

## Arabic Prose after COVID 19: A Critical Study

*Dr. Md Hussain Ahmed*

*Assistant Professor, Department of Arabic, S.R. College, kalian, Cachar (Assam)*

**Abstract.** *The COVID-19 pandemic marked the beginning of a new era that restructures the social life, cultural expression and literary production around the world. The writers of the Arab world responded to this unexpected situation by contributing their narratives that document, interpret and critically engage with experiences of fear, isolation, illness, loss and ethical uncertainty. This research paper lime-light's Arabic prose literature evolved after COVID-19, describing on thematic transformations, narrative innovations, and socio-cultural corners that characterise post-pandemic writings. Employing qualitative textual analyses and critical literary approaches, the study analyzes short stories, novels, and prose narratives of this pandemic and post pandemic period. The paper highlights Arabic prose literatures after COVID-19 represents a distinct phase in contemporary Arabic literature, marked by existential reflection, fragmented narrative structures heightened social critique, and increased reliance on digital platform. By situating post COVID Arabic prose within broader discussions of pandemic literature and crisis narratives, this study contributes to contemporary Arabic literary criticism and highlights the role of prose as cultural memory and ethical reflection.*

**Key words:** *Arabic prose literature, COVID-19, pandemic narratives, contemporary Arabic literature, crisis writing.*

### 1. Introduction:

The COVID-19 pandemic stands as one of the most transformative global events of the twenty-first century. Beyond its medical and economic consequences, the pandemic generated profound psychological, social and cultural disruptions. Lockdowns, quarantine, fear of contagion, mass death and social distancing altered the rhythms of everyday life and reshaped human relationships. Literature, as a sensitive registrar of human experience, became a crucial space for recording, interpreting and questioning these transformations. In the Arab world, prose literature- particularly short stories, novels, diaries and narrative essays emerged as a significant medium through which writers articulated the collective trauma and moral dilemmas brought about by COVID-19.

Historically, the world literature has often responded to pandemics and an epidemic, from medieval plague chronicles to modern novels such as Albert Camus's. Arabic literature, although less frequently associated with epidemic narratives, has nonetheless engaged with themes of illness, catastrophe and social crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic renewed and intensified this engagement, promoting Arabic prose writers to confront questions of morality, isolation, faith, authority, social inequality, post COVID-19 Arabic prose does not merely describe the pandemic as an external event; rather it transforms the pandemic into a narrative lens through which deeper social, philosophical and ethical issues are explored.

## **1.1 Statement of the problem:**

Despite the growing body of Arabic prose produced during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, scholarly research on this literary phenomenon remains limited and fragmented. Existing studies have largely focused on Arabic poetry or on general cultural responses to the pandemic, while systematic academic analysis of Arabic prose literature after COVID-19 is still underdeveloped. Many critical discussions remain descriptive rather than analytical, and there is a lack of comprehensive studies that examine thematic patterns, narrative techniques and socio-cultural implications across a range of prose texts.

The central problem addressed in this study is the absence of a coherent critical framework for understanding how Arabic prose literature has evolved in response to COVID-19. Without such analysis, the literary significance of post-pandemic prose risks being overlooked, and its contribution to contemporary Arabic literature remains insufficiently recognized.

## **1.2 Objectives of the study:**

The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To examine the major themes that characterize Arabic prose literature after COVID-19.
2. To analyze narrative techniques and stylistic innovations employed by Arabic prose writers in response to the pandemic.
3. To explore the socio-cultural, ethical and psychological concerns reflected in post- COVID Arabic prose.
4. To situate Arabic prose within the broader context of global pandemic literature.
5. To assess the role of digital platforms and new modes of publication in shaping post-COVID Arabic prose.

## **1.3 Research hypotheses:**

This study is guided by the following hypotheses:

Arabic prose literature after COVID-19 demonstrates a marked shift toward themes of existential anxiety, human fragility and moral questioning.

Post-pandemic Arabic prose exhibits narrative experimentation, including fragmented structures, nonlinear time and hybrid genres.

Digital media and online publication platforms have played a significant role in shaping the form and circulation of post-COVID Arabic prose.

## **1.4 Necessity and significance of the study:**

The necessity of this study lies in its attempt to fill a critical gap in contemporary Arabic literary scholarship. By focusing on prose literature after COVID-19, the research contributes to understanding Arab writers' responses to global crises and how literature functions as a site of cultural memory and ethical reflection. The study is significant for students and scholars of Arabic literature, and cultural studies, as it provides a structured analysis of an emerging literary phase that continues to shape contemporary writing.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 pandemic Literature: A Theoretical Overview**

Pandemic literature means the literary works that engage with epidemics, disease and large scale health crises, often using illness as a metaphor for social, moral or political breakdown. Scholars argue that such literature performs both representational and interpretive functions: it documents lived experiences while also offering symbolic and philosophical insights. In modern literary theory, pandemic narratives are frequently analyzed through the lenses of trauma studies, existential philosophical and cultural memory.

Within Arabic literary studies, pandemic literature has not traditionally formed a distinct field. However, recent scholarship acknowledges that COVID-19 has generated a new wave of writing that warrants critical attention. Researchers emphasize that pandemic literature often reveals hidden social structure, exposing inequalities, power relations and ethical contradictions that become visible during times of crisis.

## **2.2 Arabic literature and crisis Narratives**

Arabic literature has long engaged with crisis, including colonialism, war, displacement and political upheaval. Novels and short stories have frequently portrayed societies under stress, making Arabic prose particularly responsive to moments of collective trauma. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, introduced a different kind of crisis- one that was global, invisible and deeply personal. Scholars note that this uniqueness influenced the tone and structure of pandemic narratives, which often emphasize interiority, psychological tension and everyday survival.

## **2.3 Scholarly Studies on Arabic Literature and COVID-19**

Existing studies on Arabic literature and COVID-19 focus primarily on poetry, highlighting themes of fear, hope, spiritual reflection and resistance. Some research has examined short stories written during lockdowns, noting the emergence of allegorical representations of the virus and anthropomorphized depictions of disease. However, comprehensive studies on Post-COVID Arabic prose –particularly novels and longer narrative forms- remain scarce. This research builds upon and extends these preliminary studies by offering a boarder and more systematic analysis.

## **3. Methodology:**

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology based on textual analysis and literary criticism. A purposive selection of Arabic prose texts published after COVID-19 was made, including short stories, novels and narrative essays that explicitly engage with the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis focuses on thematic content, narrative structure, characterization and stylistic features.

Secondary sources, including academic articles, literary criticism and cultural commentaries were consulted to contextualize the primary texts and support critical interpretations. The study does not provide an exhaustive survey of all post COVID Arabic prose but rather to identify dominant trends and representative patterns.

## **4. Findings of the study:**

### **4.1 Dominant Themes in post-COVID Arabic prose**

One of the most prominent findings of this study is the thematic centrality of existential anxiety in post-COVID Arabic prose. Writer frequently explore fear of death, uncertainty about the future, and the fragility of human existence. Character often confronts isolation and loneliness, reflecting the psychological impact of quarantine and social distancing.

Another recurring theme is social inequality. Many narratives highlight how the pandemic disproportionately affected marginalized communities, exposing class divisions and economic vulnerability. Through individual stories, writers critique broader social systems and question notions of justice and responsibility.

### **4.2 Narrative Techniques and Structural Innovation**

Post-COVID Arabic prose is characterized by notable experimentation in narrative form. Fragmented structures, diary-like entries and nonlinear timelines are common, reflecting the disrupted experience of time during lockdowns. Some texts blend realism with symbolism or surreal elements using metaphor to convey emotional and psychological states.

### **4.3 Digital influence on prose writing**

The findings also reveal the significant role of digital platforms in shaping post-COVID Arabic prose. Social media, online magazines and digital publishing initiatives enabled writers to share texts rapidly

and reach wider audiences. This digital turn influenced not only the circulation of literature but also its form, encouraging brevity, immediacy and hybrid genres.

## **5. Discussion**

The findings confirm that Arabic prose literature COVID-19 represents a distinct and meaningful phase in contemporary Arabic writing. The pandemic acted as both subject and catalyst, prompting writers to rethink narrative strategies and thematic priorities and inner psychological states, post-COVID prose expands the scope of Arabic literary realism.

Furthermore, the integration of digital culture into literary production reflects broader transformations in the Arab literary field. The increased accessibility of digital platforms democratized literary expression, allowing new voices to emerge alongside established authors.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study has examined Arabic prose literature after COVID-19, highlighting its thematic richness, narrative innovation and socio-cultural significance. The research demonstrates that post-pandemic Arabic prose engages deeply with questions of human vulnerability, ethical responsibility and social justice. As a form of cultural memory, this literature preserves the emotional and psychological realities of the pandemic, ensuring that human dimensions are not forgotten.

Future research may focus on comparative studies between Arabic pandemic prose and similar narratives in other literary traditions or on detailed analyses of individual authors and texts.

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