narratives in our primary courses, like the tale of Robert Bruce and the Spider or the well-known marathon between the rabbit and the tortoise, we may still understand the benefits of persistence.

An absence of perseverance is the sole obstacle that can stand in the way of achievement. Having the capacity to bear whatever the circumstances are while maintaining an upbeat mindset is referred to as perseverance. Walking out of your issues will never get you far in life. People who are truly committed to achieving their goals maintain a positive outlook, which helps them succeed sooner or later. Friends, persistence is a quality we all need in order to get through any challenging circumstances in life. Regardless of what other assets you could possibly possess, if you cannot afford it, you could find yourself unsuccessful. You shouldn't stop if you want to be someone who succeeds in life, due to the fact that, those who give up wouldn't achieve and champions never give up. People that are thriving do not allow their worries to hinder them from advancing in life. At all costs, you shouldn't think about quitting as a prospect. If greatness comes effortlessly, it is going to forfeit its significance. The fact is that you succeed in life because of your unwavering resolve and persistent efforts.

One must be clear about their ambitions because they provide a fresh path that paves the route for their success. Set a deadline for your objectives and develop a plan of action. Even if you believe there is little chance of success, do not consider quitting a possibility. Success is guaranteed for those that maintain their motivation and don't skip a step. The capacity to adhere to your daily schedule in order to advance towards achieving your objectives is perseverance. Undoubtedly, there will be many setbacks along the route to achievement, but if you remain extremely driven, you are going to prevail. Those that reach novel accomplishment milestones have a long track record of achievement. Have complete faith in what you're capable of because people who work hard always succeed in life. Avoid comparing yourself to others because doing so constantly breeds doubt in oneself, which makes it harder to strive towards your objectives. Embrace the "anything is possible" mentality and the conviction that you'll endure.

Folks who are well-prepared in every manner are successful in life. The highest moral compass is the conscience that guides someone. One can use advice from relatives and close friends, but ensure that one considers any possible alternatives and choose wisely in the end. Always listen to your own subconscious for the best advice. It is aware of one's potential and true aspirations for life.

If you have experienced a small setback, don't think that you are powerless to succeed now. Maintain a persistent mindset and never give up. Keep your focus on that you will recover and try once more, and that irrespective of what, you will succeed in your endeavours. Keep in mind that none of us can achieve greater achievement without experiencing failures. To succeed, learn from your past errors and put forth more effort. The one factor that may unlock your dismay and help you turn your setbacks into successes is perseverance. The present research paper tries to focus on the value and importance of perseverance and faith in one's life as depicted by Earnest Hemingway in his novella *The Old Man and The Sea*. The narrative presents how an old man, Santiago, displays the real importance of perseverance and faith in any individual's life.

Research Questions:

1. How does Santiago's perseverance manifest throughout his struggle with the marlin and the sea?
2. In what ways does faith influence Santiago's actions and decisions during his ordeal?
3. What broader insights into human nature and the human condition can be drawn from Santiago's character and his journey in the novel?

Methodology

This research will employ a qualitative approach, utilizing thematic analysis to explore the roles of perseverance and faith in *The Old Man and The Sea*. The primary data source will be the novella itself, supplemented by critical essays, scholarly articles, and literary analyses.

Santiago's Perseverance in *The Old Man and The Sea*

Perseverance is one of the most important themes of the novella *The Old Man and The Sea* by Ernest Hemingway. Ernest Hemingway's portrayal of Santiago in *The Old Man and The Sea* highlights the fisherman's unwavering perseverance in the face of immense challenges.

Throughout the novella, Santiago demonstrates remarkable endurance and determination as he struggles against the marlin and the relentless forces of nature.

1. Endurance in Physical Struggle

The subject of enduring hardship is one that the Bible frequently addresses. Although one admires Santiago's toughness and resilience, the motives behind Santiago's persistence were distinct from those behind Christianity's persistence in the global community. Santiago had difficulties because of his old age and his socioeconomic situation. He is described as "thin and gaunt with deep wrinkles in the back of his neck" in the narrative (Hemingway 1). On the sides of his face are the brown spots that the sun's harsh reflections off the warm tropical sea cause as beneficent skin cancer. His palms had deep wrinkled scars from carrying big fish on the strings, and the splotch extended all the way across each side of his cheekbones. "Yet his shoulders and neck are powerful in action, and his eyes are 'cheerful and undefeated'" (Hofling 162). Santiago's physical endurance is evident from the beginning of his journey. He ventures far out into the Gulf Stream alone in his small boat, enduring the harsh conditions of the open sea. Despite his age and the odds against him, Santiago persists in his quest to catch the great marlin, showcasing his resilience in adverse circumstances.

2. Mental Fortitude and Willpower

While enduring hardship is admirable, it's as crucial to addressing the causes behind resilience. Despite having a strong moral compass and being the narrative's hero, Santiago never had an acquaintance with God. He claimed not to be a religious person. He did not see God as anyone to adore and have faith, but rather as a person to turn to for assistance. He relied on confidence in himself. He persevered because he wanted to establish himself. Beyond physical endurance, Santiago exhibits profound mental fortitude and willpower. Despite setbacks such as the marlin dragging him far out to sea, Santiago remains steadfast in his determination to catch the fish. He maintains a disciplined focus on his goal, refusing to succumb to despair or self-doubt.

Although trying to illustrate oneself is not often incorrect, Christians who follow Christ place a higher value on their connection with God. This connection which is always put to the test is what drives the optimist's tenacity. The Christian can persevere even without incredible fortitude and will be displayed by the elderly guy with the support of God. The narrative illustrates Santiago's character, which is straightforward, appealing, and very easy to relate to.

His psychological perceptions of the world are exposed via his discussions of man versus nature, the natural world familial ties, and perseverance.

3. Symbolism of Perseverance

Hemingway employs symbolism to underscore Santiago's perseverance. The struggle with the marlin becomes a symbolic battle of wills and endurance. Santiago's relentless pursuit of the fish symbolizes his refusal to give up, even in the face of overwhelming odds. This symbolism enriches the thematic depth of the novella, emphasizing the universal human struggle against adversity. One of the main tenets of *The Old Man and The Sea* is the conflict between man and nature. Santiago's war against the natural world is the central theme of the whole story. His perseverance is shown in the dialogue he had with the boy when he says, "But man is not made for defeat...A man can be destroyed but not defeated" (Hemingway 38). Santiago feels depleted, unresponsive, and most of all, fatigued after hunting a marlin and relinquishing it to the sharks. He believes he hasn't lost, even if he lost the fish he had worked so hard to catch. All of his labour was destroyed, simultaneously with the fish itself. But he managed to get it. He ended his string of misfortune and demonstrated his deserving of the beautiful marlin.

Santiago also demonstrated that he was the stronger of the two. He claims in the novella that despite having succeeded in killing the fish, he senses a connection to it. Even if it meant dying, he had no hesitation to do whatever was necessary to finish the job. By proving to everyone in the town who had questioned him that he was a capable fisherman with unrivalled willpower, Santiago rendered himself honoured. Santiago examines his duty as an individual, a seaman, and someone who lives in the world while continuing to seek the marlin. He worries about appearing feeble and devotes a lot of his energy to imagining what the marlin may be feeling. He is aware that if he doesn't, the marlin may become aware of its own ability and sever the line. He exclaims, "Let him think I am more man than I am and I will be so" (Hemingway 23-24). He is aware that he must continue to project the appearance of strength. His desire to recover a little of his youthful innocence is the driving force behind a portion of this apparently interminable quest to capture the marlin and halt his poor fortune. He wishes to demonstrate to himself his continued strength. Therefore he reassures himself, "I may not be as strong as I think...But I know many tricks and I have resolution" (Hemingway 8).

The Old Man and the Sea contain several touching instances where Santiago's kind nature comes apparent. When a little bird perches on his small boat, it happens to be particularly

noticeable. He is pleased with the business and occasionally speaks to it exactly like he wishes for Manolin. The elderly guy invites the bird to lie down for a while. But soon, it will have to enter the global arena and try its luck, just like the rest of us. In the novella, Santiago might not have managed to land the marlin lacking his extraordinary tenacity and resolve. Despite being immediately available, the award was a long distance off at the last part of the queue. That was a perfect reward. To demonstrate that he was greater in power and worthy of this kind of reward, he wrestled, was struggling, and sacrificed. He thought about his own mental state while enduring each of the hours of his fight. “In his fight with the sharks, he comprehends the philosophy of life. The fight is a very effective mechanism of self-reflection and spur, and it strengthened his belief in self-flagellation and sublimated his own personality” (Yang and Zhang 222).

Santiago trusts in good fortune, optimism, and the strength of all life. He is confident that he will manage to grasp the fish if he is persistent and maintains hope for the days to come. The old man's pre-marlin state might also be compared to this quotation. He persists in not giving up amid the gazes and remarks of other fishermen and Manolin's parents throughout his 84-day run of bad fortune. Santiago's faith is getting clearly reflected when he says, “Only I have no luck any more. But who knows? Maybe today. Every day is a new day. It is better to be lucky. But I would rather be exact. Then when luck comes you are ready” (Hemingway 11). Whenever one decides to have faith in good fortune, then it can be an influential force. Santiago believes that fate will be kind to man when it wants to, not because he can make it happen. He puts a lot of emphasis on being "precise" while fishing. Preparing his equipment will be of greater assistance in this sense than fretting about whether fortune will be by his side on the 85th day because he intends to be equipped for any circumstance that arises. Santiago keeps his mental state positive and optimistic despite the fact that he has been fighting the marlin for hours and feeling exhausted; by doing this, he ensures that he will succeed in his goal and prevents himself from giving up. Santiago's perseverance in "The Old Man and The Sea" is a testament to his indomitable spirit and unwavering commitment to his goal. Hemingway's portrayal of Santiago's physical and mental endurance enriches the novella with profound thematic depth, making it a timeless exploration of human resilience in the face of formidable challenges.

Manolin's Faith in Santiago's Capabilities

The relationship between the old fisherman Santiago and his young apprentice Manolin is one of profound admiration, respect, and unwavering faith. The theme of Manolin's belief in Santiago's abilities as fisherman and as human being runs through the narrative. This essay seeks to discuss how Manolin's belief in Santiago influences their relationship and serves to enrich the themes of the novella. The boy is only presented twice in *The Old Man and the Sea*, but his presence is invaluable as it brings out the significance of the old man as a person and a fisherman is only brought to light by the boy's dedication to Santiago.

1. The Foundation of Their Relationship

From the outset, Hemingway establishes the bond between Santiago and Manolin as deeply rooted in mutual respect and affection. Manolin, despite being forbidden by his parents to fish with Santiago due to the old man's unlucky streak, continues to support and care for Santiago. This demonstrates his steadfast loyalty and unwavering faith in Santiago's skills as a fisherman. Manolin freely expresses his affection for Santiago. He sees to it that the elderly man has stuff, covers himself, and is free to rest. Manolin is elevated to the status of a metaphorical character notwithstanding Hemingway's assertion that the characters he created were a real-life child and an actual old person. Manolin doesn't behave in a way that is indicative of teenage years, such as with misunderstandings, uncertainty, or willfulness.

On the contrary, he is a friend who is completely devoted to you. Hemingway does allude to the youngster's bitterness towards his parent, whose instructions Manolin complies with by leaving Santiago following forty days of failing to catch any fish. This truth contributes to the development of the youngster as a genuine human being—one who must make morally complex judgements. By the conclusion of the narrative, nevertheless, the youngster has broken his promise to his parent and has vowed to set sail with Santiago no matter what happens. In the novel's concluding pages, he serves as a metaphor for unwavering love and loyalty. He also stands for the existence that will come after death because he is the old man's disciple. Thanks to Manolin's commitment to learning from Santiago, Santiago will continue to exist.

2. Manolin's Role as a Supportive Companion

Throughout the novella, Manolin acts as more than just an apprentice; he is Santiago's confidant and caretaker, providing physical and emotional support. Despite his youth and

inexperience, Manolin's belief in Santiago's capabilities as a fisherman never wavers. This is evident in his decision to continue learning from Santiago, despite pressure from his parents to work on a more successful boat. Manolin is the old man's penultimate and closest human connection, his successor in every phase of human life, and the person he desires to be trusted with his fishing prowess, the transformational abilities of his perception, and his lasting impressions. Manolin is a student, a son, and a little lad, just as Santiago is a guide, an esoteric father, and an elderly man. At the conclusion of the narrative, Manolin expresses his faith in Santiago and all that Santiago stands for. He feels affection and concern for the old man. Santiago hears Manolin explain the real significance of his heroic battle, which has given him the invisible qualities he seeks. Manolin affirms his confidence in Santiago on three occasions. Manolin shows for the last time all that he comprehends and embraces everything Santiago desires to leave him, including everything that goes along with that legacy, by taking the marlin's harpoon. Despite everything the boy never loses his faith in the old man's capabilities which ultimately proves to be the right decision.

However, the faith here is in the abilities of an individual rather than the religious one. As in the case of Santiago as well, he mentioned many times in the story that he is not a religious man but he has complete faith in good fortune which will definitely be in his favour even after countless failures. "The fisherman himself, knowing what it is all about, relies on his own resources and not on God (in whom he devoutly believes, just as Jake Barnes, while calling himself a bad Catholic, is also a devout believer)" (Gurko 11). He begins his petitions by claiming he doesn't consider himself religious before reciting them compulsively and losing the phrases while engaged in an encounter with a Marlin. Santiago's meticulous and orderly attitude to whatever in life is emphasized all through the story, thus his carelessness here only highlights his lax devotion to prayer. More significantly, Santiago does not consider God. On the contrary, he turns to secular subjects like the human condition, baseball, and marine life for solace, endurance, and purpose. "Hemingway's figures are often religious but their religion is peripheral rather than central to their lives. In *The Old Man and the Sea*, Santiago, the principal figure, is a primitive Cuban, at once religious and superstitious" (Gurko 377).

3. Symbolism of the Skiff and the Sea

The skiff, the small boat used by Santiago for fishing, serves as a symbol of their shared passion and commitment to the sea. It represents their connection to nature's elemental forces and

reliance on each other for survival and success in their endeavours. Critics have examined Manolin's role in *The Old Man and The Sea* as crucial to understanding the novella's themes of resilience and companionship. For instance, in his essay "The Relationship Between Santiago and Manolin in 'The Old Man and The Sea'," Philip Young discusses how Manolin's unwavering faith in Santiago reflects the novel's larger exploration of loyalty and belief in oneself (14). Manolin's faith in Santiago resonates with readers because it underscores the power of belief in oneself and in others. This passage shows the theme that it is possible to withstand all hardships and misfortunes even if they spread around every corner of one's life, with no exception. This is the motif of the man's boundless faith in the individual he considered to be the most appropriate figure for a fisherman as well as a human being. Based on the relationship of Santiago and Manolin depicted by Ernest Hemingway in *The Old Man and The Sea*, the authors may assume that the worst days and nights that a person can ever face would be more endurable if someone had no doubt in us.

Conclusion

The analysis of faith and perseverance in Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* has clarified the role these characteristics play in shaping the personality of the protagonist, Santiago, and in the way he confronts obstacles in life. The work demonstrates that faith and perseverance are vital for overcoming hardship and achieving success in life. There is no doubt that these traits are essential for people to confront issues and achieve their dreams. The case has shown that faith and perseverance are vital for a person's struggle, as the book points out, and the audience is expected to practice these traits in their daily lives. Perseverance and faith are essential in the life of a successful person. In *The Old Man and The Sea*, Ernest Hemingway has subtly used both themes in the success story of the main protagonist of the novella. Santiago showcased the relevance of perseverance and faith in order to surpass any obstacles in one's life, no matter how difficult or fatal the situations are.

The narrative depicts how Santiago has complete faith in his good fortune even after the struggle of eighty-four harsh, tough and unfortunate days. There is no lack of faith in turning fortunes when he goes to catch fish on the eighty-fifth day. Similarly, when he caught a big Marlin fish after the drought of eighty-four days, he has shown great courage and perseverance while fighting the sharks that were trying to steal the fruit of his hard work. As he was so old and lack in physical strength but still there was no lack of firm determination in his will to carry

the Marlin fish on the shore. Therefore, he struggles for many hours against a number of sharks to save the Marlin fish which he caught after a lot of grappling with it. As Santiago is in his old age and the Marlin fish is so huge in size and strength, therefore, Santiago has to scuffle a lot with the Marlin. But while fighting with the Marlin and later with the sharks, he never loses faith in his good fortune and shows great persistence against all odds his life offers him. Through Santiago's struggle against the Marlin and the sharks, Hemingway has beautifully displayed the importance of perseverance and faith in one's life which help any individual to gain his inner strength to fight against the difficult situations one has to face during his lifetime.

References:

- “Definition of PERSEVERANCE.” Merriam-Webster, 11 June 2023, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/perseverance. Accessed 23 June 2023.
- “Perseverance.” Cambridge Dictionary, 31 May 2023, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/perseverance. Accessed 23 June 2023.
- Baker, Carlos. Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969.
- Gurko, Leo. “The Old Man and the Sea.” *College English*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1955, pp. 11–15. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/495716>. Accessed 25 June 2023.
- Gurko, Leo. “The Heroic Impulse in ‘The Old Man and the Sea.’” *The English Journal*, vol. 44, no. 7, 1955, pp. 377–82. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/808247>. Accessed 25 June 2023.
- Hemingway, Ernest. The Old Man and the Sea. [arvindguptatoys.com](http://www.arvindguptatoys.com), 1 Sept. 1952, www.arvindguptatoys.com/arvindgupta/oldmansea.pdf. Accessed 23 June 2023.
- Hemingway, Ernest. *The Old Man and The Sea*. Scribner, 1952.
- Hofling, Charles K. “Hemingway’s ‘The Old Man and The Sea’ and The Male Reader.” *American Imago*, vol. 20, no. 2, 1963, pp. 161–73. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26301852>. Accessed 25 June 2023.

Reynolds, Michael. Hemingway's Reading 1910-1940: An Inventory. Princeton University Press, 1999.

Yang, Hong and Zhenzhen Zhang. "Analysis of the power of the old fisherman Santiago in the old man and the sea." International Conference on Education, Management and Computing Technology (ICEMCT 2014). Atlantis Press, pp. 220-23. <https://www.atlantis-press.com/article/13069.pdf>. Accessed 25 June 2023.

Young, Philip. "Santiago's Apprenticeship in 'The Old Man and The Sea'." The Hemingway Review, vol. 10, no. 1, 1990, pp. 7-15.