



A Psychodynamic Study of 'The Silent Patient' by Alex Michaelides

Zainab Akram, MPhil Scholar, The University of Chenab, Gujrat

Dr. Muhammad Akbar Khan, Department of Languages, The University of Chenab, Gujrat

makbar@lang.uchenab.edu.pk

Khadija, MPhil Scholar, The University of Chenab, Gujrat

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the exploration of attachment theory within Alex Michaelides novel "The Silent Patient," which deals with the disturbed mental state of psychological patients. Drawing upon John Bowlby's theory of attachment, the analysis delves into the characters such as Alicia Berenson and Theo Faber, highlighting the complexities of trauma and childhood experiences. The study further explores how these individuals navigate and confront the disorganized or disoriented attachment and impacts of the lack of secure attachment in children and its consequences in later part of life. The paper also aims to find out the childhood traumatic experiences and the formation of personalities of the characters in novel. The analysis brought into light the elements of disoriented childhood attachments and psychological fear of abandonment from the partner.

Keywords: attachment theory, the silent patient, psychodynamics, childhood, abuse, fear, abandonment

Introduction

The main central point of the attachment theory by Bowlby (1969) is upon the relationship between people, especially the relationship between the child and parents or between romantic partners. This theory focuses on the psychological explanation for the emotional association between people. This theory proposes that people have innate need to build bonds with parents with their children (Khanam et al., 2022). These bonds and relationships have great impact on attachments in every part of life (Akram et al., 2022). John Bowlby (1969), a British Psychologist first developed this theory (Cherry, 2023). He narrated attachment as 'lasting psychological connectedness between human beings' (Bowlby, 1969). Other theorists described attachment as the feeding relationship between infant and parents, while Bowlby (1969) suggested that attachment is identified by behavioral patterns. Bowlby (1969) proposed that relationships formed by infants at their earlier life create massive impact on their lives. The main point of attachment theory is that the caregivers who properly fulfill the needs of a child and are

more responsive to his demands create a sense of security in a child and this way the child comes to know that caregiver is dependable to provide him the secure base for exploring the world. Other psychologists and researchers including Mary Ainsworth, Harry Harlow, Rudolph Schaffer and Peggy Emerson also contributed to the attachment theory proposed by Bowlby (Cherry, 2023).

The objective of this study is to explore Alex Michaelides' novel *The Silent Patient* (2019) to evaluate the Attachment theory by John Bowlby and its influences on the lives of the characters named Alicia Berenson and Theo Faber in the novel '*The Silent Patient*' by Alex Michaelides. The central motif of the attachment theory and how it develops the personality of the characters serves as a compelling vehicle for analyzing the attachment behaviors and interactions within the story, and it is the focus of this research. The characters' relationships and bonds serve as a metaphor for Bowlby's Attachment theory which claim that disorganized attachment results into developing intense anger and rage in infants and such children possess difficult relationships with parents, they can explode easily, have no control over their emotions (Yassin, 2020).

In this study, the emphasis is placed on key characters who navigate the history of bonds developed between protagonist Alicia Berenson and her caregivers. Alicia Berenson was a famous painter and was married to fashion photographer Gabriel Berenson. One day, she shot her husband in the face five times and after this incident, she became completely silent. A criminal psychotherapist Theo Faber wanted to uncover the mystery of the murder of her husband (Kajaria, 2022).

Furthermore, the analysis investigates the novel's portrayal of character's relationships and bonds being developed and turning her into a soul-less human being due to her disrupted attachment phenomenon since her childhood. Ultimately, "*The Silent Patient*" encapsulates the intricate childhood psychological wounds that shape individual's personality with the assistance of Attachment bonds with their parents unconsciously. Through the lens of Bowlby's Attachment theoretical framework, this analysis delves into the characters' associations and relationships, shedding light on the dynamics that shape their lives and personalities , and highlights the nuanced ways in which characters struggle to overcome their deeply unhappy

childhood. Thus the sole purpose of this study is to explore the deep psychological wounds left by childhood abuse in the light of Attachment theory by John Bowlby (1969).

1. Literature Review

The topic of psychological childhood trauma has received significant interest within the wider literature and it has gained considerable attention in the academic literature. Researchers have discussed the novel *'The Silent Patient'* with different ideal paradigms.

Leslie Lothstein (2020), a Board Certified in Psychology and a companion of the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP) demonstrated on the narrative, plot and trauma explored in the novel. He analyzed it by focusing that Alicia was despised by her father and her mother attempted to assassinate her in the car accident. But consequently, mother died instead of her and father hated Alicia for this. Was the father jealous of Alicia? And due to this, he wanted Alicia dead. Father blamed her even by saying that she did not deserve to life after her mother's death. Later, Alicia lived with her paternal aunt and Alicia received no care and affection from her father and she was fully abandoned. She considered her father unloving and possessed rage in her adulthood while blaming herself for his wife's death. Alicia turned to be one of those children who wanted to repair their childhood losses through their partners. She idealized her husband, but her insecurities and self-damaged self are reflected in her personality and this broken self-created a need of perfect husband for herself. These are the possible motives which are hinted in the novel. Alicia's self-structure helped to speculate on the factors of psychodynamics involved in shooting her husband five times in the face. This was not an act done in consciousness rather unconsciousness. Her father's words for her 'You don't deserve to live' and she is unable to love and to be loved. She thought that her husband did not need her in their marriage. Shooting her husband in the face has the roots traced back to psychodynamics and it proposed catathymic rage. Even her silence is the consequence of catathymic rage which forces her to shoot husband in the face (Lothstein, 2020).

The effects of traumatic childhood are explored in a prior research article named 'Traumatic Childhood and Adult Personality in Michaelides *'The Silent Patient'*. It revealed that Alicia's tragic past produced a catastrophic impact on her mental and social behavior and these combined traumas shaped her personality. Alicia also mentions the play 'Alcestis' and she feels

relatable to the heroine of the play who faces the similar wrongdoing. There was feeling of rage in the personality of Alicia and this rage was clearly observed when she became extremely revengeful towards Theo and wrote in her diary about it by saying that she wanted to kill him or be killed and she wanted to scratch his eyes out and to smash his skull into pieces. Theo related her present behavior to her traumatic childhood and came to know that after the death of Alicia's mother in a car accident, her father mentioned that Alicia should have died instead of his wife. Due to these remarks of her father, she started blaming herself for her mother's death. Thurschwell (2009) in her book '*Sigmund Freud*' also explored the same concept of guilt by mentioning that "This fear of the father's power leads to the baby's super-ego, the internal voice which ceases the child from doing things he is not supposed to do". Alicia's diary reveals that she is in severe depression when she thinks that someone is stalking her and she is being watched and someone is spying on her house. At this point, she shows the signs of depression and does not go outside for three days for safety precautions. Then she hears that stalker has entered into the house. Theo also meets with Alicia's cousin Paul who tells him that 'Alicia wasn't right in the head'. All these signs indicate her depression and anxiety regarding her feelings of being harmed by someone (Ashraf, 2022).

Another research on the novel '*The Silent Patient*' inspects the stream of consciousness. The term stream of consciousness describes the inner thoughts of characters' and feelings. Theo revealed Gabriel's extra marital affair with a girl named Kathy, so Alicia shot her husband in the face. After killing her husband, she faced mental illness. The novel illustrates Alicia's traumatic past, including her mother's car accident and making suicide attempt which caused her death. Her father also confessed that Alicia should have died instead of his wife. Her aunt Lydia also tortured Alicia. Theo's father also tormented and abused him, and Kathy cheated on him. The protagonist is hurt and it depicts the loneliness of protagonist. In The novel Silent Patient, Alicia killed Gabriel after discovering his unfaithfulness. Alicia's father also showed no love and concern for her, her mother killed herself, and her aunt tormented her. Her husband provided her with happiness but she eventually killed him and after that she became a lonely, silent and psychologically disturbed patient. Both Theo and Alicia are afraid of being abandoned by their partners in the novel. They are aware of the infidelity of their partners but want to be with them because they are lonely. In the novel, murder and unfaithfulness are linked with psychological

realism because the murderer has inner conflicts, family issues, and betrayal and these elements causes aggression. This research examined the psychological realism in the novel 'The Silent Patient' (2019) by Alex Michaelides (Al-Nuiamat, 2022).

In the novel *'The Silent Patient'*, defense mechanism and displacement is clearly observed in the Characters of Theo Faber and Alicia Berenson. Both of these characters possess displacement to express their inner feelings which caused destruction later. Displacement is not about expressing negative emotions or redirecting anger on people. Rather it is about redirecting emotions from primary source to less intimidating receiver. Even the feelings of anger and fury can be manifested through activities. Anger can be expressed in the form of any art or may express the dislikes through artistic habits. The characters Theo and Alicia did not yell at their caregivers and both did not have any siblings. Alicia was a painter in this novel, and she painted the people in her life that had influence upon her. One of her paintings portrayed the car accident and there was a woman and a child inside the car and it depicted the car accident in which Alicia's mother Eva died. Her painting represented that Eva was mentally ill and due to this illness, she tried to kill both of them. Alicia survived the accident but she was furious and she expressed this anger in the form of a painting. So Alicia used the painting as a displacement; a defense mechanism. In her painting of Alcestis, she portrayed herself as a mythological character Alcestis. She became muted after killing her husband Gabriel and retold the myth by being silent. Alicia's behavior was also violent when she stayed in the Grove. She stabbed a nurse named Elif when she tried to defame her husband Gabriel. This showed that Alicia's psyche did not have courage to accept the truth and used displacement to run off from the reality (Priyaa, 2022) .

Other researchers Amelia Pratiwi (2022) and Tri Pramesti (2022) explored the Post-Traumatic Stress Disease in *'Silent Patient'*. The traumatic events are the consequences of everyday experiences. After some tragedy or a disaster, there can be an aftermath. Alicia's car accident traumatized her. Childhood experiences develop the growth and development of a child and shape his emotional character. Alicia faced child abuse and her life was filled with heartbreaking incidents and she thinks that her father does not does not love her because he thought that why his wife should not have died in the accident. So Alicia felt unwanted by

anyone and she got verbal abuse, so her happiness vanished away and she felt alone. Betrayal of husband is another trauma that broke Alicia's trust and when she came to know that her husband had an affair with another woman, she thought that she was a bad woman. She felt abandoned and it brought trust issues and anxiety to her. Her husband's affair is another cause of PTSD in Alicia (Pramesti, 2022).

Many researchers have explored defense mechanism, stream of consciousness and PTSD but they have not sufficiently explored the Attachment theory in *'The Silent Patient'* by Alex Michaelides. The researcher's contribution is to scrutinize and investigate where the Attachment theory is found in the novel and how attachment shaped the personalities of the characters.

2. Research Methodology

The researchers have analyzed this research with the framework of Attachment Theory by John Bowlby after applying it on the text *'The Silent Patient'* by Alex Michaelides. Attachment theory is a psychological theory which was first proposed by John Bowlby (1969), a psychoanalyst who described the effects of separation between children and caregivers. He further explained that 'attachment behavioral system' which suggested that there is a system which guides infants in their patterns and habits while forming and maintaining the relationships. This theory after research reached on conclusion that children separated from their parents will behave in certain ways upon reunion. According to Bowlby and Ainsworth's views, attachments develop with the caregivers during the first eighteen months of infants' life. The Attachment theory viewed that attachment styles are formed on the basis of children's interactions with caregivers and these form emotion regulation. Emotional regulation has also been acknowledged in Education (Li & Akram; Ramzan et al., 2023). These emotion regulations are related to a child's attachment and this research is dealing with the Anxious Avoidant Attachment and Disorganized Attachment. Children with such attachment face problems in managing stressful circumstances. These children withdraw themselves and resist seeking help which restricts them from forming pleasurable relationships with others. These people exhibit much aggressive and antisocial behavior, e.g. bullying etc. and they tend to detach themselves from others to minimize emotional stress. On the other hand, children with disorganized attachment style face extreme level problems in managing separation distress; and show aggression, troublesome behaviors,

and social seclusion. They see others as a danger rather than support. Attachment styles play an important role in developing relationships. Children with secure attachments to their parents will form secure attachment with their partners as well. Attachment theory also deals with relationship attachment styles in adults and, adults with anxious avoidant attachment styles depend on partner for self worth and they have the fear of abandonment. People with such attachment style maintain a distance from others and they think that they do not need human connections in order to survive in society. These adults ‘shut down’ themselves emotionally when something extremely hurtful happens in their relationship, e.g. to avoid an argument with their partner and they feel a threat of being abandoned by their spouse or partner. These styles and types of attachment are used to understand someone’s behavior rather than personality, so a person behaves on the basis of attachment and he/she precedes intimate relationships, marriage and parenting according to it (Ackerman, 2018). Furthermore, Akram (2020), and Akram and Yang (2021) critically analyzes education governance in Pakistan, highlighting challenges of the weak implementation causes on educational policies in Pakistan. These insights contribute to the broader discussion on education policies and governance within the context of psychological issues and emotional regulation.

Moreover, Ramzan, et al. (2023) contribute to the discourse by exploring the potential of social media in enhancing academic motivation among ESL students, as presented in the Global Digital & Print Media Review. Their work aligns with the broader theme of understanding and supporting students, extending the discussion on education policies and governance.

Attachment behavior is accompanied by stronger feeling and the child feels secure with attachment figure but when he gets separated from the parents, he feels anxiety and sorrow and both of these feelings give rise to anger (Bowlby, 1969).

Bowlby proposed that the child’s caregivers provide the secure base to the child and on the basis of this relationships, child develops the capacity to make effective bonds in later parts of life. This concept has similarity to Erikson’s (1950) concept of basic trust in which he suggests that with the help of good parenting, the individual considers himself able to be helped if the hardships come and worthy of being helped by others. The disruptive style of attachment gives rise to the anger and the psychodynamic interpretation of such anger is developed by

Melanie Klein (1940); riskiest anger is when the bereaved person turns his or her anger towards others nearby or to himself or herself (Worden, 2018).

The cause of distorted attachment is inconsistent responsiveness to a child's emotional needs, and providing no emotional attachment. Anxious attachment style in relationships causes anxiety and unhappiness. Early separation from the caregiver and physical or psychological abuse may also be the risk factors for development of ambivalent attachment styles in children (The Attachment Project, 2020).

3. Textual Analysis

There is a close relationship between childhood trauma and attachment styles and role of childhood trauma due to distorted attachment. It was analyzed that physical or emotional abuse and emotional neglect were the roots of dismissing attachment styles. It was found that children who were the subjects of childhood trauma or emotional abuse would face the difficulty to sustain the friendships and would remain quite distant from their caregivers. Such children who are victims of childhood trauma will lose confidence towards social justice, not trusting their parents and considering themselves the inevitable victims. Due to emotional and physical abuse or neglect, Childhood trauma will greatly impact the functioning of their lives while being adult and it will be clearly observed in their relationships especially with life partners. So the physical or emotional abuse will produce the negative effects in the adulthood life (Erozkan, 2016).

The novel 'The Silent Patient' (2019) deals with the paradigms of psychological distress and severe trauma. The author clearly mentions in the following lines of the text 'Alicia's mental health problems had the roots back to her childhood' and due to the effects of past trauma, she showed no remorse after killing her husband' (Michaelides, 2019, p. 18). The narrator, Theo Faber mentions the quote of Donal Winnicott in the novel by saying that 'our personalities are not developed in isolation, rather in relationships with others and we are shaped by unremembered forces named parents'. 'So we do not know what abuse and indignities we faced before memory and the characters of individuals are formed without even our knowledge. The anxiety in my personality started in my relationship with my father and in his presence I never felt safe' (Michaelides, 2019, p. 22), so these lines demonstrate that Theo Faber's dismissed personality developed due to his disoriented attachment with his father. Theo narrated his

disturbed house environment by mentioning that due to his father's 'anger', 'the whole house shook as he shouted and Theo would go upstairs and hide himself under bed but his father would grab his hand, drag him, beat him with 'belt' and 'burning his flesh'. 'Then the whipping would be over' and Theo calls himself 'a rag doll' discarded by an angry infant. Theo thinks by saying that 'I had no idea what I had done to 'trigger his anger' of if I deserved it, so I asked my mother why my 'father was furious' with me but she replied with a despairing shrug that 'your father is completely mad. How should I know?' When Theo becomes a psychiatrist, he assesses the 'his father had a 'personality disorder' and the illness was untreated for which cause the hysteria and physical violence in adolescence and childhood causing threats and breaking glasses. And Theo portrays that 'when his father was away from home, these were the moments of happiness for him and his mother' (Michaelides, 2019, p. 22). All these incidents explain that Theo Faber was a victim of childhood violence and emotional and physical abuse during his childhood years. By looking from the lens of Attachment theory, these factors fluctuated in making him a psychologically sick person later in his life.

Attachment relationships are developed during the early months but with passing time, they become more complex when a person reaches to the level of adult maturity. Attachment behavioral system designs the individuals from cradle to the grave and Bowlby proposes that children make future relationships on the basis of their mental models and the following Attachment theory by Bowlby is responsible for later interpersonal functioning (Erozkan, 2016).

Theo Faber's relationship with his father influenced him to such extent that 'when one winter, his father was away from home; he and his mother made a snowman to represent his 'absent father' and they 'pelted him violently with snowballs and giggle like a naughty children'. This shows the possession of anger of a child towards his father and the impact of violence caused upon the child. Theo started considering his that 'there was a world outside this house and he had to get far away to be safe and he called his home 'a semi-detached prison'. He later realized that it was too late to leave that house because 'he had internalized his father, introjected him and buried him deep in his unconscious and one winter, he got controlled by voices and fear. He was unable to socialize or make any friends' (Michaelides, 2019, p. 23). Children with such attachment face problems in managing stressful circumstances. According to Attachment theory,

the children with disorganized attachment withdraw themselves and resist seeking help which restricts them from forming pleasurable relationships with others. These people exhibit much aggressive and antisocial behavior, e.g. bullying etc. and they tend to detach themselves from others to minimize emotional stress (Ackerman, 2018). The same thing happened with Theo Faber and he was so stressed that ‘he took an overdose of paracetamol, shut his eyes and waited for death but death didn’t come’. Theo narrates the he went to a therapist Ruth and ‘he talked about his childhood, his home and his parents. He also talked about his painful thoughts and suicidal impulses but he felt disconnected from his emotions (Michaelides, 2019, p. 24). This shows that due to Theo’s traumatic and abusive childhood, he faced social anxiety and even suicidal thoughts. He was unable to get out of that emotional damage caused by his violent father. Theo related his situation with Alicia Berenson’s condition and thinks that “‘he might also have ended up like her but due to ‘therapeutic intervention’, he was able to pull back from psychic darkness” (Michaelides, 2019, p. 26).

Alicia’s psychotherapist Theo Faber wanted to explore her psyche by examining ‘what her relationship would have been with her father’ (Michaelides, 2019, p. 40). As mentioned above by the researcher that people with disorganized attachment lose confidence in them and possess negative thoughts with them. With reference to the text, Theo was always overwhelmed “‘negative choice in his head and it was his father’s voice telling him that he was useless, he was not up to the job and a fraud” (Michaelides, 2019, p. 44). So the lack of secure attachment does not leave a person alone for the rest of his life.

For psychological assessment, Theo needed to understand Alicia’s ‘relationship with her husband, Gabriel’. He also mentioned to understand ‘her childhood’ and he thought that “‘only to see the events from night of Gabriel’s death do not make sense; he needed to see the events from her ‘distant past’ ” (Michaelides, 2019, p. 49).

‘So whatever happened in those few minutes when she killed her husband were the sown years earlier. So murderous rage, homicidal rage are not born in presents, rather they originate in the land before memory, in childhood where children face abuse and mistreatment which results after years’. So Theo needed to observe how her ‘childhood shaped her’ and ‘her history’. There was another factor in forming Alicia’s personality which was that “‘Alicia’s aunt, Lydia Rose

brought her up because her mother died in a car accident. Alicia was also in the car crash but she survived it and that trauma must have affected the little girl” (Michaelides, 2019, p. 50).

Individuals with a preoccupied attachment type consider themselves as unlovable and think that people would provide them support. Preoccupied individuals would become clingy in order to get support from other people. While the individuals with fearful type of attachment desire for love and intimacy and they are afraid to get rejected by their partners (Erozkan, 2016) Attachment theory also deals with relationship attachment styles in adults and, adults with anxious avoidant attachment styles depend on partner for self worth and they have the fear of abandonment (Ackerman, 2018).

Theo Faber portrays that “he never had a special connection because he too damaged and incapable of intimacy. Now he heard Kathy’s giggle which brought excitement in him and he thought that Kathy inspired him to be an unafraid man” (Michaelides, 2019, p. 62). Theo asked Kathy for marriage and he wanted to introduce her to his parents but they didn’t seem to like her and he felt ‘desperately sad’. Theo thought that ‘part of him never left that house and he had remained there as a forever trapped child’’. This shows that even as an adult, he had strong impact of parents over his life. When Theo met Kathy, he thought that “God had not abandoned him during childhood, rather he had kept Kathy hidden under his sleeve like a deft magician” (Michaelides, 2019, p. 63). These elements demonstrate that Theo who felt abandoned by his parents felt safe in the presence of his life partner.

By analyzing the attachment type in the character of Alicia Berenson, researcher ponders upon her childhood traumas and events happened in her life. Alicia mentions in her diary that ‘I thought of my mother that was she crazy? Why she put me in a passenger seat and hit the red brick wall? I think it was a suicide or an attempted murder’’. She thought that her mother was trying to kill her but she died herself. Tears came in her eyes and she writes that ‘there is so much pain everywhere’ (Michaelides, 2019, p. 69). All these points depict the mental state of Alicia and the impact of trauma in her life which was her mother’s death in her early childhood. She faced this accident and it played a major role in forming her personality. Alicia said that “Gabriel’s actions make her feel totally loved” (Michaelides, 2019, p. 70). This shows that she was extremely attached to him and she was happy with him. She said that ‘before she met

Gabriel, she had lost her way and lost herself”. “Gabriel is my world and I will love him no matter what he does or whatever happens” (Michaelides, 2019, p. 71). After her traumatic past, she managed to come back to life through her life partner and had intimate love feelings for him. Theory of attachment and its impact are clearly seen in various parts of the novel. There is a line;

‘We need our mother to soothe us and she makes us sense our experience. She teaches us how to manage out physical and emotional state. How our mother contains us depend upon how we contain ourselves, our ability. And if the mother had no containment, how could she teach us what she did not experience’” (Michaelides, 2019, p. 95).

Fear of abandonment and lack of self confidence are the significant points in fearful type of attachment. Theo caught his wife Kathy cheating on him and he knew it but he afraid to lose himself if he lost Kathy. He quotes that “I wanted her to look after me and I needed sympathy and reassurance but I had lost her-Kathy was gone”. Theo’s lack of confidence is showed in the following line, “I was never good enough for her. I was useless, ugly and I did not deserve her. I did not deserve anything” (Michaelides, 2019, pp. 105,106). This shows that Theo was afraid of being left alone and he constantly got horrible thoughts about himself. Theo had this feeling of ‘the pain of not being loved’ and this story was related to his past, present and future. This was not just about Kathy, but his father, childhood and feelings of abandonment. His therapist Ruth asks him ‘I think you should leave (Kathy)’. She asks him ‘to be honest with yourself. Love that does not contain honesty does not deserve to be called love’” (Michaelides, 2019, pp. 113,114).

Theo narrates that ‘leaving Kathy would be like tearing of a lamb and he was not prepared to mutilate himself’ he used to phrase that ‘he would forgive Kathy and they would work through this’ (Michaelides, 2019, p. 118). This is a demonstration of weak character of Theo who was afraid of being abandoned by his wife. Attachment theory suggests that adults with anxious attachment ‘shut down’ themselves emotionally when something extremely hurtful happens in their relationship, e.g. to avoid an argument with their partner and they feel a threat of being abandoned by their spouse or partner (Ackerman, 2018). The same thing is being observed in the character of Theo Faber because he is unable to leave his wife even though she cheated on him. He does not even argue with her, rather he hides the truth of her infidelity.

Another trauma which caused Alicia Berenson's violent killing of her husband was that 'after her father's death, she took an overdose and he a kind of breakdown' (Michaelides, 2019, p. 129). Alicia misses her mother on several occasions in the story and she discusses that she is scared to have kids because she cannot be trusted with them. She even speaks a line 'not with my mother's blood running through my veins', which means that she thinks that may be like her mother; the way she abandoned Alicia (Michaelides, 2019, p. 132). Alicia's sorrowful past is described in the story and the consequences of her trauma as well. She says 'I may not have been a happy child' but she wanted the moment of happiness lying under willow tree with Gabriel to last forever and she says 'I feel joyous and full of hope'. These phrases highlight that Alicia was happy with Gabriel as his wife. By looking at the life of Alicia, narrator explains that;

“Only the people who are abused become abuser in their life. No one is born evil. According to Winnicott, a baby cannot hate the mother unless the other hates the baby. Babies are born with black slates, but something bad happens in their circumstances of their living and the house in which they are brought up. An abused child cannot take revenge in reality, rather the child possess vengeful fantasies in imagination” (Michaelides, 2019, pp. 142,143).

These lines are from the novel '*The Silent Patient*' (2019) which highlights that if there is some problem in the childhood attachment and development, mental problem rise from there which appear in later parts of life.

Paul enlightens Theo about the death of Alicia's father by telling him that 'Alicia's father hanger himself' and after his death 'Alicia was in a bad state' (Michaelides, 2019, p. 148). This event also refers to the trauma happened in her life. Later there is mentioning of Theo's encounter with Lydia Rose who took care of Alicia after her mother's death. She tells Theo about Alicia that 'she is a little bitch and even as a child' (Michaelides, 2019, p. 152). Theo assessed that Lydia was an abusive and 'monstrous woman' and he imagined 'why Alicia would have gotten out of that house and it was obvious that Alicia was running away from Lydia. She reminded Theo of his own father' (Michaelides, 2019, pp. 152,153). Then there was a painting depicting 'the car accident that killed Alicia's mother and a bloodied and obviously dead woman was slumped at the wheel' (Michaelides, 2019, p. 165). She had this memory of her mother's

death, so she painted it. Jean Felix told Theo that ‘Alicia hated and despised her father. She did not love him. She hated him ever since her mother died’ (Michaelides, 2019, p. 167).

Alicia mentions her hatred for Lydia by saying in her diary, ‘I escaped from Lydia, from that house but Paul is still trapped there. He is still eight years old, I should help him’. She further said then ‘facing Lydia was far scarier than facing loan sharks’ (Michaelides, 2019, p. 174).

The disruptive style of attachment gives rise to the anger and the psychodynamic interpretation of such anger is developed by Melanie Klein (1940); riskiest anger is when the bereaved person turns his or her anger towards others nearby or to himself or herself (Worden, 2018). Out of rage, Alicia killed her husband, so rage is clearly observed in the character of Alicia when she says ‘I wanted to hurt him and wanted to be brutal’ (Michaelides, 2019, p. 176). She also mentions about Gabriel ‘I wanted to hit him or bite him or scream at him because I am not crazy’ (Michaelides, 2019, p. 232). Alicia also suffered the same fear of Abandonment from his partner. She says ‘I cannot bear the thought of losing him and I would do anything to keep him’ (Michaelides, 2019, p. 234). Bowlby also suggests that people with distorted attachment tend to gain the attention of their partner because they lack that attention in childhood. Christian told Theo Faber that ‘Alicia showed suicidal behavior after her father’s death for trying to get Gabriel’s attention’ (Michaelides, 2019, p. 250).

Christian also explains that ‘Alicia never recovered from the trauma of her father’s suicidal death’ (Michaelides, 2019, p. 250). The most contributing things which developed the character of Alicia being unstable, violent and traumatic are her mother accident and her father’s behavior which broke her apart after her mother’s death. Paul tells Theo about the emotional abuse which Alicia faced the day her mother was killed. Paul brings Theo to the place and calls it ‘the scene of crime’ by saying that this is when her father killed Alicia’ (Michaelides, 2019, p. 272). He referred it as an emotional death which killed Alicia. He further calls Alicia’s father ‘a mean bastard because he only cared about his wife auntie Eva’ and he kept saying ‘why didn’t Alicia die instead of her? Why did it have to be Eva?’ Paul told Theo that Alicia whispered in his ear after hearing father’s words ‘Dad just killed me and I will never forget it’ (Michaelides,

2019, p. 273). All these points are highlighting that Attachment styles play crucial role in the development an individual's personality as a whole.

4. Conclusion

By applying John Bowlby's Attachment theory, attachment of child with parent, childhood experiences and the impacts of disoriented attachment upon the lives of children are examined in '*The Silent Patient*' by Alex Michaelides. The researcher has discovered the strong childhood traumatic experiences through the lack of secure attachment with caregivers or parents. The novel depicts the psychologically disturbed mind and how the characters Alicia Berenson and Theo Faber ended being in a purely pathetic situation. The researcher has applied the framework of Attachment theory and observed the impacts of trauma and abuse upon the lives of the characters. The researcher's focus is to explore the earlier life attachment of the characters and how this attachment shaped the personality of individuals in the novel. The researcher has analyzed that disoriented attachment caused mental trauma in the novel and how the past never left the characters even as adults'. The novel '*The Silent Patient*' encourages readers to critically explore the childhood experiences; psychological factors contributing in forming the individuals' personalities and the impacts of traumatic events. It promotes a deeper understanding of how the questions in the present are linked to the past and if the child's attachment is not secure, it may turn the life into a devastating state. It also provides clear understanding of consequences of less secure attachment with parents and how these factors contribute in making the personality of Theo Faber who was the victim of emotional child abuse of his father and Alicia Berenson whose mother died in a car crash in which Alicia was also present and her father wished Alicia dead instead of her mother. While focusing the childhood experiences and traumas, researcher came to conclusion that early life traumas and lack of secure attachment with parents make the disoriented adult personality and even being young, such individuals fail to develop the successful relationships with their partners. Theo Faber and Alicia, the victims of emotional abuse faced the fear of being abandoned by their partners and due to these mental problems; they behaved in a complete abrupt and failed way. Discussions about the disoriented attachment, fear of partner's abandonment, effects of childhood traumas and children's mental of physical abuse are analyzed through every aspect in this research.

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