AN ANALYSIS OF MARRIAGE CRISIS IN GILLIAN FLYNN'S GONE GIRL

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Abstract: This study examines the dysfunctional marriage of Nick and Amy Dunne in Gone Girl through the conflicts that arise in their relationship. Human marriages often face challenges that can lead to emotional instability and dysfunction. In the novel, Flynn portrays Nick and Amy's marriage as chaotic, marked by deception, mistrust, and psychological tension. Financial difficulties, job loss, and dependence on each other's resources exacerbate their frustrations, while poor communication and dishonesty hinder effective conflict resolution. Both characters suppress emotions, harbor resentment, and engage in manipulative behaviors, creating persistent tension. Amy's diary entries and contrasting perspectives reveal the gap between appearance and reality, highlighting the complexity of marital dysfunction. Using a literary and interpretive approach, this study analyzes textual evidence to understand the dynamics of their relationship. The findings indicate that unresolved conflicts, corrosive conflict management, and lack of transparency sustain the dysfunction, demonstrating how deceit and emotional suppression undermine marital stability.

Keywords: Gone girl, marriage, Amy Dune, Nick Dune, dysfunctional

INTRODUCTION

Human beings are social creatures who cannot exist without interacting and forming relationships with others, both in social and personal contexts. These interactions may take different forms, one of which is marriage. Within marriage, a husband and wife make a mutual commitment to share their lives together over a long period of time. Nevertheless, not every marriage relationship functions smoothly or develops as expected. Conflicts often arise within relationships, and these internal tensions may contribute to the development of dysfunctional marriages and affect emotional stability. The dynamics of marriage relationships involve both satisfaction and disagreement. In married life, individuals inevitably face various pressures and conflicts that are difficult to avoid. This occurs because life and relationships are rarely perfect, and certain circumstances may lead partners into a dysfunctional marital situation. Even when couples attempt to maintain their relationship, some aspects of their partnership may not operate effectively or consistently over time.

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In Gone Girl, Gillian Flynn blends elements of murder, mystery, revenge, and marriage intrigue while also presenting complex character developments marked by controversial attitudes and psychological tensions. The novel centers on the marriage of Nick Dunne and Amy Dunne, both former writers who relocate to North Carthage, Missouri. The narrative unfolds around the escalating conflict within their relationship, particularly on the occasion of their fifth wedding anniversary. Through the storyline, Flynn portrays a marriage characterized by romance, deception, and cruelty, further enriched by Amy's diary entries that reveal an alternative perspective on their relationship and expose the contrast between appearance and reality. Over time, Nick and Amy become trapped in a dysfunctional marriage relationship that has been built on dishonesty since its early stages. As a result, their marriage fails to develop as they once imagined during their courtship. Throughout the novel, the couple becomes entangled in conflicts of their own making, including personality shifts, deception, infidelity, and hidden secrets that deepen the instability of their relationship.

METHODS

In this study of the novel Gone Girl, the researcher employed a literary research method to collect textual data related to dysfunctional marriage, particularly focusing on the relationship between Amy and Nick Dunne in the novel. This method is based on an interpretive approach that relies on social descriptions, textual data, and relevant analytical categories, following the narrative research design proposed by John W. Creswell (2013).

Furthermore, this research approach emphasizes the collection of information from multiple references in order to obtain various perspectives, interpretations, and deeper insights into the issue being examined. According to Hossein Nassaji (2015), such qualitative research focuses on gathering descriptive data to understand a particular phenomenon more comprehensively. In this study, the descriptive data are obtained through a detailed analysis of the literary work in relation to the themes and issues being investigated.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the novel Gone Girl, the marital relationship between Amy and Nick is portrayed as destructive, reflecting the manipulative and calculated plans developed by Amy. From the beginning, their marriage demonstrates signs of instability, despite the fact that both partners appear deeply immersed in romance and initially perceive their relationship as happy and fulfilling. As the narrative progresses, it becomes evident that their marriage gradually deteriorates and turns dysfunctional, particularly after both Amy and Nick lose their jobs and are forced to relocate to Missouri.

However, it also suggests that the two are not really in a functional relationship from the start, even though they constantly compliment each other before.

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"What are you thinking? How are you feeling? Who are you? What have we done to each other?" (Gone Girl, 2012:3).

Nick and Amy complimented each other by saying they used to be their dream couple. Amy argues that Men like Nick love women like her role, Cool Girl. However, then everything changed. Nick starts the storydescribed his wife as a little strange. He shows that he does not even know his partner, Amy, and cannot guess and understand what is going on in his wife's head. They give the story from each point of view to the reader. It shows readers with several statements of honesty that their marriage conditions are indeed chaotic and dysfunction.

The economic and financial situation of Amy and Nick Dunne becomes one of the most prominent sources of conflict in their relationship in the novel Gone Girl. From the beginning of their relationship until their marriage, financial circumstances play a significant role in shaping the tensions that arise between them. Both Amy and Nick work as writers, although their careers follow different directions. Initially, their professional lives appear relatively stable, and Amy comes from a financially secure background, as her parents are well-known authors.

However, the situation changes when Nick loses his job due to the prolonged economic recession, which leads to growing frustration as their financial stability begins to decline. At the same time, Amy expresses emotional exhaustion as a result of these circumstances, particularly because she had believed that Nick's position would remain secure. As their difficulties accumulate, Amy feels that the problems in her marriage emerge simultaneously, intensifying her emotional distress and deepening the tension within their relationship.

Nick becomes increasingly frustrated after losing his job, and his stress intensifies when Amy is also dismissed from her position. As a result, communication between them begins to deteriorate, largely because Nick withdraws and avoids discussing their situation. Meanwhile, Amy expresses concern about what Nick is experiencing. However, Nick interprets her reactions differently, feeling as though Amy is mocking him, especially considering how dedicated and enthusiastic he had once been about his career.

"Now I can feel Amy looking over my shoulder, smirking at the time I've spent discussing my career, my misfortune, and dismissing her experience in one sentence. That, she would tell you, is typical." (Gone Girl, 2012:5)

Nick appears increasingly irritated and insecure about how Amy perceives and evaluates him, particularly regarding his career and his family's financial situation. Although he benefits from Amy's remaining financial resources for a period of time, he is uncomfortable with the idea of being viewed as dependent on her. For Nick, relying on Amy financially creates a sense of inferiority, and he strongly resists the perception that he is subordinate to her because of economic circumstances.

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"We opened a bar. We borrowed money from Amy to do this, eighty thousand dollars, which was once nothing to Amy but by then was almost everything. I swore I would pay her back, with interest. [...] Well, there are all kinds of men, his most damning phrase, the second half left unsaid, and you are the wrong kind." (Gone Girl, 2012:18)

In this situation, Nick is determined not to repeat the perceived failures of his father or assume a negative role in his marriage. Nevertheless, he is compelled to rely on Amy's financial resources after both of them lose their jobs. While the money is intended to support household needs and facilitate new career opportunities, it primarily benefits Nick. He acknowledges that whether Amy pursues a new career is irrelevant, as the funds come from her income. Despite this, Nick's frustration persists, as he fears potential embarrassment if others were to discover his dependence or if Amy were to confront him about it.

Dysfunctional marriages can take many forms and are often marked by poor communication, low levels of care between partners, a lack of genuine commitment, and ineffective conflict resolution (Fals-Stewart & Lam, 2010). In the case of Nick and Amy, their conflict resolution is both inadequate and destructive, as neither demonstrates a willingness to engage with the other's approach to resolving disagreements within their marriage. While both partners recognize each other's distinct traits and qualities, neither takes active steps to repair the damage in their relationship. Instead, they retreat into their personal anger, allowing their marriage to remain strained and "compromised."

"...the I so don't want to be mad but I'm going to be feeling. [...] Because a rule, a good rule, a nice rule is being broken. Or maybe rule is the wrong word. Protocol? Nicety? But the rule/protocol/nicety-our anniversary-is being broken for a good reason, I understand, I do" (Gone Girl, 2012:72)

Nick knows that compromise in their marriage is becoming increasingly unhealthy. Unlike the usual compromise, because only he agreed and Amy would

curse in her mind. What she thought was a great idea was not what Amy wanted. Though, Nick did it and believed in his own decision. Meanwhile, Amy also said

'yes' because she wanted to continue to do her role as the ideal wife, the wife Nick wanted. Briefly, they create their internal conflicts and have no immediate goal of resolving them.

Communication issues often lie at the core of dysfunctional marriages, and this is evident in the relationship between Nick and Amy. Their lack of effective communication becomes particularly apparent when Nick loses his job and their financial situation deteriorates. Nick's frustration as a husband is understandable, while Amy appears to attempt to empathize with his struggles.

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However, their lack of healthy communication leads to negative assumptions and misunderstandings about one another. Nick resists being blamed for the difficulties they face, while Amy grows increasingly dissatisfied with his behavior and begins to distance herself. Frustrated by Nick's actions, Amy suspects him of dishonesty but continues to maintain the façade of the "ideal wife," portraying herself as Cool Girl and Amazing Amy in a household that is far from stable. At the same time, Nick becomes critical of Amy's changes, perceiving them as unpleasant, while she gradually reveals her true nature.

"My wife was no longer my wife but a razor-wire knot daring me to unloop her, and I was not up to the job with my thick, numb, nervous fingers. [...] She was not the thing she became, the thing I feared most: an angry woman." (Gone Girl,2012:50)

Nick and Amy become aware that both of them are changing, and their relationship is deteriorating into a tumultuous state. The sense of happiness in their marriage has largely disappeared. Aware of Nick's affair, Amy chooses to remain silent and avoids confronting him. She suppresses her feelings and refrains from communicating with Nick, perhaps believing that addressing the issue could make their already unstable relationship even more unpredictable.

CONCLUSION. This paper examines the dysfunctional marriage of Nick and Amy Dunne in Gone Girl through the conflicts present in their marital life. These conflicts reveal that their marriage is chaotic and fails to operate effectively. The analysis shows that several recurring conflicts provide a clear depiction of the dysfunctional nature of their relationship, including poor communication, destructive conflict resolution, dissatisfaction, and ongoing dishonesty.

These issues reflect common characteristics of dysfunctional marriages, where problems are neither addressed nor resolved promptly or appropriately. The absence of honesty in their relationship significantly increases the likelihood of marital unhappiness. Consequently, conflicts between them tend to be enduring, as both partners continue to harbor grievances in silence and bring up past mistakes. Their marriage is marked by uncertainty, deceit, and a lack of clear purpose, leaving them unsure of how to act toward one another or fulfill the commitments of marriage. Ultimately, they choose to uphold falsehoods and maintain their flawed union, perpetuating a dysfunctional marital dynamic.

Gone Girl is a complex novel that provides many views, considerations, and descriptions of the world of marriage and how the reality of life as a couple is not always smooth and happy. Even though marriage is dysfunctional, we can learn from there and find out how dysfunctional married life is through conflict in this novel. So, it can be a lesson for many people.

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