

An Analytical Study of Problematic Marital Life and Its Psychological Effect in
Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl* and Alex Michaelides' *The Silent Patient*

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requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing my degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material that has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

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Abstract: It is common sense that a husband and wife would provide emotional support for each other. Obviously, too much emotional dependency could cause loss of self, fear of abandonment, and lack of boundaries. On the other hand, interdependency provides mutual support and secure attachment. In the two novels, *The Silent Patient* and *Gone Girl*, we see the importance of interdependence. Theo Faber, one of the major characters of the novel *The Silent Patient*, is a victim of excessive emotional dependency. He always believes that his wife is his lifesaver. Eventually, he could not let go of his wife, Kathy, after finding out about her infidelity. Moreover, Amy Dunne, the protagonist of the novel *Gone Girl*, is similarly obsessed with her husband. No matter what, Amy never wanted to leave her husband, even though he was cheating on her. Both the novelists, Alex Michaelides and Gillian Flynn, portray through their unique narratives how emotional dependence leads a spouse to mental devastation. However, “interdependence is the solution.” Is this a good answer? In my dissertation, through my research question, I will present whether interdependence is crucial for a healthy married life and how emotional dependence causes incurable psychological effects.

Key Words: Marriage, Spouse, Couple, Dependence, Interdependence, Parenting, Problematic, Infidelity, Psychology, Thriller, Relationship, Attachment.

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Table of Contents

Declaration.....	2
Approval.....	3
Abstract.....	4
Acknowledgment.....	5
Table of Contents.....	6
Chapter 1.....	8
1.1 Contextual Background of <i>The Silent Patient</i>	10-13
1.2 Contextual Background of <i>Gone Girl</i>	13-16
1.3 Overview of the Thriller Genre	16-17
1.4 The Purpose of My Thesis	18
Chapter 2: Literature Review	19-43
Chapter 3: Methodology	43
3.1 Research Gap	43-44
3.2 Research Question	44-45
3.3 Analysis of Theory	45-46
3.4 Data Collection Method	46
Chapter 4: Analysis and Discussion on <i>The Silent Patient</i>	46

4.1 Dependency in Marriage	46-52
4.2 The Consequences of Abusive and Neglectful Parenting	52-54
4.3 Deep-Seated Resentments in Marriage	54-56
Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion on <i>Gone Girl</i>	56
5.1 Dependency in Marriage	56-61
5.2 The Consequences of Abusive and Neglectful Parenting	61-63
5.3 Deep-Seated Resentments in Marriage	63-64
Chapter 6: Conclusion	64-66
Works Cited	66-67

Chapter 1: Introduction

“The chief cause of unhappiness in married life is that people think that marriage is sex attraction, which takes the form of promises and hopes and happiness - a view supported by public opinion and by literature. But marriage cannot cause happiness. Instead, it is always torture, which man has to pay for satisfying his sex urge.” (Leo Tolstoy)

Both of the authors of the novels, *The Silent Patient* and *Gone Girl*, have challenged Tolstoy’s above-mentioned statement. Is marriage all about sexual pleasure and physical satisfaction? Obviously not. Most probably, one of the highly concerning issues in the present world is marriage. The increasing divorce rate, crimes of domestic violence, and the mental suffering of the children from broken families are the most discussed topics about this issue. If one asks what the effective formula for a happy married life is, the answer may be a myth in this contemporary world. Yes, happy married life is a myth. But why? Because everyone is pretending to be happy. No one knows what is happening inside a relationship.

Moreover, problematic marital life is not only a temporary issue but also a long-term psychological effect. In a marriage, spouses are supposed to be dependent on each other. It can be emotional dependency, sexual dependency, financial dependency, and so on. Now, here is another question: to what extent should a spouse be dependent? Both the authors, Alex Michaelides and Gillian Flynn, send a clear message through their literary pieces that too much dependency can create a disaster. However, it is a general idea that married partners are bound to each other for their responsibilities, future, and sexual needs. So if dependency is not healthy for couples, then why should couples live together? If we think in terms of psychology, human beings like to depend, especially in marriage.

In *The Silent Patient*, Theo Faber decided to stay with his wife even after finding her infidelity. He was so attached to his spouse that he did not dare to end the relationship. Similarly, Alicia Berenson did not want to find out whether her husband was cheating on her or not. Both characters have mental illnesses regarding their childhood traumas. Theo and Alicia, both of them were raised in abusive families. In order to create a perfect family and to be loved by their spouses, they were not in a position to accept separation. Bad parenting has created an emptiness in their life. Theo and Alicia wanted to fill that emptiness with the love of their lovers. But in the end, everyone was devastated. Theo and Alicia both became murderers.

Next, in *Gone Girl*, the wife, Amy Elliott Dunne, successfully framed her husband, Nick Dunne, in her missing case. Although she decided to kill herself when Nick was sent off to prison, she later chose to return to him because she had realized that she had changed Nick. On the other hand, Nick agreed to live with Amy, even though she was a murderer. Both characters represent a realistic marital life where the couple know each other, are informed about each other's flaws, weaknesses, imperfections, insecurities, and so on. They wanted to spend the rest of their lives since they found out they were the best match for themselves. Additionally, they were pretending that they were happy.

The main link between these novels is their focus on how a dysfunctional marriage can cause irreparable and lasting mental trauma or illness, and why, often, marital discord triggers crime or violence. For instance, in *The Silent Patient*, Alicia killed her husband, Gabriel, in an unstable mental state when he chose to save himself instead of her. It was a betrayal by Gabriel that triggered Alicia to kill him, even though she worshipped him like Jesus Christ. Another example, in *Gone Girl*, when Nick figured out Amy's hypocrisy and trap, he continuously

imagined killing her. Later on, in a heated moment, he almost strangled Amy. These novels explore how a relationship full of love and excitement can convert to a hateful relationship.

Moreover, one of the hidden themes of the novels is bad parenting. All the major characters are sufferers of abusive parenting. Alicia, Theo, Nick, and Amy show the consequences of toxic parenting and how it causes lifetime trauma. Alicia and Theo tried to find the mental peace in their marriage that they did not receive from their parents. Meanwhile, Amy and Nick both had grudges and resentments toward their parents. Dysfunctional parenting can harm not only people's mental health but also their marital relationships.

The Silent Patient and *Gone Girl* are psychological thrillers and bestseller novels. These fictional thriller novels are linked with crime thrillers and blended with psychology. Social perspectives also play a vital role in this marriage, where readers somehow become engaged with the characters. The thriller genre was basically composed or established in the nineteenth century. Nowadays, this genre is becoming popular day by day. In my thesis paper, I would examine why psychological thrillers are gaining popularity among the audience gradually, whether this genre is or is not representative of real-life issues, how bad parenting affects the victim's marital life, and whether interdependency is or is not necessary in a relationship.

1.1 Contextual Background of *The Silent Patient*

Written by a British-Cypriot writer, Alex Michaelides, *The Silent Patient* is a bestseller that has been placed on the list 'New York Times Bestseller'. It is the biggest-selling debut novel in 2019. This psychological thriller has created a great impact on readers, critics, and reviewers. This novel has gained immense popularity and is relatable to many contemporary issues, like mental health.

The main reason that captivates the readers with this novel is its unique narrative style and the plot twist. The author uses a lot of suspense that keeps the readers engaged with the story. The story of the novel is told by two narrators, who are Theo and Alicia. Through Theo's monologue and Alicia's diary entries, we as readers understand both the perspectives of the protagonist and the antagonist. Since the beginning, the author has used two different timelines to narrate the plot. But the time trickery is found on page 260, in the fourth part of the novel.

"This was the first time I came face-to-face with Alicia Berenson." (Michaelides 260)

As a postmodern text, this fiction involves readers with the storyline. Readers become the detectives trying to solve the case. In the novel, when Alicia was stalked, a reader can be confused by Alicia's behavior because she had a long history of mental illness. Is someone truly stalking Alicia, or is she imagining it? Furthermore, when Alicia confessed to Theo, readers could get confused again about whether she was telling the truth or not. The author has played some mind games with the readers. The psychological subject influences readers to think about the antagonist in a sympathetic way. The plot of the novel raises many questions and the fans of this book try to solve the unsolved mysteries. Thus, Michaelides has involved readers in the plot, where readers become the investigators.

Symbols are used very immaculately by Michaelides. The short-term joy of touching the snow signifies how a man desires owning a possession of someone, even though he knows it is impossible to happen. Cigarettes signify the blurred distinction between a therapist and a patient, and it also questions what kind of relationship a therapist and a patient should have. If the therapist has suffered from a mental disorder, then obviously, he does not have the ability to cure a patient. Michaelides portrays a picture where politics and hypocrisy make a kind of impossible situation for getting healthy treatment for mental illness kind of impossible. Notably, again, as a

postmodern text, the novel has characteristics like temporal distortions, irony, paranoia, and intertextuality. If we discuss intertextuality, the author makes a direct reference to the Greek play, *Alcestis*, by Euripides. Moreover, strong dialogues make the narratives more expressive, ironic, and evocative.

“I’m a married man. So I know what it’s like to love someone. And I know what it’s like to be let down.” (Michaelides 264)

While discussing the characters, one major fact about the novel cannot be ignored, which is the author’s use of an anti-hero concept. Theo Faber can be classified as an anti-hero due to his actions and lack of remorse. Initially, readers sympathize with Theo for his traumatic childhood, complicated adulthood, and unfaithful wife. Even at the end of the novel, it is hard to hate him. Nonetheless, Theo had choices, and he should have followed his former therapist, Ruth’s suggestion. Despite that, Theo could not make the difficult choice of his life, asking for a divorce. Instead of hating or being infuriated with Theo, one can feel his inner conflicts through his narration. Undoubtedly, it is easy to say ‘move on’, but not easy to actually do it. Similarly, Theo has the characteristics of a tragic hero, such as fatal flaws, an inevitable downfall, and catharsis. It shows how Michaelides uses Greek literature in his novel. Another key character, or we can say the protagonist, is Alicia Berenson, who portrays the helplessness of a woman in a toxic masculine society. She was almost victimized by every male character of the novel. Additionally, her concealed childhood trauma led her to commit murder. Through Alicia Berenson, we travel the life journey of a person’s childhood trauma and its aftermath.

“She was immobilized, frozen—a statue carved from ice—with a strange, frightened look on her face, as if confronting some unseen terror.” (Michaelides 15)

The Silent Patient can be categorized as a British novel, as it is written by British-Cypriot author Alex Michaelides, and the plot is set in London. Regardless of this fact, this novel is a cosmopolitan fiction because its main focus points are mental health issues and marital discord. This novel's immense popularity proves this point. It is a highly experimental work that manifests the alarming problem of mental illness, the consequences of abusive parenting, and how patriarchy reappears in different forms.

1.2 Contextual Background of *Gone Girl*

American novelist Gillian Flynn is recognized for her first two psychological thriller novels, *Sharp Objects* and *Dark Places*. Nevertheless, she received enormous popularity because of her third novel, *Gone Girl*, which is a best-selling psychological thriller. This novel is clearly a psychological crime thriller because of its twisted plot, manipulative narration, and suspense. The movie, "Gone Girl", is based on this novel, with the same name equally gained a lot of public attention. It proves that the audience of a book and the audience of a movie are different. Both the movie and the novel are successful, have gained popularity, and received awards. After reading the novel, the first question that arises in our mind is whether *Gone Girl* promotes feminist ideology or misogynistic doctrines. The answer is that this is the best part of this novel, where Gillian Flynn adopts the androgyny quality and utilizes both male and female perspectives in her literary piece. As Samuel Taylor Coleridge says,

"A great mind must be androgynous."

Gillian Flynn experiments with the narrative of *Gone Girl* to deceive the readers, as if she were trying to show how humans observe the world with prejudice. Like *The Silent Patient*, in *Gone Girl*, we, the readers, find two different narratives: Nick Dunne's monologue, Amy

Elliott's diary entries, and her monologue. Amy's diary creates consolation for her in the readers' minds. Meanwhile, readers start to feel resentment towards Nick. Especially, Nick's infidelity provokes the readers' anger. However, at a later time, when the truth is exposed to the audience, the situation becomes complicated. In detail, it shows how society likes to assume women in a helpless situation. Thus, Flynn manipulates readers through her narrative style and raises a question in their minds about why they believe blindly in Amy's diary when it could be a setup. As Jean Paul Sartre said,

“I mustn't put strangeness where there's nothing. I think that is the danger of keeping a diary: you exaggerate everything, you are on the lookout, and you continually stretch the truth.”
(Michaelides 181)

Since *Gone Girl* is a contemporary literary work and an American novel, the side effects of Capitalism are seen through the plot narration when Nick has lost his job, and because of his unemployment, he starts feeling insecure, timid, and fragile. His economic condition hurts his ego as he has to ask for money to his wife, Amy. Consequently, problem starts rising in their family life since both Nick and Amy have lost their job. Flynn shows how the 2008 Great Recession affected Americans' lives.

If we decipher the novel, *Gone Girl*, as a postmodern text, the first aspect is 'readers' involvement'. Like *The Silent Patient*, in this novel, readers become investigators. In the first part of the novel, it was supposable that Nick was associated with his missing wife's case. He did not show any remorse, sadness, or concern. Rather, he was continuously lying to the police. After the exposure of Nick's adultery, it is quite impossible not to hate him. Additionally, after the exposure of Amy's duplicity, readers might feel inner turmoil about whether Amy did the

right thing or not. At the same time, when Nick met Tommy and Hilary Handy, it is difficult to say that Amy is not suffering from several mental disorders, or we can say she seems naturally inclined toward wrongdoing. At this point in the novel, one could start hating Amy. Therefore, readers' involvement is a normal sign while reading the novel.

While in *The Silent Patient*, Michaelides focuses on the mental health and the patient-therapist relationship, in *Gone Girl*, Flynn shows the media's influence on present life. After the missing case of Amy has been filed, Ellen Abbot, a former prosecutor, stars in a show where she tries to put all the blame on Nick, even when she herself is unsure about the truth. The show has an impact on people, and public opinion changes about Nick because everyone starts to believe that Nick is the real culprit. Eventually, Nick also has gone to a talk show where he openly has revealed his extramarital affair with Andie. Again, public opinion changes about Nick after his interview due to his emotional behavior and the courage to tell the truth in the limelight. Thus, media hypocrisy is shown in *Gone Girl*.

Another important point of the novel is its detailed description of Amy's revenge plan. Amy wrote a diary to frame Nick, where she perfectly maintained the timeline. Make sure to people believe that she has a blood phobia, the setup in the living room, escape plan, everything is described elaborately by the author. Moreover, *Gone Girl* does not give any message or solution. The novel has an ending where the main problem among the couples remains unsolved.

As I have mentioned before, the best part of the novel, *Gone Girl*, is that it is neither a feminist work nor promotes misogynistic ideologies. Gillian Flynn portrays a picture of the current society where both feminism and misogyny exist in her work. At first, Flynn shows how patriarchy takes rebirth in several new forms in society. Nick resents his father, especially for

being a bad father. His fear comes true when he realizes that he has possessed all the qualities of his father, chiefly the annoyance with women. Then, Flynn creates one of the wild villainesses of literature, Amy Elliott. Amy's character is far stronger than Nick's character. Through the character of Amy, Flynn explains how a woman can fight for her desires while living in a patriarchal society. Amy pretended to be a victim and later revealed herself as a perpetrator. Markedly, the term 'Cool Girl' is used to display how women have become male-identified women unintentionally. Therefore, with these themes, *Gone Girl* becomes a universal fiction that cannot be limited to only the label of an American novel.

1.3 Overview of the Thriller Genre

In today's world, the most popular genre is probably the thriller genre. If we only discuss genre, it can be said that Aristotle is the father of genre. In his book, *Poetics*, Aristotle divided poetry into three genres: epic, comedy, and tragedy. In literature, numerous genres have been created, including dystopian, mystery, bildungsroman, fantasy, and horror, among others. However, in the last few years, the thriller genre has not only been highly utilized by authors, writers, and movie directors, but also gained huge popularity among the audience. It cannot be said when exactly the thriller genre was actually invented, since literature has a history of combined fiction like tragi-comedy. But it is universally accepted that the thriller genre was invented in the nineteenth century. According to the sources, the first literary thriller novel is *The Spy*, published in 1821 by James Fenimore Cooper. Even so, Alfred Hitchcock is considered the father of the psychological thriller genre. He is famous for his movies like *Blackmail*, *Rope*, *The Lodger*, *Rebecca*, and so on. Wilkie Collins and Edgar Allan Poe are the pioneers of the thriller genre. *La Princesse de Cleves* is a French novel considered the first psychological classic novel.

The definition of the thriller genre is simply the combination of gothic, mystery, and crime fiction. The thriller genre has many sub-versions; among them psychological thriller is the most popular one. Psychological thrillers explore the dark and subconscious side of the human psyche. They play mind games with readers and light the unspoken side of human life. Most psychological thrillers are somehow connected with detective or crime fiction. However, the question is whether the psychological thriller genre is or is not a representation of our realistic life. In my opinion, this genre perfectly represents our life, as it deals with human psychology and social crimes.

As has been noted, in the last few years, the demand for thriller novels and movies has been increasing rapidly. In Hollywood, some top famous movies are *Black Swan* (2010), *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), *Split* (2016), and so on. The Korean film industry is widely recognized for its amazing psycho-thriller movies. For example, *Forgotten* (2017), *Call* (2020), *The Chase* (2017), *Door Lock* (2018), and others have global fans even though they are non-English films. The Indian film industry, especially the South-Indian film industry, is focusing on thriller genres more. As can be seen, thriller movies are made because of their rising demand. In these movies, directors combine social phenomena with mystery.

Similarly, like movies, the demand for psychological thriller novels is also increasing at an alarming rate. If we examine the best-selling novels of the last ten years, many of them belong to the thriller genre. To explain, *Gone Girl* (2012), *The Girl on the Train* (2015), *The Silent Patient* (2019), and *The Guest List* (2020) are the New York Times bestsellers. One of the reasons for thriller fiction's popularity is that these novels portray the real social picture through plot twists, mystery, and suspense.

1.4 The Purpose of My Thesis

The reason I have chosen the two thriller novels for my topic, *The Silent Patient* and *Gone Girl*, is that the plot of these novels represents how childhood trauma, bad parenting, and excessive dependence on one's spouse could harm one's marital life. For many people, especially for teenagers, marriage is a fairy tale. Our old romantic movies and some classic novels have created a plot where the theories of marriage are based on fantasy, subconscious desires, and imagination. To emphasize, in *Pride and Prejudice*, the author Jane Austen did not provide any story or suggestion about what a married couple should do when they face a financial problem. Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy took care of the financial problem of the Bennet family. It shows how women are obligated to depend on men financially. With this intention, both my chosen novels manifest how any kind of dependency, whether it is emotional, financial, or sexual dependency, kills a person's inner self. Through my research question, I will examine the root problems of the characters' problematic marital life that is presented in the novels.

The importance of my topic is that it is not based on classic or Romantic fiction's common or general themes. Rather, it focuses on contemporary issues like separation, infidelity, financial support, and so on. I prefer thrillers over other genres because I believe this genre not only provides entertainment facilities but also sends social and clear-sighted messages through its twisted and tangled mystery. Thus, this genre has academic significance in its own pattern or format. This thesis explores how the psychological thriller novels, *The Silent Patient* and *Gone Girl*, depict problematic marital relationships rooted in abusive parenting and excessive emotional dependence, examining the underlying psychological factors behind these issues.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

According to many scholars, psychologists, and sociologists, a perfect relationship should be based on interdependency. It provides mutual support in a relationship where partners balance their responsibilities to each other, protect individual identity, and build emotional resilience. In contrast, excessive emotional dependency causes loss of self-identity, lack of personal space, fear of abandonment, and unnecessary demands from the partner. However, every human being is naturally accustomed to depending on their spouses. Some of them desire to be loved immensely by their lovers, and some of them provide love to their partners beyond their partners' capacity. So, in this discussion, the main question arises, which is if partners are not supposed to be each other's weaknesses, then why they should be together and do sacrifice, compromise, and take responsibility to be together. Additionally, if self-love is the most important thing in a person's life, then why would a human need to be loved by someone? Moreover, sometimes, in a marriage, one partner plays a caretaking role while the other thinks that he or she deserves more and more. It causes an imbalanced love and affection between partners. Here, we see the root cause of a problematic married life.

In this literature review, I intend to provide a critical discussion related to the above-mentioned issues by focusing on academically approved sociology books and journal articles.

Psychologist Rachel Heller and psychiatrist Amir Levine's book, *Attached: The New Science of Adult Attachment*, examines how adults feel and show their attachment toward their partners. Published in 2010, this book is based on research and depicts the story of Tamara and Greg, a fictional but representative real-life couple who have opposite attachment styles. Based

on the books' data, there are three kinds of attachment styles. They are secure attachment style, anxious attachment style, and avoidant attachment style. According to the authors,

“Attachment theory designates three main ‘attachment styles’ or manners in which people perceive and respond to intimacy in romantic relationships, which parallel those found in children: Secure, Anxious, and Avoidant. Basically, secure people feel comfortable with intimacy and are usually warm and loving; anxious people crave intimacy, are often preoccupied with their relationships, and tend to worry about their partner’s ability to love them back; avoidant people equate intimacy with a loss of independence and constantly try to minimize closeness.” (Levine and Heller 8)

These attachment styles differ from each other in the partner’s way of showing affection. For example, some spouses think that showing affection to their partner means showing possessiveness. Although sometimes possessiveness reflects the deep love in a relationship, in most cases, partners feel uncomfortable and trapped in this relationship, which obviously leads to an end. Levine and Heller describe,

“All people in our society, whether they have just started dating someone or have been married for forty years, fall into one of these categories, or, more rarely, into a combination of the latter two (anxious and avoidant). Just over 50 percent are secure, around 20 percent are anxious, 25 percent are avoidant, and the remaining 3 to 5 percent fall into a fourth, less common disorganized category. Over the past two decades, adult attachment research has produced hundreds of scientific papers and dozens of books that carefully delineate the way in which adults behave in close romantic ties. These studies have confirmed, many times over, the existence of these attachment styles in adults in a wide range of countries and cultures, including

the United States, Australia, Canada, Germany, Israel, Italy, Portugal, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.” (Levine and Heller 8-9)

Both authors emphasize that determining an individual’s attachment style in a relationship has validity and can also help resolve tractable issues. They also claim that these kinds of attachment styles are primarily a product of spouses’ upbringing, which means parenting plays a vital role in a person’s marital relationship. The way a person’s parents show their love is the same way the same person tries to express his affection to his lover. Levine and Heller also mention,

“Understanding attachment styles is an easy and reliable way to understand and predict people’s behavior in any romantic situation. In fact, one of the main messages of this theory is that in romantic situations, we are programmed to act in a predetermined manner.” (Levine and Heller 9)

If we examine the story of Tamara and Greg, we understand that Tamara has an anxious attachment style, whereas Greg has an avoidant attachment style. Greg has affections for Tamara, but he feels that everything in their relationship is going too fast. On the other hand, Tamar wants to believe that Greg does not love her. Additionally, in the meantime, she does not have the courage to end this relationship either. Because of her over-sensitiveness, clinginess, and possessiveness towards Greg, not only does it harm her relationship, but also she cares less about her professional as well as personal life. We find the similarities between Tamara and Theo. In *The Silent Patient*, Theo shows anxious attachment styles, where he wanted to believe that his wife had been involved in infidelity. In the meantime, he did not want to lose her. Hence, he never confronted Kathy. For the solution of this problem, Levine and Heller advise,

“Learning about these three attachment styles was a true eye-opener for us; we discovered that adult attachment behavior was everywhere. We were able to view our own romantic behaviors and those of people around us in a fresh, new light. By assigning attachment styles to patients, colleagues, and friends, we could interpret their relationships differently and gain much more clarity. Their behavior no longer seemed baffling and complex, but rather predictable under the circumstances.” (Levine and Heller 11)

In chapter 2, “Dependency is not a bad word” of the book, *Attached: The New Science of Adult Attachment*, Levine and Heller thoroughly examine and opine how dependency is a natural phenomenon in a relationship. They present an example of another couple, Tim and Karen. If one partner in a relationship becomes too needy, it creates an unhealthy situation. But is becoming needy not a common characteristic of companionship? Both writers answer,

“Getting attached means that our brain becomes wired to seek the support of our partner by ensuring their psychological and physical proximity. If our partner fails to reassure us, we are programmed to continue our attempts to achieve closeness until they do.” (Levine and Heller 20)

Attachment is a feeling that is associated with love. When a spouse has a feeling that his or her lover is not showing enough affection, he or she will crave more affection. Thus, dependency is created in a courtship. Levine and Heller further explain,

“Attachment principles teach us that most people are only as needy as their unmet needs. When their emotional needs are met, and the earlier the better, they usually turn their attention outward. This is sometimes referred to in attachment literature as the “dependency paradox”: The more effectively dependent people are on one another, the more independent and daring they become.” (Levine and Heller 21)

Here, writers coined a significant term, ‘dependency paradox’, where partners feel independent when they can rely on their spouse, which is quite a contrasting point of view since experts suggest codependency could kill a person’s inner self. But Levine and Heller point out that it is a part of human attachment. The desire to rely on your partner also manifests the complexity of human psychology. Moreover, psychiatrist Levine and psychologist Heller shed light on the subject of interdependency. They criticize the present society, where to glorify independence, dependency has become an abusive remark. The writers exemplify how some experts present the love of parents for their children,

“The erroneous belief that all people should be emotionally self-sufficient is not new. Not too long ago in Western society people believed that children would be happier if they were left to their own devices and taught to soothe themselves. Then attachment theory came along and turned these attitudes—at least toward children—around. In the 1940s experts warned that “coddling” would result in needy and insecure children who would become emotionally unhealthy and maladjusted adults. Parents were told not to lavish too much attention on their infants, to allow them to cry for hours and to train them to eat on a strict schedule. Children in hospitals were isolated from their parents and could only be visited through a glass window. Social workers would remove children from their homes and place them in foster care at the slightest sign of trouble.” (Levine and Heller 22)

The writers further claim,

“Numerous studies show that once we become attached to someone, the two of us form one physiological unit. Our partner regulates our blood pressure, our heart rate, our breathing, and the levels of hormones in our blood. We are no longer separate entities. The emphasis on

differentiation that is held by most of today's popular psychology approaches to adult relationships does not hold water from a biological perspective. Dependency is a fact; it is not a choice or a preference." (Levine and Heller 26)

A stronger statement is made by the writers, which is that dependency is a logical emotion, and obviously, it is not an option that a spouse can make easily. Levine and Heller also demonstrate that emotional dependency has a direct connection with physical movement. So, they challenge a question to readers,

"How can we be expected to maintain a high level of differentiation between ourselves and our partners if our basic biology is influenced by them to such an extent?" (Levine and Heller 27)

Since dependency is an innate and inherent human trait, it cannot be completely eliminated. Because it is a part of affection, one spouse who thinks emotionally, along with logic, may be concerned whether he is supposed to avoid his affection to become emotionally independent. Showing affection or the signs of being needy is absolutely predictable and normal. The point is the measurement of the limit regarding dependency. In simple words, emotional dependency on an extreme level cannot be justified. Furthermore, Levine and Heller disclose another unconscious desire of humans. As human beings, we like to choose a partner who is better than us. The writers discuss more,

"once we choose someone special, powerful and often uncontrollable forces come into play. New patterns of behavior kick in regardless of how independent we are and despite our conscious wills. Once we choose a partner, there is no question about whether dependency exists or not. It always does. An elegant coexistence that does not include uncomfortable feelings of

vulnerability and fear of loss sounds good but is not our biology. What proved through evolution to have a strong survival advantage is a human couple becoming one physiological unit, which means that if she's reacting, then I'm reacting, or if he's upset, that also makes me unsettled. He or she is part of me, and I will do anything to save him or her; having such a vested interest in the well-being of another person translates into a very important survival advantage for both parties." (Levine and Heller 28)

Whether our partner is better than us or comparatively less advanced than us, it is an instinct that, in a courtship, dependency as a form of adult attachment will exist. We can relate this tendency to our childhood, where we got immense care from our parents. Even in old age, humans expect love and care from their next generation. In a courtship, sometimes, in some particular situation, we like to take control over our partners. The exact opposite happens in some specific moment, where we like to rely on or take the position of submission before our spouses. So dependency comes from both sides, and it balances the affection. However, Levine and Heller's perspectives are based on emotional dependency. Marriage is not only founded on emotional dependency, but also on other dependencies, too, for example, financial dependency and sexual intimacy. Above that, Levine and Heller advise,

"Does this mean that in order to be happy in a relationship we need to be joined with our partner at the hip or give up other aspects of our life such as our careers or friends?

Paradoxically, the opposite is true! It turns out that the ability to step into the world on our own often stems from the knowledge that there is someone beside us whom we can count on—and this is the "dependency paradox." The logic of this paradox is hard to follow at first. How can we act more independent by being thoroughly dependent on someone else? If we had to describe the basic premise of adult attachment in a single sentence, it would be: If you want to take the road

to independence and happiness, first find the right person to depend on and travel down it with them.” (Levine and Heller 29)

No matter how we emphasize the topic of dependency, a question remains: Is dependency a part of love or affection, or is interdependency important? The answer is that to maintain dependency and interdependency, one should find a suitable partner, according to the writer’s advice. Nonetheless, getting a perfect partner to balance the attachment and dependency is actually a dream. Although Levine and Heller provide suggestions in the next chapters of the book, *Attachment*, on how to find a perfect match, the above-mentioned proposal is somewhat unrealistic. In other words, this proposition may not be acceptable in practical life. I would propose that, to defend the affection, personal life, and safety, interdependence could be a good idea. Because it will help to control the feeling of attachment.

John Gottman, an American psychologist and Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of Washington, introduces seven principles to maintain a healthy, interdependent, and balanced marriage in his famous bestseller, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*. According to Gottman, marriage is all about investment, and every spouse should contribute to this investment. Gottman outlines seven key principles to improve and enhance marriage. The first one is “Enhance Your Love Maps”. As a psychologist, he prefers to create a love map, where couples will write every detail of their married and personal life so that they let each other know about themselves. To exemplify his point, he gives an example of a pediatrician named Dr. Rory, who, though he is a perfectionist in his profession, has no care for his married life. His wife does not expect anything from him. Because she has got the idea that her husband has no interest in her. Visibly, this is the beginning of the epilogue of a marriage. Gottman suggests,

“As bizarre as Rory’s rampant ignorance may sound, I have found that many married couples fall into a similar (if less dramatic) habit of inattention to the details of their spouse’s life. One or both partners may have only the sketchiest sense of the other’s joys, likes, dislikes, fears, stresses. The husband may love modern art, but his wife couldn’t tell you why or who his favorite artist is. He doesn’t remember the names of her friends or the co-worker she fears is constantly trying to undermine her.” (Gottman 48)

For the solution of this problem, Gottman restates,

“In contrast, emotionally intelligent couples are intimately familiar with each other’s world. I call this having a richly detailed love map--my term for that part of your brain where you store all the relevant information about your partner’s life. Another way of saying this is that these couples have made plenty of cognitive room for their marriage. They remember the major events in each other’s history, and they keep updating their information as the facts and feelings of their spouse’s world change. When she orders him a salad, she knows to ask for his dressing on the side. If she works late, he’ll tape her favorite TV show because he knows which one it is and when it’s on. He could tell you how she’s feeling about her boss, and exactly how to get to her office from the elevator. He knows that religion is important to her, but that deep down she has doubts. She knows that he fears being too much like his father and considers himself a “free spirit.” They know each other’s goals in life, each other’s worries, each other’s hopes.” (Gottman 48)

Therefore, as an investment in marriage, each spouse ought to know about every tiny detail of their partners. That’s why the love-map is important. If we discuss the topic of ‘love-map’, my opinion is that I think it is one of the most effective methods to keep a marriage secure.

If we scrutinize the South-Asian countries, it is notable that in almost every marriage, only women invest in the marriage. Some women completely demolish their personal space and comfort to keep their husband, in-laws, and children happy. They almost forget that they are also humans and they need space and happiness too. As a consequence, most of them suffer from depression, especially in their middle ages. They often take out their frustration on their children. Their depression remains incurable because they do not even know that they have psychological problems. On the other hand, in Western countries, women file for divorce from their husbands, and they allege that their husbands forgot about their marriage anniversary, which is a serious mistake according to their social environment. It shows how women in Western countries give value to their desires and self-respect, whereas in Asian countries, women love to sacrifice their dreams or demands. Because that's what social norms and their culture teach them. Moreover, in *Gone Girl*, Amy had expected that Nick would have remembered every detail of their relationship, but Nick was annoyed by Amy's kind of expectation. Later on, he started putting effort into his marriage and also memorizing every little detail of their marriage. Basically, Nick was trying to make Amy happy, and that's what Amy wanted. In parallel, in the novel *The Silent Patient*, Gabriel, although he showed concern for Alicia, did not care about her. He did not even know that his wife had been assaulted by his step-brother. Alicia also could not share this trauma with her husband. To tackle this kind of situation, a love map is important.

At the end of chapter 3, "Enhance Your Love Maps", psychologist Gottman provides some charts, like the love map questionnaire, love map games, and so on. He also mentions a chart named 'Exercise 3: Who am I?', where he suggests his readers use the chart for self-exploration. In that chart, readers will figure out their triumphs, strivings, injuries, healings,

emotional world, and future aims. Thus, John Gottman emphasizes that in a relationship, self-exploration is also important.

As I have mentioned before, while living together under the same roof for a long time, couples begin to recognize each other's failures, defects, and imperfections. Sometimes, they preserve their unsatisfied and disrespectful memories against their partner without sharing them with anyone. It creates contempt in a relationship that often leads to separation. Hence, Professor John Gottman advises in chapter 4 of the book, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*,

“Fondness and admiration are two of the most crucial elements in a rewarding and long-lasting romance. Although happily married couples may feel driven to distraction at times by their partner's personality flaws, they still feel that the person they married is worthy of honor and respect. When this sense is completely missing from a marriage, the relationship cannot be revived.” (Gottman 63)

After examining many couples, Gottman concludes that in a long relationship, it is very common to have a feeling of contempt and defensiveness toward each other. To save the marriage, couples should preserve the admiration and fondness for each other that they felt when they started their relationship. From my perspective, the admiration and fondness between a couple is the key to saving a marriage. Obviously, no relationships start with flaws. Problems begin through the motion of time. The feeling of love is hidden in that admiration and fondness, where spouses used to adore, respect, and show eagerness for each other. Additionally, like contempt, defensiveness is also a threat to marriage. Usually, spouses do not admit their mistakes

and try to blame each other. Couples should accept their flaws as well as their partners' flaws. Thus, an interdependent relationship can be created in a marriage. Gottman further explains,

“At first, this may all seem obvious to the point of being ridiculous: People who are happily married like each other. If they didn't, they wouldn't be happily married. But fondness and admiration can be fragile unless you remain aware of how crucial they are to the friendship that is at the core of any good marriage. By simply reminding yourself of your spouse's positive qualities--even as you grapple with each other's flaws--you can prevent a happy marriage from deteriorating. The simple reason is that fondness and admiration are antidotes for contempt. If you maintain a sense of respect for your spouse, you are less likely to act disgusted with him or her when you disagree. So fondness and admiration prevent the couple from being trounced by the four horsemen.” (Gottman 65)

In chapter 5, Gottman suggests his third principle, which is “turn toward each other instead of away.” In this chapter, he focuses on how spouse responds unintentionally harshly to their partners. According to him, even in very unimportant matters, couples need to talk, respond, and listen to each other. Gottman also claims that turning to your partner every day is kind of saving emotion in an emotional bank account. He says,

“The biggest payoff from this emotional bank account isn't the cushion it offers when the couple are stressed. As I said, turning toward your spouse in the little ways is also the key to long-lasting romance. Many people think that the secret to reconnecting with their partner is a candlelit dinner or a by-the-sea vacation. But the real secret is to turn toward each other in little ways every day. A romantic night out really turns up the heat only when a couple has kept the pilot light burning by staying in touch in the little ways.” (Gottman 81)

If we analyze the above-mentioned claim of John Gottman, it is predictable that turning to your partner creates memories that can help people to save their marriage even in a sensitive time. Human beings desire attachment. Memories are the attachment that binds a couple together. Additionally, like Gottman's other chapters, this chapter also has some questionnaires where he advises how to keep an emotional bank account for both husband and wife. Again, it is clear that Professor John Gottman influences couples to practice his seven principles in a way that both of them can put effort into their marriage. Hence, it is proven that *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* supports the idea of interdependency, or also can be said as healthy dependency in a marriage. To sum up, although John Gottman's suggested principles are very productive, functional, and relatable to real life, we cannot say with strong certainty that these principles would help every conjugal couple in every situation.

In *Lasting Marriages: Men and Women Growing Together*, a research-based book, authors Richard A. Mackey and Bernard A. O'Brien report on the marital life of many older couples and their perspectives, especially those over fifty. These couples are basically African-American, Mexican-American, and so on. In this book, writers mentioned how the roles of husband and wife in a marriage create a foundation. In chapter 2, it is said,

"Most individuals entered marriage with clearly differentiated expectations of marital roles which mirrored prevailing cultural mores about "appropriate" behaviors for men and women during that era. Nine out of ten people expressed little ambiguity in recalling expectations of themselves in the marital relationship. Gender was not related significantly to role expectations. Men defined themselves primarily in terms of work so as to provide for their families; women, in terms of supporting their husbands and taking care of their families. There

was an implicit power differential in these memories, which was sometimes stated explicitly.”
(Mackey and O'Brien 23)

Society standards secure the roles in a marriage in terms of gender. Husband would be the breadwinner, and wife would become a housemaker. In most cases, the breadwinner has the authority and position, ‘the Man of the House’, to control the family. So, here is the root of the problem, and that is trying to control. In a marriage, one partner takes control over the other. But what if the other person tries to control back? The consequence will be a clash in marriage. In *Gone Girl*, both Nick and Amy were fighting to take control of their marriage. Finally, Amy started controlling Nick with her manipulation tricks. Contrarily, sometimes even if the role measurement among couples is not visible, the desire to control others remains active. Thus, gender role creates a political situation in a marriage. Where one partner demands to control the other. Barbara, a fifty-seven-year-old Catholic high school graduate, mentioned how she changed her behavior,

“You always make sure that your man was happy and that your family's happy. I used to shine his shoes and my daughter's shoes every night... all these things that I don't do anymore. I think I was stupid. That was my upbringing that you do those things. I was only half of a person. I didn't demand anything. Everything was like clockwork ... I worked ... I had dinner on at six and nobody ever left without breakfast. Now it's totally different. Now I demand, if he gets up early: "You make the coffee, you make the breakfast.” But I didn't do this before, so how could he respect me? He respected me, but not as a person because I didn't demand it.” (Mackey and O'Brien 27)

In some cases, women love to play the role of submission. In the book *Lasting Marriages: Men and Women Growing Together*, there is another interview with the old couple, Grover and Gladys, who share their marriage experiences. Gladys, a fifty-year-old housewife, states that she likes to depend on her husband. She said,

“My mom was a typical housewife, even though she worked. Her husband and family came first. I was brought up to feel that my family came first. From the time I was a little girl I wanted to grow up and get married. That was my goal in life. I wanted to be a mom and wife. I expected to stay home and raise my family. That is pretty much what happened. I have been very fortunate; I have everything in life that I have ever turned out to want... I expected Grover to be ... the breadwinner, the supporter, mentally, physically, and every other way. The leaning tower in any part but still the person I could lean on. The stronger of the two of us. That is very much how it worked out and still is today.” (Mackey and O'Brien 24)

From this extraction, we can understand, some women are psychologically accustomed to love to depend on their husbands. They think their husband would perform better than them. In Asian countries, especially in South-Asian countries, we see women waiting for their husbands' consent in any family matter, even their own personal matters, rather than deciding by themselves. Obviously, it is not a foolish decision for a woman to aim to become a housewife and a full-time mother, and to prefer her husband's choice or prioritize his consent. Rather, it creates a friendly environment in a relationship. The problem arises when the same woman attempts to make her own decisions by herself, but cannot do it because of her previous conduct. Therefore, codependency in a relationship destroys one's personal space and independence.

If we discuss the financial issues in a marital relationship, then it will be a serious topic because the economic condition has a deep connection with marriage. An unstable financial state could break a strong relationship. As the writers of the book, *Lasting Marriages: Men and Women Growing Together*, say,

“On the one hand, relative economic security along with clear cultural expectations about marital roles may have resulted in people not even thinking about effort. On the other hand, poverty may have created stresses that undermined the romantic notion that love conquers all.” (Mackey and O'Brien 27)

In a marriage, it is a social expectation that the man will be the main earning person in the family. We can see a different picture from this, where the woman somehow gives financial backup to her husband. Since we are living in a patriarchal society, many men do not want to commit to the truth that they have taken financial help from their wives. Visibly, it will lower their standard or make them incapable. In *Gone Girl*, Nick had an egotistic mind, where he could not accept the fact that it was Amy who helped him make a living. Similarly, in *The Silent Patient*, Gabriel was having an affair. When Alicia killed him, the police scrutinized their bank accounts and found out that it was Alicia who was richer than Gabriel. However, in a marriage, if there are no economic problems, generally, there can be other issues, which means economic security cannot assure a perfect marriage.

Long-lasting relationships go through changes over time, and also face different reactions in different phases of life. By examining the story of Eve and Douglas, a senior couple, the writers of the book, *Lasting Marriages: Men and Women Growing Together*, claim that changes happen in a marriage both inside and outside. They note,

“While the modification in the post-parenting structure depicted by these two people was, no doubt, influenced by outside events, such as retirement, the critical aspects appeared to be shaped substantially by transitions within marital relationships, which had begun in the child-rearing period, particularly during the adolescent years of children. Change was also shaped by illnesses that affected both spouses. Medical crises were a turning point. For Eve and Douglas, crises brought about a new manifestation of love not previously evident in their relationship with their spouses.” (Mackey and O'Brien 30)

This statement proves that changes occur in marriages through the flow of time. Many modern and nihilistic people claim that living with the same person for their whole life is kind of boring and traditional. To make changes, they should involve more than one relationship. But this research manifests the fact that no human being is perfect. Again, while living together, partners discover each other's weaknesses, imperfections, insecurities, mentality, and so on. Gradually, their feelings transform from love to irritation. But in different periods of life, for example, in adulthood, middle age, and in old age, they start accepting those limitations of their spouses and begin to love each other again. However, for some people, a relationship is an adventure or full of romance and excitement. In my two chosen novels, two partners tried to search for excitement in their conjugal lives. But both of them ended up involved in infidelity. Firstly, in *Gone Girl*, Nick always wanted a 'cool girl' in his life. When Amy stopped acting like a cool girl, he became involved in an extramarital relationship with Andie. Next, in *The Silent Patient*, Theo's wife, Kathy, lived in a fantasy where she tried to make her love life into a perfect movie plot. Like Nick, she was also involved in infidelity with Gabriel. To sum up, emotional attraction from both sides makes a relationship stronger.

Interpersonal skill is a mandatory skill that every person should have in a relationship. It helps to communicate, work in a team, and adopt the quality of compatibility. Writers Richard A. Mackey and Bernard A. O'Brien explained how complementarity and symmetry are important in a marriage where two people try to match each other in a range. Additionally, complementarity and symmetry are adopted by the partners to fit into the marriage. They explain,

“In marriage, interpersonal fit may be thought of along a continuum from complementarity to symmetry. Complementary styles of relating were characterized by differences in marital behavior, division of tasks, decision making, child-rearing, and emotional responses to each other. Given the cultural mores about gender roles when these people were married, we expected their relationships to be of a complementary nature. Indeed, 78 percent of the respondents spoke initially in complementary terms about their relationships, a finding that did not change significantly from the beginnings of marriage to the empty-nest years, with a slight shift toward symmetry during the latter phase. If spouses discussed their relationships in language that reflected similarities and equality, the fit was considered symmetrical. That style was evident in the response of a middle-class woman who said that she and her husband were much alike emotionally, enjoyed similar things, and generally made mutual decisions. Three out of ten respondents talked of their relationships as having both symmetrical and complementary features in the final phase, and the fit was classified as mixed.” (Mackey and O'Brien 30)

Complementary styles are traditional, but they balance the role of partners within a marriage. Symmetrical styles are adopted by modern couples. Now the question is, which is the perfect style? In recent decades, both styles have been adopted by couples. These mixed styles create a non-binary atmosphere in a family. Contrarily, these styles do not help much for those married couples where partners fit themselves into a marriage according to their partners' choice.

Because that leads the married couple towards separation. Hence, codependency is a threat to marriage, where interdependency is the solution.

Elizabeth Brake, an American philosopher and Professor of Philosophy, defines the connection between marriage and obligations in her book, *Minimizing Marriage: Marriage, Morality, and the Law*, which was published in 2012. In chapter 2, “How to Commit Marriage”, Brake asserts that marriage is not a promise rather it is a commitment. She explains,

“The aspirations voiced in wedding vows are better understood as commitment than as promise; but the concept of commitment needs considerable clarification. Delineating commitment will help to define the moral significance of marriage and raise questions about the rationality of entering it. Paradigmatic commitments are distinct from promises: They do not necessarily establish interpersonal obligations, and they typically attach to complex, temporally extended goals. “Commitment” itself is ambiguous between a psychological state and a self-binding action (such as a promise). Disambiguating “commitment” allows us to articulate the crucial point that making a commitment does not amount to having a commitment.” (Brake 43)

The difference between commitment and promise is that commitment basically is an action where one person accepts some unwritten rules. In contrast, promise is based on personal feelings. Brake says that marriage is a commitment where spouses have to fulfill their duties. It is not a promise that is led by emotion, but rather a combination of emotion, morality, and obligation. Thus, marriage sets some moral rules where spouses are supposed to be loyal to their partners. Brake further exemplifies,

“This disambiguation also helps to illuminate the moral complexities of commitment. Some, but not all, commitments generate interpersonal obligations, but one cannot be obligated

to have a commitment. Nor need commitments be exclusive or unconditional. These simple points have implications for the moral status of marriage. Marriage is a way of making a commitment, but it does not obligate spouses to be committed, nor does its nature as a commitment entail that marriage must be monogamous, permanent, or that it is a good.” (Brake 43)

Therefore, Elizabeth Brake opines that the performance in a marriage should be led by contribution and conditions. If in a marriage, spouses make decisions and take the responsibility through emotion, it will create an unbalanced bonding between conjugal couples. In short, to build a healthy relationship, spouses have to contribute. Hence, there will be no caretaker playing a role between partners. Both partners equally submit themselves to the relationship to maintain their commitment.

In the book *Hold Me Tight*, Dr. Sue Johnson, a British clinical psychologist and couples’ therapist, discloses her experience while she was dealing with a couple named Tim and Sarah. Through her experience, observation, and research, she declares that in a marriage, emotional closeness is very important. Often, couples feel the fear of losing their loved ones. Their panic and insecurity make them tense. According to Johnson, even when in a heated argument, couples go through harsh language, which she calls ‘demon dialogues’, they show their love, kindness, and concern for their partner. As she says,

“The powerful emotions that came up in my couples’ sessions were anything but irrational. They made perfect sense. Partners acted like they were fighting for their lives in therapy because they were doing just that. Isolation and the potential loss of loving connection is coded by the human brain into a primal panic response. This need for safe emotional connection

to a few loved ones is wired in by millions of years of evolution. Distressed partners may use different words but they are always asking the same basic questions, “Are you there for me? Do I matter to you? Will you come when I need you, when I call?” Love is the best survival mechanism there is, and to feel suddenly emotionally cut off from a partner, disconnected, is terrifying. We have to reconnect, to speak our needs in a way that moves our partner to respond. This longing for emotional connection with those nearest to us is the emotional priority, overshadowing even the drive for food or sex. The drama of love is all about this hunger for safe emotional connection, a survival imperative we experience from the cradle to the grave. Loving connection is the only safety nature ever offers us.” (Johnson 33; ebook)

So, couples’ therapist, Sue Johnson, mentions why, in a marriage or relationship, emotional closeness is crucial. There is no doubt that through emotional responses, couples will get closer. Yet, this emotional closeness should be measured within limits. The fact is that, while other social experts point out the importance of an interdependent persona, many couples’ therapists, like Dr. Sue Johnson, emphasize the seriousness and urgency of emotional closeness in a relationship. Indeed, interdependency and codependency in a relationship are holding the rivalry positions. Which term is the real benefactor of a balanced courtship: codependency or interdependency?

In my two primary texts, *The Silent Patient* and *Gone Girl*, one of the concealed themes is the parenting role. As I have said before, visibly, in the above-mentioned novels, all the important characters are somehow the victims of bad parenting, we can also say, immature parenting. A New York Times Bestseller, *Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents*, deals with a similar theme, which was published in 2015. American clinical psychologist Lindsay Gibson discusses how immature parenting affects one’s adult life in the chapter 1: “How

Emotionally Immature Parents Affect Their Adult Children's Lives" in her book, *Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents*. Gibson says,

"Emotional loneliness comes from not having enough emotional intimacy with other people. It can start in childhood, due to feeling emotionally unseen by self- preoccupied parents, or it can arise in adulthood when an emotional connection is lost. If it's been a lifelong feeling, it points to the likelihood of not being sufficiently emotionally responded to as a child.

Growing up in a family with emotionally immature parents is a lonely experience. These parents may look and act perfectly normal, caring for their child's physical health and providing meals and safety. However, if they don't make a solid emotional connection with their child, the child will have a gaping hole where true security might have been." (Gibson 7)

The parenting role is a very influential factor in our adult lives. The first attachment we face in our life comes from our parents. Hence, emotional loneliness has a deep connection with a lonely childhood. A silent child is a kind of traumatized child. The environment of a child shapes their behavior, nature, and confidence. In most cases, the environment is created by the family. Thus, if adults have a communication problem, their childhood is one of the reasons for it. Different from this, sometimes too much affection from parents can cause adult life. Often, adults seek the same love from their partners that they got from their parents. Here, we can use the term 'Oedipus Complex', proposed by Sigmund Freud. It is a psychological state where adults seek the characteristics in their spouses of their parents. 'Oedipus Complex' defines a son's unconscious sexual desire for his mother. Gibson further explains,

"We gravitate to situations we have had experience with because we know how to deal with them. As children, we don't recognize our parents' limitations, because seeing our parents

as immature or flawed is frightening. Unfortunately, by denying the painful truth about our parents, we aren't able to recognize similarly hurtful people in future relationships.” (Gibson 11)

Obviously, one cannot judge his parents easily. Our parents' love life also affects us badly. The faults and trauma we have observed in our parents' lives; we do not want to experience in our marital life. Thus, it creates an inner and hidden fear in our minds. For the solution of this problem, psychologist Lindsay Gibson proposes,

“Parental neglect and rejection in childhood can adversely affect self- confidence and relationships in adulthood, as people repeat old, frustrating patterns and then blame themselves for not being happy. Even adult success doesn't completely erase the effects of parental disconnection earlier in life. Understanding how your parents' emotional immaturity has affected you is the best way to avoid repeating the past in your adult relationships.” (Gibson 24)

Needless to say, no matter how much a human being tries to suppress their trauma, it returns in a different form. Alex Michaelides represents the same statement in his work, *The Silent Patient*. Even if we want to believe that our life has no connection with our childhood, it somehow influences our sexual and marital relationships. According to Gibson, we should not run from our trauma or disturbing problems in our childhood; instead, we should face these. Theo and Alicia always ran and hid from their trauma. It later affected them more. Alicia attempted suicide after her father's death, while Theo never confronted his father about his abusive acts. Similarly, Amy took revenge on her parents but never showed any anger or remorse toward them. On the other hand, Nick feared that he would become like his father, and eventually, he adopted his father's misogynistic nature.

What makes a novel a bestseller? Both of my primary texts are bestsellers. These popular novels are not only famous in Western countries but also all over the world. But some critics opine that making a novel a bestseller is kind of an act of consumerism. Laura J. Miller, in her journal article, describes how a novel gets popular when “The New York Times” announces the list. She also reports that some readers proudly claim that they only read bestsellers. Miller says,

“By helping a book to make a bestseller, booksellers manufacture predictability.” (Miller 9)

This statement shows the conspiracy of a marketing strategy. However, though the process of making a book a bestseller is a marketing strategy, a bestseller has some characteristics. Two of them are relatable, and the adaptation of language. The themes of my novels are based on familiar subjects. Both the authors of my novels have experimented with the narrative style that attracts the readers most. The genre of the primary texts is the thriller genre, which is in my opinion, represents real life with a little bit of distortion.

To conclude, my primary source in this literature review is *Attached: The New Science of Adult Attachment*. In this book, writers demonstrate that dependency is a customary feeling in a relationship that is related to affection and attachment between couples. In *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, John Gottman elaborates on investing in marriage with self-exploration. He creates a balance between dependency and interdependency. In *Lasting Marriage*, we can see how gender roles create obstacles between spouses. The writers also present that marriage is not a smooth journey. It has variants. Lastly, *Adults Children of Emotionally Immature Parents* defines how parenting plays a vital role in one’s adult relationship.

After reviewing all the above-mentioned academically approved psychological books, in the literature review section, the first gap in my thesis paper is that it focuses on the problems of marital life. Although the two primary texts portray the same common theme, mental illness, my thesis topic only examines their problematic marital life. Additionally, since I have used thematic structure in my literature review, I did not use all the academic books and journals related to my topic, except for the books and journals that are related to my topic. This is another gap in my literature review.

I discovered that the main breach of my research topic is the practice of choosing either dependency, which means submission, or interdependency, which means mutual dependence. Modern psychologists have suggested that interdependency should be adopted by couples. The difference between dependency and interdependency is that dependency stands for one-sided reliance, and interdependency defines mutual support. Michaelides and Flynn have hinted at the seriousness of excessive emotional dependence. They also shed light on financial dependency, where couples feel trapped. On the other hand, contemporary psychologists advise that dependency is not an issue but an innate phenomenon. They focus on controlling emotional dependency with some formulas, where one can nourish their separate identity. So my opinion on this subject is that we should establish a relation between emotional dependency and interdependency, where spouses would not lose their self-worth and individual existence.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Gap

In their novels, Alex Michaelides and Gillian Flynn depict the intensity of excessive emotional dependence in their storyline. Additionally, both of them describe how gender roles, the influence of parenting, and the ups and downs in married life affect married life. The question is, then, why do the authors emphasize the negative side of dependency?

In my point of view, when we talk about dependency, we highlight financial dependency, which, in a marriage, both spouses should be financially liable, but mostly, we do not pay much attention to emotional dependency, which is the most significant part of a marital relationship. Because of the waves of feminism and the postmodernism movement, we have received many perspectives on emotional dependency. Modern psychologists have pointed out emotional dependency as a complex concept. They have opined that unhealthy dependency could cause disaster. On the other hand, Postmodern psychologists argue that emotional dependency is nothing but a biological, natural, social, cultural, and relational construct. Another argument is how feminist scholars view emotional dependency. Although the main theory of feminism is equality between men and women, some feminists define feminism as an anti-male movement. They advise transforming patriarchy to matriarchy. Henceforth, they condemn emotional dependency in a relationship. To demonstrate that the viewpoints on emotional dependency are countless. My main argument is whether interdependency, where couples maintain their individuality while they also rely upon each other, is truly an effective suggestion or not. In this case, my thesis will answer this argument through my research question.

3.2 Research Question

My research question is:

To build a healthy relationship, should a couple adopt the quality of interdependence, or will interdependence lead them toward separation?

3.3 Analysis of Theory

In my research paper, I will establish a relation between my topic and ‘interdependence theory’. John Thibaut, a social psychologist, first coined this theory in his book, *The Social Psychology of Groups*, published in 1959. In this book, Thibaut examines how in a relationship, independence and dependence exist. In his opinion, when a spouse acts like an independent person, automatically, their partner takes the role of submission and plays the role of dependency. He also explains that the relation between independence and dependence is like the cause (independence) and effect (dependence) relation. In his estimation, to make a relationship more stable, optimal, satisfactory, and successful, we should understand a couple’s interdependent relationship. (Thibaut 2)

Interdependence theory was later developed by the psychologists John Thibaut and Harold Kelley in their book, *Interpersonal Relations: A Theory of Interdependence*, in 1978. In this book, Thibaut and Kelley insist that by managing interdependency through cooperation, competition, communication, and trust, spouses can have a lasting, understanding, and satisfying relationship. They present how psychology and social interaction are connected to each other. Caryl E. Rusbult and Paul A.M. Van Lange, in their journal article, “Interdependence, Interaction, and Relationships,” explain the theory.

“Interdependence theory presents a logical analysis of the structure of interpersonal situations, offering a conceptual framework in which interdependence situations can be analyzed in terms of six dimensions. Specific situations present specific problems and opportunities,

logically implying the relevance of specific motives and permitting their expression. Via the concept of transformation, the theory explains how interaction is shaped by broader considerations such as long-term goals and concern for a partner's welfare. The theory illuminates our understanding of social-cognitive processes that are of longstanding interest to psychologists, such as cognition and affect, attribution, and self-presentation. The theory also explains adaptation to repeatedly encountered interdependence patterns, as well as the embodiment of such adaptations in interpersonal dispositions, relationship-specific motives, and social norms.” (Rusbult and Paul)

Including the interdependence theory, to detail explain my thesis subject, I will also enlist feminism and postmodernism theories in my research paper.

3.4 Data Collection Method

A qualitative descriptive method has been employed to analyze the primary texts, secondary texts, and primary and secondary sources in my research paper. *The Silent Patient* and *Gone Girl* are the primary texts. For the literature review, *Attached: The New Science of Adult Attachment* is used as a primary source. Other renowned psychological books and journal articles have been used as secondary sources. Psychology books are used in a thematic pattern. Similarly, journals and articles, taken from Google Scholar, Jstor, and Research Gate, are employed in the same process as secondary texts.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Discussion on *The Silent Patient*

4.1 Dependency in Marriage

One of the important key aspects of excessive emotional dependency is feeling responsible for your partner's emotions or happiness. In Alicia's diary, she often mentioned that she does not want to upset Gabriel, her husband. She listened to everything that Gabriel told her to do. Eventually, she never shared her own problems or miseries with him. Max Berenson, Gabriel's step-brother, sexually assaulted her. Alicia did not complain about Max to her husband because Gabriel was so close to his stepbrother. Hence, basically, Alicia was lonely even though she was married. She was dealing with her problems alone. Only because she did not want to hurt Gabriel's feelings, she did not dare to expose Max. It also put her in danger since Max also knew Alicia was not going to take any legal steps against him. In any relationship, one of the spouses typically puts in a lot of effort. Sometimes, they provide so much effort, love, and care that it exceeds their partner's capacity. While another spouse cannot return the same amount of love and affection to their partners. As a result, the marriage becomes unbalanced where one partner feels and thinks that he or she becomes a taken-for-granted product. Alicia intensely loved Gabriel, but in her love, she was unsafe, unreliable, and in a defenseless position that also affected her mental health.

“Occasionally I sensed Max staring at me over dinner. I'd look up and catch his eye and he'd look away. I didn't eat anything. The thought of eating made me sick. I kept tasting his blood in my mouth. I don't know what to do. I don't want to lie to Gabriel. Nor do I want to keep it a secret. But if I tell Gabriel, he'll never speak to Max again. It would devastate him to know he'd misplaced his trust in his brother. Because he does trust Max. He idolizes him. And he shouldn't.” (Michaelides 113)

The contribution in marriage should come from both sides. Although Gabriel showed a lot of love and affection to Alicia, he ignored her main problems. In opposition, Alicia always

praised Gabriel's little contributions while ignoring his major mistakes. Gabriel never gave her enough attention. Even when Jean-Felix disturbed Alicia, Gabriel did not seem bothered. Alicia always appreciated Gabriel for his supportive attitude. Gabriel's little efforts were satisfying fulfillments for her. She believed that she was getting more than she deserved. Here, we can ask how a human decides what he deserves. Oftentimes, it is the spouse's insecurity that creates a delusional theory in his mind that they should expect less. As a consequence, one of the partners was always treated badly. Each spouse should be treated equally, where the contribution would be the same.

“Gabriel didn't say it, but I could tell he's concerned about me. And if I'm going to be honest—and I may as well be—the real reason I agreed to keep this diary was to reassure him—prove that I'm okay. I can't bear the thought of him worrying about me. I don't ever want to cause him any distress or make him unhappy or cause him pain. I love Gabriel so much. He is without doubt the love of my life. I love him so totally, completely, sometimes it threatens to overwhelm me.”
(Michaelides 12)

Is it normal to think about your partner that he is your life's savior? In many movies, dramas, and romantic novels, we regularly read or visualize that the heroine is in a trap and the hero comes to save her. Almost every movie plot is based on 'Cinderella Syndrome'. In *The Silent Patient*, Alicia believed that Gabriel was her life's savior. She even symbolized him with Jesus. Alicia expressed her feelings through paintings. She painted Gabriel in the position of Jesus. It proves her immense love for him.

“But I know Gabriel believes in me and my talent—I'd never be a painter if it weren't for him. If he hadn't needled and encouraged and bullied me, I'd never have kept going during those first

few dead years after college, when I was painting walls with Jean-Felix. Before I met Gabriel, I lost my way, somehow—I lost myself. I don’t miss those druggy parties who passed for friends during my twenties. I only ever saw them at night—they vanished at dawn, like vampires fleeing the light. When I met Gabriel, they faded away into nothing, and I didn’t even notice. I didn’t need them anymore; I didn’t need anyone now I had him. He saved me—like Jesus. Maybe that’s what the painting is about. Gabriel is my whole world—and has been since the day we met. I’ll love him no matter what he does, or what happens—no matter how much he upsets me—no matter how untidy or messy he is—how thoughtless, how selfish. I’ll take him just as he is. Until death do us part.” (Michaelides 61)

However, at the same point, we find emotional dependency in an unrestrained position. Because of her traumatized past, Alicia considered that she was living only for Gabriel. As a lonely child, Alicia tried to heal her pain, ‘not being loved’ with the love of Gabriel. It was her dependency on Gabriel, as she had completely fallen for him. Later on, she had killed Gabriel because she could not accept the truth that Gabriel did not love her. Even though she did not try to protect herself, when Theo pushed the injection into her veins. She lost all the reasons for living. Thus, Michaelides shows how emotional dependency kills a human’s inner self. Despite dependency being a natural phenomenon, it can cause disaster in a relationship.

Similarly, like Alicia, Theo also believed that Kathy, his wife, was his life’s savior. Although he moved from his father’s house, he could never escape from that house where he was abused by his father. Ruth, his former therapist, treated him well he still wanted a secure environment where he could feel reliable. That’s why he was so dependent on Kathy that even after finding out about her infidelity, he could not manage to decide on separation. Neither could he confront her nor make the right decision. Visibly, we find another aspect of deeply emotional

attachment, which is the fear of abandonment. Clearly, Theo could not leave Kathy because without her, he could not imagine his world. He considered Kathy to be his lifesaver.

“I felt an unfamiliar happiness just being in her company, as though a secret door had been opened, and Kathy had beckoned me across the threshold—into a magical world of warmth and light and color, and hundreds of orchids in a dazzling confetti of blues and reds and yellows. I could feel myself thawing in the heat, softening around the edges, like a tortoise emerging into the sun after a long winter’s sleep, blinking and waking up. Kathy did that for me—she was my invitation to life, one I grasped with both hands. So this is it, I remember thinking. This is love.” (Michaelides 52)

We can see men also carry ‘Cinderella Syndrome’, a psychological state. Theo always suffered from severe mental illness because of his past traumas. He desired a person in his life who would rescue him from the nightmares of his life. Considering your life-partner as your lifesaver is like making yourself emotionally disabled.

Alex Michaelides creates a link between emotional dependency and addiction. Theo compared marijuana with Kathy. He had fancied that marijuana helped him to feel relaxed, safe, and controllable. Later on, when he started his relationship with Kathy, he gave up on his addiction. It was his theory that Kathy replaced marijuana, or his addiction.

“I talked a lot about marijuana in therapy. I wrestled with the idea of giving it up and wondered why the prospect scared me so much. Ruth said that enforcement and constraint never produced anything good, and that, rather than force myself to live without weed, a better starting place might be to acknowledge that I was now dependent on it, and unwilling or unable to abandon it. Whatever marijuana did for me was still working, Ruth argued—until the day it

would outlive its usefulness, when I would probably relinquish it with ease. Ruth was right. When I met Kathy and fell in love, marijuana faded into the background. I was naturally high on love, with no need to artificially induce a good mood.” (Michaelides 79)

Notably, love cannot be an addiction. Obviously, a healthy relationship cannot be based on an addiction. Anything related to addiction is dreadful. Just like drug addiction is harmful to health, an obsession with one’s partner is harmful to a relationship. Thus, the author manifests how emotional dependency can lead to addiction. Furthermore, Theo restarted taking marijuana after a while, and his excuse was that he was feeling lonely. One of the misconceptions about marriage is that if you are married, you will not feel lonely. Firstly, Theo was lonely in his marriage, but he did not realize his wife’s ignorance. Secondly, Kathy was a human being, not a drug. Marriage cannot erase loneliness or past trauma. Marriage is not a solution but a responsibility.

Emotional dependence is a common characteristic of a relationship. In a marriage, both partners share the same emotion. But when infidelity takes place in a marriage, it is considered that this is the end of marriage. Living with your cheater or disloyal spouse depends on one’s choice. Whether it is a wise decision or not is a serious discussion. But here the point is, if you are not okay with your spouse’s infidelity, you should not drag the relationship further. Even so, people cannot move on easily. It is their emotion that holds them up. People frequently argue that emotional cheating and physical cheating are not the same. In my opinion, these are baseless arguments. In the case of Theo, since he was so emotionally involved with Kathy from the first place, he did not have the strength to leave her. The fear of abandonment was his main priority as he could not let his fear become true. He says,

“I would not let Kathy go. Instead, I would say nothing. I would pretend I had never read those emails. Somehow, I’d forget. I’d bury it. I had no choice but to go on. I refused to give in to this; I refused to break down and fall apart. After all, I wasn’t just responsible for myself. What about the patients in my care? Certain people depended on me. I couldn’t let them down.” (Michaelides 98).

4.2 The Consequences of Abusive and Neglectful Parenting

Alicia, Theo, and Paul, three of them, are the victims of abusive parenting. The parenting role in their lives has a deep connection with their adult relationships. The major factor is that all of them searched the love, which they did not receive from their parents. Additionally, while they were thinking that their spouses would love them, it became a catastrophe since their natural emotional dependence transformed into a reliable obsession.

“The pain of not being loved” is the main trauma in Alicia and Theo’s lives. Alicia’s father literary killed her soul when he expressed that he wished Alicia would die in the place of his wife. The death of her mother, abusive aunt, and the hatred from her father, everything made her life miserable. The hiding spot of Paul and Alicia in their house symbolizes how they tried to escape from their traumatized past. The hateful statement from her father made Alicia’s life miserable. It caused her incurable depression and emotional instability. When she became thirty-three, she thought she was living more than she deserved because her mother died at the age of thirty-two. When she saw a homeless man, she compared herself with him because she felt she was abandoned, too. She has no other friends except Gabriel. Even, she rarely contacted Paul. Moreover, after the death of her father, she attempted to commit suicide. It was her guilt that she might be responsible for her mother’s death. Alicia also assumed her mother might have wanted

to kill her because her father's words attacked her repeatedly. She tried to run from that guilt. So it is predictable that because of her abusive father and childhood trauma, Alicia's whole life was miserable. Alicia always escaped from her traumas by thinking about how much Gabriel loved her. Her diary is mostly full of reality and her assumptions. She appreciated every little thing about Gabriel and ignored his anger issues and aggressive behavior. Whenever she recalled her past trauma, she instantly thought about Gabriel, which made her mind cheerful. Nevertheless, when Gabriel chose his life over Alicia, it was unbearable for her.

“I wish I could say I struck a blow for the defeated—that I was standing up for the betrayed and brokenhearted—that Gabriel had a tyrant's eyes, my father's eyes. But I'm past lying now. The truth is, Gabriel had my eyes, suddenly—and I had his. Somewhere along the way, we had swapped places. I saw it now. I would never be safe. Never be loved. All my hopes, dashed— all my dreams, shattered—leaving nothing, nothing. My father was right—I didn't deserve to live. I was—nothing. That's what Gabriel did to me. That's the truth. I didn't kill Gabriel. He killed me. All I did was pull the trigger.” (Michaelides 266)

Theo Faber's full life is disturbed by his traumatized childhood. He became a therapist because he wanted to heal him. Not only he was suicidal and suffering from depression but he also had an addiction of marijuana. All these incidents are related to his childhood trauma. However, He was better when he met Ruth, his former therapist, who helped him to recover from his depression. Nevertheless, Theo could never escape from his trauma. Instead of facing his trauma or confronting his parents, he always chose to run or hide from the awful memories. As a consequence, he started believing that Kathy was the gift of his life from God because he endured so much suffering. Is it logical to demand the unfulfilled love that you did not win from your partner? Or, is it logical not to expect enough love from your spouse because you are the

most beloved child in your family? In my opinion, these kinds of demands are totally illogical and unjustifiable. The attachment from your parents and the intimacy with your partner are completely different. Again, we can discuss ‘Oedipus Complex’. The devotion for your father and the adoration for your husband are not comparable and parallel. Theo expected the family attachment from Kathy. But when he discovered his wife’s adultery, he was so devastated that he was even equipped to kill a human. On top of that, he did not want to accept the truth of his and Kathy’s relationship. Kathy desired to explore excitement in love, which is not possible in real love. As Ruth said,

“About love. About how we often mistake love for fireworks—for drama and dysfunction. But real love is very quiet, very still. It’s boring if seen from the perspective of high drama. Love is deep and calm—and constant. I imagine you do give Kathy love—in the true sense of the word. Whether or not she is capable of giving it back to you is another question.”
(Michaelides 93)

Paul Rose, Alicia’s cousin, also suffered in an abusive family. He liked Tanya, Max’s girlfriend, but he did not dare to ask her out. Even though he was a strong man, he always feared his mother. According to Alicia’s perception, he was captivated in his ominous house for the rest of his life. Thus, the cruelty in their upbringing devastated all three of them.

4.3 Deep-Seated Resentments in Marriage

If extravagant dependency generates uncontrollable intimacy, it also produces unconscionable resentments. In Alicia’s situation, she had many displeasures with Gabriel. Yet she never committed Gabriel’s faults because she was in immense love. In her diary, she only wrote her happy moments with Gabriel. As Jean-Paul Sartre said in their personal diaries, people

often misinterpret reality by turning ordinary moments into false narratives. Gabriel expressed his love for his wife consistently. Nevertheless, there is another background story. Alicia was richer than Gabriel. Alicia wanted kids, but she never expressed her desire because of Gabriel. She was assaulted by Max, but Gabriel did not acknowledge that. Although he was aware that Alicia felt uncomfortable in the presence of Max. Still, he always invited him. The essential part is when Alicia was suffering from depression after her father's death, Gabriel took her to his psychotherapist friend, Dr. Christian West, who prescribed her strong medications. It was unclear whether Gabriel might have intended to harm Alicia purposely. Another point is that when Alicia informed Gabriel about the stalker, he did not believe her. Noted, Gabriel's actions were suspicious and neglectful.

Moreover, when he chose to save his life, he betrayed Alicia. The Greek drama, *Alcectis*, explores the theme of love and sacrifice. Alex Michaelides portrayed the fact in his storyline that giving up on your life for the sake of your lover is a bizarre and foolish act. Clearly, love includes the emotion of sacrifice, but it does not mean that one should renounce everything they possess.

Furthermore, at the time when Theo had given a choice to Gabriel, Alicia was continuously begging Gabriel and reminding him of their love, which means Alicia was also unsure what Gabriel was going to choose. Consequently, her anger, pessimism, disappointment, and dismay turned into a savage and vicious emotion. She could not help but kill her love. It conveys how emotional immoderate reliance and high expectations generate deep disappointment, profound dismay, and severe frustration.

Theo decided to kill Gabriel instead of his wife. The point is that both Gabriel and Kathy were involved in the extramarital affair. Despite that, Theo chose to punish only Gabriel, whereas he did not even face up to Kathy about her betrayal. Quite often, spouses accuse the third party for infidelity rather than blame their partner. Theo was devastated by his wife's adultery. Since he could not leave her, to satisfy his ego, he chose to let down another married woman by exposing her husband's disloyalty. Moreover, Theo went to Grove not to help Alicia but to help himself as he became a psychotherapist to heal his emotional wounds. The possession of snowflakes, or we can say the desire to hold our loved ones, is a temporary happiness. Even after Gabriel's death, Theo never found his lost happiness, and it led him to Grove.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion on *Gone Girl*

5.1 Dependency in Marriage

The universal truth is that human beings always try to hide their weaknesses and incompleteness from their spouses. At the beginning of a relationship, everyone tries to pretend to be perfect. But the reality reflects that no one is perfect. In *Gone Girl*, Amy pretended to become a cool girl, a girl every man desires. On the contrary, Nick postured to be an alpha man, a man every girl desires in his marriage. However, they both stopped pretending after some years of their marriage, and as they learned each other's flaws, fragility, imperfections, and shortcomings, they started to detest each other. It was basically a real picture of a marriage. In *Lasting Marriage*, we have seen how couples find themselves in a discomfort position at the different phases of life. Notably, in Amy and Nick's situation, their marriage was in a worse position.

The main accusation of Amy towards Nick was that he had stopped trying. At the beginning of their relationship, Nick did everything to impress Amy. He tried to make her happier by acting like a dancing monkey, a person who tries to prove his love at every moment. But when Amy stopped acting like a cool girl, he did not find any interest in her. Nick had only complaints about the real Amy. Even more, he expected that Amy would play the role of a traditional wife. To find the cool girl in his life, Nick became involved in infidelity with his student, Andie. In the relationship with Andie, Nick started acting again like an alpha man, where he had no economic problems, no personal issues, and no emotional weakness. So, here it appears that dependency has many forms. To create a perfect impression in front of our partner, we construct a fake identity in ourselves. No matter how much we try to hide our true selves, our true identity remains in our personality. Authenticity should prevail in a marriage; one should not wear a mask before their spouse.

Unlike *The Silent Patient*, in *Gone Girl*, the couple did not care for each other's feelings. Nick was usually a narcissist who always cared about his image and reputation. When his wife was missing, he did not show any concern for her. He did everything to protect how the public would view him. Similarly, Amy was also obsessed with perfection. Amy wanted everything in her life to have a perfect image. In this context, it is clear that they had no strong bond. But the truth is that their selfishness was the root of their emotional dependence. Since Nick was overly protective about his reputation as a narcissist, he chose Amy as his life partner, who is "Amazing Amy", a girl with no imperfections. Nick prioritized the women surrounding him based on their appearances. On the other hand, Amy always craved perfection. She chose Nick as her life partner because he had the same characteristics as Abel, the hero of the "Amazing Amy" book. A man thinks himself powerful when he wins the heart of the most beautiful woman because it

raises his standards. Equivalently, a woman feels secure and happy when she has a powerful and caring man beside her. The dependence is evident in their marriage, which is rooted in their fixation on perfection.

“Nick loved me. A six-o kind of love: He loooooooved me. But he didn’t love me, me. Nick loved a girl who doesn’t exist. I was pretending, the way I often did, pretending to have a personality. I can’t help it, it’s what I’ve always done: The way some women change fashion regularly, I change personalities. What persona feels good, what’s coveted, what’s au courant? I think most people do this; they just don’t admit it, or else they settle on one persona because they’re too lazy or stupid to pull off a switch. That night at the Brooklyn party, I was playing the girl who was in style, the girl a man like Nick wants: the Cool Girl. Men always say that as the defining compliment, don’t they? She’s a cool girl.” (Flynn 250)

Amy had a choice to leave Nick when she found out about Nick’s infidelity. But she decided to take revenge on him. Gillian Flynn has built up Amy’s character in a way that she is not perfect, but a perfectionist and a stickler. The nature of her revenge looks like teaching a lesson. She is a woman who is never going to sacrifice what she deserves, and also not going to compromise because she will win what she wants. Amy is a precious villain created by Flynn who wants to break all social norms created for women. Flynn portrayed Amy as a strong woman who is full of negative personalities. The surprising part is that the readers can hate her, resent her, and also rebuke her, but they cannot say she is wrong. Amy took revenge on Hilary Handy because, as a friend, she did not show any care for Amy. Similarly, she retaliated against Tomy because he also cheated on her. Hence, she taught Nick a good lesson. She preferred to make his life miserable instead of leaving. Obviously, Amy contributed to her marriage more than him. She supported the family during financial crises, she acted like a cool girl because

Nick worshipped a ‘cool girl’, and she also helped Nick when his mother was diagnosed with cancer. Nevertheless, Nick never appreciated her rather wanted to get rid of her. It is an arguable matter whether Amy’s revenge is justified or not. Living with a person for years and sacrificing for him out of love seems natural. But when it comes to leaving the person for our better future, the question arises here: what about the sacrifices and compromises of so many years? Thus, dependence in marriages restrains people from the decision of separation.

“But it’s so very necessary. Nick must be taught a lesson. He’s never been taught a lesson! He glides through life with that charming Nicky grin, his beloved-child entitlement, his fibs and shirking, his shortcomings and selfishness, and no one calls him on anything. I think this experience will make him a better person. Or at least a sorrier one. Fucker.” (Flynn 264)

Moreover, Amy thinks a husband should be a dancing monkey. He should sacrifice his bachelor parties to pick up his wife at dinner party. Women are often symbolized as a sign of sacrifice. Flynn shows men and women both must compromise and contribute in marriage.

On the contrary, Nick’s dependency on his wife is more financial than emotional. In the 2008 Great Recession, both Nick and Amy lost their jobs. Since Amy had funds, she helped Nick open a bar for a living. Nick could not ask divorce from Amy because without her help, Nick cannot survive due to his poor economic condition. Nick was involved in infidelity because with Andie, he could act like a sigma male. Additionally, Andie was not aware of Nick’s fragile condition. With Amy, Nick lived like a reserved person. Nick could accept the real Amy because he only loved the ‘cool Amy’. In Andie, he was searching for the ‘cool girl’ who does not know his weaknesses. Living with Amy was only an option for him. Sometimes, people live with their partners only for their financial advantages. They feel suffocation in the relationship and want to

get rid of it. Nick disliked the ‘actual Amy’ but still could not face her. To escape reality, he cheated on Amy.

“I cheated. I disrespected my wife. I didn’t want to be the man that I had become, but instead of working on myself, I took the easy way out. I cheated with a young woman who barely knew me. So I could pretend to be the big man. I could pretend to be the man I wanted to be—smart and confident and successful—because this young woman didn’t know any different. This young girl, she hadn’t seen me crying into a towel in the bathroom in the middle of the night because I lost my job. She didn’t know all my foibles and shortcomings.” (Flynn 392)

Furthermore, like Michaelides, Flynn also showed that marriage cannot erase one’s loneliness. Nick cried in the restroom alone because he was feeling devastated. He slept beside his wife but did not dare to intimate with her. Although he made those excuses to justify his infidelity, his loneliness, and his hidden wish to have kids made him weakened and debilitated. Eventually, when Amy returned to him, Nick desperately wanted to leave her. However, he was also trying to find some excuse to live with her. Because Nick realized that he and Amy had become the perfect match for each other. Nick acknowledged the ‘actual Amy’, and Amy also discovered the real Nick. Nick feared that Amy could kill him. Yet it was not his fear that held him to this relationship. He realized that no matter how much he runs from Amy; she will always be with him.

“As a man, I had been my most impressive when I loved her—and I was my next best self when I hated her. I had known Amy only seven years, but I couldn’t go back to life without her. Because she was right: I couldn’t return to an average life.” (Flynn 443)

At first, Amy had decided to frame Nick for her murder. She also had planned her suicide after sending Nick to prison. Later, she compared him to Desi and chose to return to Nick. Mainly, like Nick, she also wanted an excuse to live with Nick. It was her unspoken wish to save her marriage. But she was not ready to sacrifice her happiness. She transformed Nick into a man who was her dream man by scaring and blackmailing him creepily and unlawfully.

“He won’t sleep with me yet. He sleeps in the downstairs guest room with the door locked. But one day, I will wear him down, I will catch him off guard, and he will lose the energy for the nightly battle, and he will get in bed with me. In the middle of the night, I’ll turn to face him and press myself against him. I’ll hold myself to him like a climbing, coiling vine until I have invaded every part of him and made him mine.” (Flynn 447)

5.2 The Consequences of Abusive and Neglectful Parenting

It is apparent that our parents’ marital relationship has a deep connection with our adult life. Although Nick and Amy’s parents were not abusive, their neglectful parenting deeply affected Nick and Amy’s lives. Seemingly, Amy was raised by her parents with great love and care. Yet, they had lack of empathy for Amy. For them, their child was kind of a money-making tool. They never could understand their daughter, and they also never discovered the true nature of Amy. For Rand and Marybeth Elliot, Amy’s parents, their priority was to make Amy perfect. They are a kind of self-obsessed couple who were lost in their own world. Moreover, Amy’s complaints about her parents are neither logical nor useless. She asked why her parents let Nick take her to Missouri. Sometimes, girls want support from their parents when they face problems in their marriage. On many occasions, parents, instead of supporting their daughter, push them to choose the option of compromising. They believe that by doing this, they are helping their

daughters to adjust to their married life. The reality is, they quite often disappoint their daughters and abandon them when they need them most. Like abusive parenting, neglectful parenting also has many negative impacts.

“My parents are worried, of course, but how can I feel sorry for them, since they made me this way and then deserted me? They never, ever fully appreciated the fact that they were earning money from my existence, that I should have been getting royalties. Then, after they siphoned off my money, my “feminist” parents let Nick bundle me off to Missouri like I was some piece of chattel, some mail-order bride, some property exchange. Gave me a fucking cuckoo clock to remember them by.” (Flynn 268)

Furthermore, after the disappearance of Amy, her parents used the media to enhance the popularity of “Amazing Amy”. They did not suspect Nick. They do not know what the relationship is like between Amy and Nick.

Nick always resented his father because of his coldness and indifference towards his family. He was the man of his house, but still, he was never there for his family. When Nick’s mother asked for a divorce, Nick and his twin sister, Go, were okay with it. They had no problem with their parents’ separation; rather, they were expecting this. His father’s irresponsibility and rudeness created an attitude in him. Nick determined not to be like his father. Nevertheless, he acquires all the qualities of his father. Like his father, he started hating women. His innate misogynistic mentality led him to judge women for unlawful measures. Additionally, Nick’s untold desire was to be a good father, unlike his parent. He wished to provide the love to his child that he did not get from his father. Amy used this emotion of Nick and blackmailed him to stay with her. In this patriarchal society, though men talk and support feminism, they expect a

male-identified woman in their lives. A male-identified woman means a woman who acts in the way a man wants. She will have some sort of freedom, but those freedoms will be decided by men. When Nick understood that Amy was not the girl he had dated and there was a huge difference between the amazing Amy and the actual Amy, he started to patronize Amy.

5.3 Deep-Seated Resentments in Marriage

Both Nick and Amy showed immense hatred for each other. Once their excited, romantic, and glorified love turned into strong hostility. Amy not only framed Nick for false accusations, but also planned to kill herself so that he could not save himself. For Amy, avenging Nick was more important than her life. When Nick understood the clues of treasure hunts hinted at his infidelity, he immediately realized it was Amy who was framing him. Nick also set a trap for Amy. His intention was not only to clear his name but also to kill Amy. Many times, Nick fantasized about strangling Amy with his own hands. The same goes for Amy. She planned to take her own life to ensure that Nick would be sentenced to death.

However, later on, they started living normally like before, as if nothing had happened between them. They started pretending again, like the first phase of their relationship. Gillian Flynn ironically presents that a marriage is combined with a lot of emotions, including hatred and resentment. In marriage, partners may simultaneously experience feelings of affection, resentment, and even disdain toward one another; this complex blend of emotions essentially defines the nature of marriage.

“You stopped loving me. We’re a sick, fucking toxic Möbius strip, Amy. We weren’t ourselves when we fell in love, and when we became ourselves—surprise!—we were poison. We

complete each other in the nastiest, ugliest possible way. You don't really love me, Amy. You don't even like me. Divorce me. Divorce me, and let's try to be happy." (Flynn 440)

Flynn conveys an important message in her literary work. No matter how much we strive to appear as the "cool girl" or the "sigma man", in the end, we remain our true selves.

"But he said, "Because I feel sorry for you."

"Why?"

"Because every morning you have to wake up and be you." (Flynn 463)

Chapter 6: Conclusion

To sum up, this study has demonstrated how problematic married life has a deep connection with immature parenting, undeveloped attachment, and concealed resentments in the novels, *The Silent Patient* and *Gone Girl*. These psychological thriller novels remarkably present the clear-sighted problematic married life through the fictional characters, where the psychological factors in a marriage are visible.

Intimacy, attachment, and dependence are completely natural in a marriage. To build a healthy marriage, one should figure out what his and his spouse's attachment nature is. Too much affection for a spouse, appreciating his little efforts, ignoring personal happiness, cannot be a proper definition of attachment between couples. Dependence is habitual, but one should be emotionally intelligent to know how to control their feelings. This is the main difference between Alicia and Amy. Alicia had loved Gabriel unconditionally and was later heartbroken because of his infidelity and selfishness, whereas Amy compelled Nick to change for her. Nick changed

himself to make her happier, as it was always his priority. Besides, Alicia and Theo believed that their partners were their lifesavers. On the contrary, Amy and Nick were blind to the perfectionist status. A healthy relationship can be established with a perfect match. Spouses can be the most fitting companions or the best-suited match. Considering your partner, a flawless human and your lifesaver, is a foolish mentality. Marriage is not a fairytale but a responsibility.

Moreover, both partners have to take responsibility for their spouses' happiness in a marriage. Nick never cared about Amy's treasure hunt game. For him, the game was just a time-waster. But that game conveyed the clues of their relationship. Amy hinted to Nick that, since he is a married man, he has to make his wife happy. Unlike Alicia, Amy never wanted to compromise. She winced back her pleasure. To make a relationship exciting, Amy did everything she could. Without excitement, marriage becomes a suffocated, trapped, and boring relationship. Additionally, in a marriage, couples have annoyances, irritations, and outrages for each other. The main problem is that spouses often fight to take control in a marriage. All the resentments are erasable if they reserve their feelings for each other. Amy had a belief that her husband would fall in love with her again. Theo also shared the same feelings. Thus, couples reserve their emotions, which is related to dependency. Lastly, marriage is a commitment where spouses are bound to fulfill certain duties. If one partner boosts his expectations beyond their partner's providing capacity, it will certainly bring disappointment. Furthermore, emotional loneliness, caused by abusive and immature parenting, cannot be recovered one's loneliness rather, a person should be self-sufficient sentimentally.

If we analyze the couples' psychological aspects from the novels, the main fact is that dependence is not a disease or defect, but completely natural. However, it should be maintained, whether it is emotional, financial, or sexual. Alicia and Theo were badly dependent on their

partners. In contrast, Amy and Nick reserved their self-identity. Interdependence is not the opposite of dependence but a part of it. If you cannot love yourself, it will be harder for you to love others. Depending on ourselves helps us to protect our loved ones and also saves us from a devastating situation. So, interdependence cannot be a reason for separation, but an attempt to save the marriage.

One of the crucial themes of the novels, *The Silent Patient* and *Gone Girl*, is infidelity. My research has focused on how to protect a problematic marital life. From my perspective, further study could investigate when people should decide to end their relationship because living in a toxic relationship is also a poor choice.

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