Unraveling the Layers of Intimacy: A Kaleidoscopic study of Exit West, through the Lens of Social Penetration Theory

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Abstract— This study examines Mohsin Hamid's novel Exit West (2017), from the perspective of social penetration theory. The prime focus is Saeed and Nadia's relationship, they grow closer in the beginning of their relationship by sharing personal thoughts, experiences, comfort, and security, but once they start migrating through the magical doors, their relationship disrupts and weakens, which underline their emotional transition with physical movements, as they confront external upheavals and internal vulnerabilities, ultimately lead to the social depenetration. Using the lens of Social Penetration Theory given by Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor in 1973, which is based on the notion that every relationship develops through the gradual process of reciprocal self-disclosure and moves into a deeper level of intimacy by covering the different stages to reach intimacy. Moreover, the study examines how the novel offers a unique application of the given theory by shedding light on the challenging environment for maintaining intimacy in a fragmented world. The study follows a qualitative method with a descriptive and interpretive approach with thematic encoding. The findings of this study will help future researchers to expand the scope of this theory in a broader context.

Keywords— Intimacy, Relational Development, Social Penetration and Depenetration, Migration.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Human relationships are dynamic and can be influenced by personal, social, and environmental factors. Social penetration theory, a literary framework proposed and developed by Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor in 1973, provides a background and approach to understanding the development of intimacy in relationships. Social penetration theory claims that interpersonal relationships and closeness are achieved through a gradual process of self-disclosure, the process Social penetration is specifically accomplished through self-disclosure, the purposeful process of revealing information about oneself (Derlega, et.al., 1993). where individuals share their personal information about themselves, so this process exactly resembles peeling the layers of an onion, starting with sharing general information as the outermost layer and then going deep down progressively for more intimate layers. (Altman & Taylor, 1987). During the process, every individual shares their personal information according to the need of the time, and gradually they build trust, as trust and mutual willingness to share are the fundamental elements of this progression. However, Altman, Vinsel, and Brown (1981) argue that external circumstances, such as events, cultural norms, and environmental factors, can accelerate, hinder, or even disrupt the penetration process of building relationships. Specifically, the theory describes how relationships advance through stages of penetration and de-penetration. Social penetration is not a guide for how relationships should progress, but, rather, is a description of how they tend to progress (Carpenter & Greene, 2016) The theory also identifies stages for the development of relationships, which include orientation, the exploratory effective stage, the effective stage, and finally the stable stage. Yet the

relationships are not always uninterrupted and linear towards succession but can be disrupted when faced with social, psychological, or environmental barriers. Miller Henningsen (2015), suggests that this theory is better for understanding romantic relationships. Thus, social penetration theory offers a framework to examine how relationships develop, dissolve, or adapt under varying conditions.

The novel Exit West by Mohsin Hamid provides the best gap to explore the principle of social penetration theory, as the mentioned novel is set against the political instability in the country, the backdrop of war in the country, and people facing forced migration the text provides the detail of the evolving relationship between Saeed and Nadia, whose relationship is shaped by the personal choices as well as the external factors which have an impact on their relationship. The story begins when Saeed and Nadia meet for the first time in a war-torn city, they both are young and start a romantic relationship amid this crisis marked by affection and challenges. However, their world is engulfed in war, and the circumstances of war and forced migration impact the pathway of their intimate relationship.

The central themes in Exit West are the violence, forced displacement, dislocation, and external pressure on personal relationships, through the journey of Saeed and Nadia across continents which are through the magical doors that transport people from one place to another, Saeed and Nadia experience shifts in their relationship as they move through the magical doors, new landscapes of culture and emotional struggles, through each door they face a transition of not only physical migration but as well as emotional and psychological transition which requires them to recalibrate their relationship in the new challenges, these transitions serve as a metaphor for the stages of intimate relationship in the light of social penetration theory. Their relationship is quite challenging at every stage of life, which depicts the resilience and fragility of human nature. The narrative shows two opposing forces as they seek connection and intimacy even though they want to escape the impact of obstacles which creates distance between them.

The novel Exit West when situated within the framework of social penetration theory, aims to provide a clear understanding of the development and evolution of Saeed and Nadia's relationship and how the layers of intimacy are built and dismantled under the external pressure of war, migration, and dislocation. The narrative portrays a universal perspective on how conflict and social turbulence affect romantic bonds like between Saeed and Nadia. The narrative also challenges the traditional view of love and intimacy, demonstrating how the relationships can be simultaneously a source of crisis and strength.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem.

The experiences of human connections are deeply affected by internal emotions and external circumstances such as war, forceful evictions, displacement, and other cultural changes. In this case, Social Penetration Theory offers a conceptual framework through which intimacy and emotional closeness are developed, regulated, and eroded amid different circumstances. Thus, the novel Exit West by Mohsin Hamid recreates the glamorous and ordinary aspects of characters Saeed and Nadia's love story during war and migration, making them the optimal subjects to analyze different layers of intimacy during war circumstances.

While there is extensive literature available on the psychological and emotional impact of war and migration, limited scholarly attention has been given to how these external factors affect relationship dynamics of self-disclosure and intimacy. Also, little is known about how this theory can be applied to relationships in the context of unstable and changing environments, such as those that refugees might experience. An exploration of Saeed and Nadia's relationship, and how they maintain connection and deal with emotional barriers in the wake of forced migration and trauma.

Thus, this research seeks to fill the above-mentioned gap by employing Social Penetration Theory to follow the relational journey of Saeed and Nadia in the war-torn and post-migration context and how their modes of self-disclosure and intimacy culminate into their detachment. Thus, the present work does not only deepen the knowledge of interpersonal relationships in crisis but also becomes a contribution to the discussions about the possibility of people's connections worldwide in the context of global instability.

1.3 Research objectives

1) To analyze the stages of relational development in the light of social penetration theory in Saeed and Nadia's relationship in the novel Exit West.

2) To understand the interpersonal relationships during the crisis and the factors which causes disruption, by applying social penetration theory.

1.4 Research Questions

1) How does the social penetration theory explain the relationship development and evolution of it in the novel Exit West?

2) How do the experiences of migration and displacement influence the intimacy of Saeed and Nadia's relationship and what factors causes disruption?

1.5 Rationale of the Study.

This research study is motivated by the need to understand the human relationships and how they evolve in the circumstances of war and dislocation as depicted in the novel Exit West. By applying social penetration theory to Saeed and Nadia's relationship, the study provides a profound understanding of the intimate relationship and the external challenges of war and migration. The research not only bridges a gap between the existing literature but also contributes to a broader discussion on intimacy, resilience, and the impact of crisis on personal relationships, which has real relevance for individuals affected by war and migration. Academically, the study contributes to expanding the scope of social penetration theory, showing its applicability in the new challenging context of war and migration.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Social penetration theory introduced by Altman and Taylor (1973) offers a fundamental framework for understanding the development of relationships, they categorize the development of relationships into four stages, the orientation stage where the exchange of socially acceptable and surface level information occurs, the exploratory affective stage which involves the sharing of opinions and beliefs and self-disclosure occurs, the affective stage marked by personal and emotional information sharing occurs and the stable stage where individuals show complete openness and have trust, whereas they also note that external factors such as cultural norms, crises and societal pressures often alters and interrupt the process of development making it non-linear and dynamic. The theory states that as people uncover more about themselves, relationships advance from the surface down to the depths. Social penetration theory has been widely used in interpersonal communication, because of its relevance in explaining trust, vulnerability, and emotional bonding (Derlega et al., 1993).

Migration and displacement have been extensively studied as to its effect on how personal relationships evolve within the discipline of sociology, psychology, and literature. In this way, migration normally breaks social networks forcing individuals to walk into new cultural, economic and emotional landscapes (Castles et al., 2014). Displacement strains relationships as stress of adaptation, loss of familiar environment and the rebuilding of identity. (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). However, some studies also noted that shared experiences of adversity can build up bonds, strengthen resilience and build emotional connections (Pittaway et al., 2010). Mohsin Hamid tackles

these dualities in Exit West from the point of view of Saeed and Nadia whose relationship is stressed by the burdens of migration but also strengthened by their common experience of migration. This is in line with the existing literature which has looked at how crisis both distorts and strengthens the intimacy.

While Cozby (1973) consider depth or intimacy as a dimension of self-disclosure. Pearce and Sharp (1973) argued that conscious, deliberate intent to disclose or willingness to disclose as well as honesty are basic dimensions of self-disclosure. Interpersonal attraction and relationship development become understandable when the fundamental elements are considered of self-disclosure which include intimacy and valence dimensions. These two fundamental dimensions gained significance when Gilbert and Horenstein (1975) expanded upon the foundation created in Blau's 1964 study. The dimension of intimacy defines a person's information disclosure level from superficial to deep personal revelations while valence indicates whether disclosed content is optimistic or pessimistic. People tend to show their best traits in beginning relationship development because they want to display attraction to one another. Research by Blau (1964), reveals that revealing unfavorable aspects during relationship impedes attraction development because such information threatens initial relationship expressions of connection and cohesion.

Papadopoulos (2002) argued that displacement often leads to relational and emotional upheavals in the relationship because every individual struggles to adopt to unfamiliar environments and to cope with trauma of loss and separation which can cause further increase in the stress and misunderstanding in the relational development. Additionally, the emotional toll because of displacement can cause further disruption in development of emotional intimacy. While Moghissi (2006), asserts that migration require individuals to discuss and make it clarify not only their identities but the dynamics of their relationships. This process of negotiation is considered important because migrants are often forced to reconcile with past memories. Open talk between participants becomes crucial and play a great role in maintaining the expectations in the changing cultural landscapes.

Through Exit West the crucial themes of citizenship loss and migration enable deep examination of stateless and displaced populations. Edward Said (1984) introduced the notion that refugees emerged as a creation of modern twentieth century state but Giorgio Agamben (1995) made an extended case showing how people lose all rights after losing ties of the state. According to Agamben the condition imposed by political refugees activates an inherent contradiction between their existence and state

nationality. This concept finds clear echoes in the novel through Saeed's and Nadia's fate. The absence of state citizenship denies them their supposed rights and protection that come beneath the given framework.

The literary analysis in combination with psychological theory offers a suitable framework for studying relational dynamics. Holland (1989) argued that narratives reflect human behavior, allowing readers to engage with characters as psychological subjects. Literary works highlights how universal patterns of human nature and interaction often portrayed in narrative according to Forster (1997) so Social Penetration Theory offers helpful tools to analyze and study human relationships. Throughout Exit West Saeed and Nadia show these relational patterns that social penetration theory identifies. The metaphorical doors of migration symbolize different levels of intimacy because they mirror the symbolism depicts migration boundaries that show both physical development and emotional growth. Their connection spans from attraction to deep emotional intimacy and end up with separation reflecting Social Penetration and depenetration, yet this evolution occurs under the consequences of war and forced migration.

The concept of Relational barriers is given by Duck (1982), which refers that societal norms, personal biases, and miscommunication lead to difficulties in building intimacy. this concept is similar with Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) theory of relational dialectics wherein the tension between individuality and connection is argued. These are ideas which provide bases for the account of Saeed and Nadia's relationship in Exit West. These relational dynamics act as mirror of their journey through different stages of self-discloser, where involved both internal emotions and external sociopolitical forces. It's important to say that he obstacles they face, from cultural expectations to the psychological impact of displacement reflect their struggles of getting intimacy in times of crisis. Their relationship, like relational dialectics indicates, is defined is marked by confusion of closeness versus independence, and leading them to grow apart.

Despite the various number of research works are present on migration, displacement, and intimacy but there is a notable gap in the application of Social Penetration Theory used in treating literary works with these themes. While most studies on the subject meticulously focus on either the psychological outcomes of migration or the depiction of the relationships in literature, they hardly bridge the two areas from Theoretical perspective like Social Penetration Theory. Moreover, much has been written about the novel's themes of migration and identity, but limited attention has been given to the novel using the lens of relationship development theories. The subsequent aim for

this study is to fill the gap by applying Social Penetration Theory to look at important moments of Saeed and Nadia's relationship together including the evolution of intimacy and displacement.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Nature the of Research

This study follows a qualitative research approach while relying on descriptive and interpretive analysis methods. Through qualitative research methods one can gain comprehensive insights into complex real-world phenomena, along with their hidden meanings and unmeasurable impacts (Soratto et al., 2019). The open ended nature of the Research questions posed in this research fit within the qualitative research paradigm because it is effective in explaining human behavior pattern and its processes (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

The selected analysis method produces optimal results when applied to follow Saeed and Nadia's relationship through Exit West. The exploration of human behaviors such as beliefs, behaviors emotions and relationships can be best studied through qualitative research approaches as described by Tscholl et al. (2019).

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

This study employs a critical reading of the novel's text to showcase the essential dialogues, key interactions between Saeed and Nadia, and the important themes, such as self-disclosure, emotional depth, migration, and the impact of external factors. The researcher has used, the Social Penetration Theory proposed by Altman and Taylor (1973) to understand the layers of intimacy and the progression of Saeed and Nadia's relationship. The framework examines the depth of their relationship and its progression as well as external factors such as displacement, and cultural change and its impacts on character disclosure.

The study has used both primary and secondary sources for data collection, the primary data has been collected from the novel, Exit West, in the form of direct quotes. The secondary sources include scholarly research articles, journals, scholarly views on relationships, and other relevant literature to incorporate contextual elements. These secondary sources are important and serve as validation for the study.

The researcher conducted a thematic analysis of the arranged data which included intimacy stages with recurring transition metaphors using doors as examples.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

This researcher has used the Social Penetration Theory as a theoretical framework for analysis of the novel, Exit

West. The theory has been presented by Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor (1973), which describes relationship evolution through progressive self-revelation. According to Social penetration theory, the development of a relationship resembles the peeling of onion layers, where participants reveal information and develop their intimacy in their relationship through the four key stages. The theory identifies four key stages of relational development, the Orientation Stage, Exploratory Affective Stage, Affective Stage, and Stable Stage. Social Penetration Theory provides the theoretical foundation through which the development of Saeed and Nadia's relationship in Exit West can be understood. This research extends the mentioned theory to the unstable context of war and migration where external elements such as migration, nostalgia, trauma, and cultural differences are faced, creating a sophisticated framework to examine intimate relationships in a setting of disruption. Using theoretical concepts of Social

Penetration theory, this study provides its research value with a clear understanding by providing substantial insights into enduring human relationships.

IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Overview.

The study follows the story of Saeed and Nadia's relationship, from the lens of Social Penetration Theory and kaleidoscopic approach which highlights the layers of intimacy and the dynamic nature of their relationship, their relationship evolves from superficial to deep, through the gradual process of relational development and by covering the stages for achieving intimacy, the following are the stages as according to the framework of social penetration theory.

4.2 Orientation Stage

Saeed and Nadia's relationship is marked by guardedness and superficial interaction in the beginning which confirms the orientation stage of their relationship according to the Social penetration theory, the orientation stage is the initial interaction between strangers which involves minimal personal sharing (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008, p. 367) Saeed and Nadia's initial steps were cautious as according to the novel, "A young man met a young woman in a classroom and didn't speak" (Hamid, 2017, pg.1), this silence depicts the cautious and protective layers which both the characters maintain and avoids the emotional vulnerability in their first encounter. Nadia's choice of wearing a black robe further exemplifies her guarded nature when Saeed asks her about her conservative and concealing black robe, and she admits that she wears it to

shield herself not because of any religious devotion.

Similarly, Saeed feels hesitant when he finally initiates the conversation with Nadia by saying " would you like to have a coffee" (Hamid, 2017, pg.1), this deliberate tentative approach of Saeed shows his respectful and cautious approach toward Nadia, as he feels hesitant yet to express deeper emotions. This phase reflects the social and cultural constraints shaping their initial interactions and their guardedness and hesitant nature highlight the gradual process required to build intimacy between them.

4.3 Exploratory Affective Stage.

This a stage where discussion of topics largely remains at the periphery, occasional, and intermediate levels. A transition occurs from superficial interaction to an effective exchange of conversation between Saeed and Nadia as they start sharing personal thoughts, information, and feelings and they feel more comfortable, which confirms their exploratory affective stage. It is also important to note that personal information only accounts for about 21% of talk between relational partners (VanLear, 1987). They begin to explore their mutual attraction and individual values as they spend more time together and frequently meet and find it easy to talk to one another, as the text confirms, "Despite initial instances of awkwardness, or rather of disguised shyness, they find it mostly easy to talk to one another" (Hamid, 2017, pg.18). although the self-disclosure remains limited and cautious the backdrop of war in their country accelerates the closeness between them at this stage as their environment forces them to rely on one another for emotional support. They start meeting in Nadia's home frequently marking their transition from hesitancy to regular contact representing the gradual movement from superficial to exploratory affective stage, where they navigate the boundaries of their relationship with care.

4.4 Affective Exchange, Deepening Intimacy.

Saeed and Nadia's relationship marks a significant stage where they begin to share emotions and form a stronger bond and constant contact without physical presence as they start thinking about one another " He became present without presence, and she did much the same to him" (Hamid, 2017, pg. 27). Their relationship reaches a stage where they would pass a few waking hours without contact between them. Soon a rhythm was established they fell into a pattern and during the early days of their relationship, they feel an intense longing for one another "Soon a rhythm was established...they had begun, each of them, to be penetrated, but they had not yet kissed" (Hamid, 2017, pg. 27) these quotes highlights the emotional yearning for one another depicting how their bond evolves despite living in the war-torn environment.

The shifting of Nadia into Saeed's home on the day when Saeed's mother was shot and died, she came to their apartment and never went back to her, she remained in Saeed's home to offer her comfort and help Saeed, this decision to live with Saeed and then the decision to leave the country together solidify this stage because the act of migration requires immense trust and mutual reliance as what they face together. Another key moment in the narrative reflects Saeed's father, placing his trust in Nadia to protect and support his son, as he tells her. " I am entrusting you with my son's life, and you whom he called daughter, must like a daughter and not fail him...and he hoped she would one day marry his son". (Hamid, 2017, pg 58). The key interaction between Nadia and Saeed's father depicts the trust that he places in Nadia, indicating and confirming the stronger bond between Saeed and Nadia.

4.5 Stable Exchange.

In the stable exchange stage, the relationships achieve a level of mutual trust, understanding, and openness, at the stable exchange stage, the communication is open at all levels, (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008, p. 367). But in the case of Saeed and Nadia, this stage doesn't lead to permanence instead, their relationship reaches a plateau where they have mutual respect they share kisses, they migrate from place to place, they experience ups and downs but their relationship couldn't last long because of various psychological and external factors act as barriers emerged which caused friction in their relationship.

Nadia's psychological instinct, her vagueness in feelings towards Saeed was uncertain, as according to the text, " Saeed was certain he was in love. Nadia was not certain what exactly she was feeling". (Hamid, 2017) This passage highlights the emotional confusion of Nadia which becomes a psychological barrier and plays a great role in the eventual divergence between them. This emotional unawares also reflects her response to dislocation, the nostalgia and trauma of uprooting from her familiar surroundings affect her ability to maintain clarity about her feelings and emotions. This highlights the non-linear nature of relationships according to the Social penetration theory which emphasizes how these barriers disrupt the stable relational stage.

Saeed and Nadia experienced migration and displacement which profoundly influenced their relationship both the intimacy and emotional distances, and these experiences created external pressure and eventually led to their divergence as they tried to adapt to the individual transformations in the changing environment.

4.6 Friction and Emotional Distance.

The relationship concept of Altman and Taylor (1973) which is about reward and cost, aligns with Saeed and Nadia's relationship in Exit West. In the beginning, their relationship is rewarding and offers comfort and security during the war, but their migration journey leads to rising emotional expenses and eventually results in social depenetration (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). The transformation of relationships occurs through human differences as personal rewards decline in value. Rawlins (2008), identifies that not all bonds are transactional, as Saeed and Nadia retain intrinsic values which remain robust despite their growing separation since displacement began.

Migration creates instability in their lives by forcing them to adapt to new places, People, and surroundings and also to cope with the uncertainty of their future, this instability causes emotional friction in their relationship for instance, when Nadia talks to him in a different harsh tone and Saeed was shocked by her tone. " He wondered if this new way of speaking to one another, this unkindness that was now creeping into their words from time to time, was a sign of where they were headed" (Hamid, 2017, pg. 78) This moment indicates the stress caused by displacement which erodes the tenderness and replaces it with harshness and miscommunication, both were trying to reconcile the issues and maintain their bond but they both find it difficult to talk openly about the issues, for instance, " Nadia wanted to say more than that, but just then her throat felt raw, almost painful, and what else she would have liked to say was unable to find a way through to her tongue and her lips" (Hamid, 2017, pg. 105)

Similarly, in the case of Saeed, he feels the need for conversation to resolve the issue but remains silent, illustrating how both characters are psychologically paralyzed by their emotional exhaustion.

Saeed shows nostalgic behavior is evident in the novel, because of the deep conflict that exists between inherited identity and chosen community described by Edward Said. Said (1983, 1991) explains that filiative attachments are rooted in birth, nationality, and inherited identity whereas affiliative bonds develop through voluntary effort and shared experiences shaped by historical and social circumstances. Through his strong affinity for his homeland and cultural roots, Saeed shows his filiative orientation but his migration experience requires him to establish affiliative bonds that transform his sense of identity. Saeed shows his strongest desire to return home in the moment when he loses his father and this nostalgic mindset blocks his total involvement in present-day life, this shows the differences between filiative and affiliative

bonds during their relationship development. The strong bond Saeed shares with his ancestral roots prevents his successful transition into new kinds of community affiliations which eventually damages his relationship with Nadia.

In Saeed's experiences of longing for the past Exit West depicts the conflict between what identity he received from birth against his need to change because of his displaced status. The migration process separates him from filiative connections as he fights to build new affiliative bonds which he proves unable to accept and therefore intensifies his feelings of detachment.

4.7 Diverging Paths.

As they migrate from place to place, this intensifies the divergence between Saeed and Nadia and their values. The intimacy and romance they shared began to fade and were replaced by a growing discomfort and emotional distance, the source of comfort and strength has become strained under the weight of external pressures and evolving identities, and they both sense that their closeness has become a source of tension between them with their differing desires pulling them in opposite directions, it is also important to consider that relationships are not bad if they do not progress through all stages (Mongeau and Miller, 2015). their emotional distances are symbolized in the following passage, "Mention of their love had made Saeed and Nadia a bit uncomfortable, for they had not very romantic of late, each still perceiving the grating of their presence on the other" (Hamid, 2017, pg. 82) this highlights the discomfort and how their intimate relationship had been shifted from romantic to a sense of obligation, a critical stage in their relationship where the migration and other experiences accentuated the gaps between them. Moreover, the growing discomfort between them, made Nadia think about the promise she had made to Saeed's father, as he told her to stay by Saeed's side until he was safe, she thinks and worries that would make to be proven untrue to the promise she has made, this highlights the conflict between them, which is growing and eroding their feelings which they had for one another.

4.8 The Decision to Part.

The pressure of migration, displacement, and psychological distances led them that they both realize that parting ways at this stage of their relationship is now inevitable as according to the text,

"A spoilage had begun to manifest itself in their relationship, and each recognized it would be better to part now, ere worse came"(Hamid, 2017, pg. 122)

Finally, they parted ways which were marked by unspoken words and hidden emotions that reflected their

mutual understanding, they realized that their bond could no longer endure the strain and that it was better to part ways,

"They stood facing each other at the threshold of the shanty that had been theirs, and they did not shake hands either, they looked at each other and any gestures seeming inadequate"(Hamid, 2017, pg. 123) The moment highlights the tension caused by the experiences they faced which transformed their relationship and forced them to acknowledge that their relationship can no longer endure, and their paths must be diverged. They part their ways ultimately and accept their differences and recognize the inevitability of doing that, parting their ways in this way reflects their mutual respect, without bitterness and a mature understanding of the circumstances, and embracing one another and the circumstances allows them to move forward as individuals.

V. CONCLUSION

Throughout the novel Exit West, the characters Saeed and Nadia go through a process of relational development, which has been analyzed in this paper through the lens of Social Penetration theory. The novel presents Saeed and Nadia's journey of relationship as a psychological and emotional journey. Their relationship evolvement aligns with the stages given by Social penetration theory, where their interactions foster selective revelation about their personalities, as they progress on their journey they share deeper details reveal their personal identity, and build a stronger bond, they start living together which is a token of a deep relationship and then migrated from place to place together covering the stages of intimacy, but their relationship couldn't make permanence in the stable stage where they faced different issues of internal as well external factors emerged as barriers which caused friction in their relationship and lead to emotional distances. Migration creates instability by forcing them to adapt to the new places, cultures, and surroundings which erodes the tenderness and replaces it with harshness for one another they felt and decided to part ways because they tried to reconcile the issues between them but they both find it difficult to talk about the issues as they used to talk in the past, this moment highlights the psychological paralysis in their relationship. They were at a stage where they both knew that parting ways was inevitable and it would be better to part ways finally, they parted their ways, which was marked by unspoken words and hidden emotions that reflected their mutual understanding and respect for one another and the decision they made, they accept their differences without bitterness for one another

and embraced the circumstances and move forward as individuals.

5.1 Suggestion and Recommendation

The findings of this study, which explore relationship development in Exit West, and analyze how migration impacts intimacy, offer valuable insights for future researchers and application of social penetration theory. Future studies can expand the scope in a broadened way to address other literary works or to take into account real-life couples facing the issues of displacement to engage interdisciplinary approaches such as the Attachment Theory or Trauma Theory to seek further insight into the dynamics of a relationship under stress. Also, the potential contribution could come from investigating gender roles, long-term migration effects, as well as digital communication through the application of Social Penetration Theory. Practitioners and policymakers can work to create support systems for migrants, foster cultural sensitivity, and utilize literature such as Exit West to further strengthen programs create awareness and economically empower migrant communities.

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