

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Intrinsic Elements

Intrinsic elements are the internal components that form and shape a literary work. These elements build the foundation of the story and determine how events, characters, and meanings are presented to the readers. Through intrinsic elements, readers are able to understand how a narrative develops, how conflicts emerge, and how themes are conveyed throughout the story. Without intrinsic elements, a literary work would not have a clear structure or direction, since these elements function as the core framework of the narrative.

Among the various intrinsic factors in fiction, character and characterization have a very important part to play as they actually affect the progress of the story. It is the characters that get into conflicts and make certain choices and create certain feelings and emotions in fiction. In most cases, the reader gets emotionally involved in literary pieces because of the characters and the path that they follow in their lives. For this reason, the analysis of the intrinsic factors, particularly, of the characters and characterization, is necessary to understand the message of a literary piece. In this paper, the discussion on intrinsic elements concentrates mainly on characters and characterization since the major aim of the research is to examine the traits of Noah Calhoun and their relation to commitment. Conflict and setting may be touched upon only where they explain Noah's character and support the

analysis. The main point of interest for this research is not the entire structure of the plot, but character creation and its effect on decisions and choices made by him.

2.1.1 Character and Characterization

Character can be said to be an important element in fiction due to the fact that the story revolves around the activities of the characters. In a story, there will be no actions and therefore no conflict without characters. Usually, readers identify with the story through its characters and their reactions to various situations.

According to *Elements of Fiction* by Robert Scholes, fictional characters come into existence through narrative performance, whereby characters manifest themselves as a pattern of action and reaction (Scholes, 1968: 15). Therefore, a reader perceives a character from his/her actions, reactions, and behaviors at various stages. A character gets identified where there is a pattern of actions through the entire narrative process.

The characters may not be actual human beings, but they are created in such a manner that they seem real to the reader. The creation of characters is achieved systematically by the author, allowing the reader to get to know the nature of the character gradually. Characterization is the process through which the author introduces and develops the character. It is through characterization that the reader gets to know the character's personality and beliefs.

The techniques of characterization may be divided into two major types. The first type is known as direct characterization. It implies that the traits of the character are described directly by the narrator. The second technique of characterization is indirect, which means that the readers need to use the

information on the character's actions, conversations, and reactions in order to understand his or her traits.

Characterization is vital in understanding the reasons for the decisions made by the character. Character traits may be revealed by how the character responds to the conflicts that occur; how he or she manages to cope with negative emotions; and how the character behaves around other characters. For the purposes of this research, characterization becomes crucial since commitment will be reflected through the consistent character traits.

2.1.2 Conflict

The element of conflict is very crucial in fiction since it brings out problems that the characters have to deal with. The absence of conflict in fiction makes it very dull and boring. According to Robert Scholes in his book, *Elements of Fiction*, characters are created by patterns of action and reaction that take place within the structure of the plot (Scholes, 1968: 15). The patterns normally arise from situations whereby there is some form of challenge for the characters. Conflict helps the reader to understand how characters react to difficulties and their characters as well.

Conflict may be internal or external. Internal conflict occurs when the character faces such things as uncertainty, fear, and mental battles. External conflict involves the character facing challenges in terms of interaction with others including members of his/her family or the surrounding environment. Conflict plays an important role in the current study since commitment is usually demonstrated via challenges faced by people. A consistent pattern of behavior of a person who

chooses to stay with his/her partner despite hardships reflects the character's commitment.

2.1.3 Setting

The setting describes the time period and geographical location of the action. This element provides contextual information to the reader about the events and the problems that confront the characters. While Scholes pays attention mainly to the structural features of the story and character development, he highlights the fact that fictional meanings are created through the organization of narrative elements in an ordered world (Scholes, 1968: 20). The setting plays a role in creating this world since it gives context to the characters' behavior.

The setting is not just a physical location but also social background and living circumstances. These conditions can affect the way in which characters act. In this case, setting plays an important role because it enables us to understand how stories can be structured to make them have a coherent pattern. According to Scholes, fiction can be structured through elements that enable the reader to perceive patterns in the entire text (Scholes, 1968: 37). This means that each and every element of the fictional universe, including setting, plays a significant role in creating an organized pattern of events. As such, setting gives us insight into how circumstances affect people's actions and relations.

2.2 Extrinsic Elements

Among other characteristics, commitment becomes especially important for relationships as it denotes a desire of being faithful to a partner. Commitment means consistency, dedication, and efforts aimed at maintaining relationships irrespective

of possible difficulties and obstacles. In many cases, commitments do not depend on emotions only, but are based on people's evaluation and reflection. From this perspective, it is important to understand commitment as an emotional and psychological attitude that affects human behavior in close relationships.

The case of Noah Calhoun from *The Notebook* is not an example of passionate love but a continuous commitment which remains unchanged under circumstances of being parted and belonging to different social groups. Decisions, sacrifices, and persistent attachment reveal Noah's commitment as an act determined by psychological factors. Instead of regarding his commitment as just loyalty, it becomes necessary to look into motivational components making it possible to maintain commitment through various life stages.

In order to examine this perspective, this research will be applying the theory of Commitment by Caryl Rusbult, which is basically an extrinsic framework for explaining commitment. The theory is used as a basis to show the effects of satisfaction level, alternative quality, and investment on commitment formation by an individual within a relationship. Through this framework, it is expected to get insight into the psychology behind Noah's commitment to Allie.

2.2.1 Satisfaction Level

Satisfaction level means the degree to which a person enjoys and finds himself/herself content in the relationship with another person. It depends on the assessment of the balance between rewards and costs in the relationship with one's partner. The former can include things like affection, care, mutual happiness, understanding, and feeling secure; as for costs, they can involve such negative

experiences as disputes, misunderstandings, disappointments, and sacrifices. Everyone automatically assesses the proportion of pros against cons. If it turns out that there are more rewards in the relationship than costs, individuals experience satisfaction and emotional bond.

However, it does not mean that satisfaction always relates to momentary happiness, joyfulness, and love at first sight. Satisfaction means that an individual has a feeling of comfort and inner balance when being together. Even though there might be some disputes or challenging periods in the relationship, if a person feels loved and respected, it will lead to high levels of satisfaction.

For many couples, satisfaction stems from experiencing things together and offering support to one another. Good communication, joint problem-solving, and respect for one's needs can all lead to a stronger satisfaction base. On the contrary, dissatisfaction and neglect of emotional needs can slowly wear down the level of satisfaction. Hence, an individual's interpretation of experience and its significance play a crucial role in this concept.

As stated before, high satisfaction can enhance the urge to stay in a relationship, as people would believe that they have much more to gain than lose. Emotional safety and understanding are what prevents individuals from having doubts about their partner and the relationship, helping them to build trust. Overall, satisfaction adds to the significance of the connection.

When analyzing literature, one can identify the character's level of satisfaction by evaluating his/her appreciation, happiness, and overall attitude towards the other person. Such factors can be observed both in verbal and non-

verbal communication as part of a character's attitude. This will allow determining why he/she stays with the partner (Rusbult et al., 2011: 8).

2.2.2 Quality of Alternatives

Quality of alternatives means the degree of attractiveness of other available options apart from the existing relationship. These alternatives can be related to another partner, personal freedom, career advancement, etc. The point here is not whether there actually are some alternatives but what kind of impression individuals make about the options. Individuals can possess plenty of other choices but perceive them to be no more appealing than the existing relationship.

When it comes to romance, people tend to compare what they currently have with what else is offered to them. They usually find a different option as more attractive and enjoyable and, thus, stop being loyal to their partner. The process of comparing can take place consciously as well as subconsciously, especially during conflicts or difficult times. So, quality of alternatives turns into one of the most influential elements affecting loyalty.

On the contrary, if individuals see alternatives as less appealing, they continue being attached to their partner. They perceive the existing relationship as the best alternative for them. Thus, although the relationship may face certain difficulties and obstacles, individuals keep remaining loyal to their partner and see him/her as irreplaceable.

The quality of alternatives also has a close association with emotions. If an individual maintains his/her emotional connection with one partner only, he/she will be less inclined to explore other alternatives. It can also suggest that he/she

does not give any thought to other alternatives since the present relationship is more significant for him/her. The existence of alternatives is not ruled out here; it is just that they are not deemed valuable enough.

Another crucial element associated with the investment theory involves how people value various alternatives outside the present relationship. Everyone tends to make comparisons between what they possess and what they can obtain by exploring the options outside their relationship. In cases where the most favorable alternative is better than the existing relationship, individuals will tend to become less dependent. Otherwise, if the alternatives are inferior, the level of dependency increases (Rusbult et al., 2011: 8).

2.2.3 Investment Size

Investment is the quantity of resources, both tangible and intangible, that an individual has invested in the relationship and will be deprived of if the latter ends (Rusbult et al., 2011: 9). Such resources can include various amounts of time and emotional effort, memories created together, sacrifices made for each other, and a common future that has been planned and worked on together.

As people spend more and more time within the context of a relationship, their investments tend to accumulate. This makes it harder to quit because a lot more has already been sacrificed than at the beginning of the relationship. Investments make partners dependent on each other through making it less desirable to break up the bond (Rusbult et al., 2011: 9).

When the realization dawns on people that they have put in so much work and emotional energy into something, they may decide to stick to the same

regardless of any problem. Investment is an element that works as such in terms of fostering commitment and dedication. With regard to literary analysis, the level of investment may be evaluated from the standpoint of characters' efforts, sacrifices, and persistence to sustain the relationship. It allows readers to see how time and emotional engagement make characters committed.

2.2.4 Commitment as Long-Term Orientation

Commitment, according to the investment model theory by Rusbult, is a perspective for a prolonged period of staying together. The concept of commitment shows the psychological attachment of individuals, which makes them stay together for a long period. Commitment should be viewed as a long-term perspective since it does not rely on temporary and fluctuating emotions such as passion (Rusbult et al., 2011: 10)

Commitment develops with time as a result of evaluations of individuals about the experience they have during the interaction. This means people always think about what happens in their relationship and look at all the good things they get over time. When individuals feel that there are many positive experiences within the interaction and that the interaction means a lot to them, they start considering the relationship as an essential part of their life. Because the relationship feels so important to them, they eventually see their partner as a big part of themselves and cannot imagine their life without the relationship.

According to Rusbult, commitment arises from the accumulated assessments made in relation to the relationship. The sense of meaning and importance of the relationship leads to forming a strong psychological connection

between partners. Commitment acts as the guiding principle for decisions taken in difficult times, such as conflicts, breakup threats, or outside interference (Rusbult et al., 2011: 10)

Committed individuals demonstrate a greater readiness to forgive errors, to tolerate difficulties and maintain their relationship in a stable condition. Rather than concentrating on temporary dissatisfactions, committed individuals prefer to focus on the value of the long-term relations. Committed individuals can have feelings of doubt and frustration, however, their commitment leads to maintaining patience and consistency (Rusbult et al., 2011: 10).

Commitment can also play an essential role in influencing one's behavior in response to outside attractions or alternative options. As an individual's commitment grows stronger, he or she will be less willing to think about parting ways with their partner despite the presence of other appealing options. Instead, they are more concerned about developing the current relationship without looking for other chances elsewhere. In essence, this demonstrates how commitment serves as a protective mechanism that shields the relationship against disruptions (Rusbult et al., 2011: 10).

With this understanding, commitment is defined as a combination of affection toward the partner and a deliberate choice influenced by various factors, including satisfaction, alternatives, and investments. The combination of these elements will determine the intensity of an individual's dedication toward their beloved. With the aid of Rusbult's investment theory, this study applies a scientific

approach to analyze Noah Calhoun's commitment in the *The Notebook* novel (Rusbult et al., 2011: 10).

2.2.5 The Connection Between Characterization and Commitment

Characterization serves as a primary psychological framework to measure, evaluate, and understand the strength and stability of an individual's commitment within a relationship. In the context of the Investment Model, an individual's internal character structure directly determines how they process relational experiences and make long-term decisions. Assessing commitment through characterization allows researchers to analyze how a person's intrinsic disposition influences their satisfaction level. An individual whose core character naturally values deep emotional connections will consistently maintain a stable level of satisfaction, while their internal moral framework inherently devalues external options, automatically resulting in a low quality of alternatives.

An individual's commitment can be understood and evaluated by how their character dimensions drive the accumulation of investment size within the relationship. A person's behavioral and dispositional traits dictate their willingness to actively pour intrinsic and extrinsic resources—such as time, psychological energy, and personal sacrifices—into the bond. Through these character elements, investments are not viewed as temporary burdens but as direct manifestations of the individual's personality structure. As theorized within the model, investment itself represents the total quantity of resources that an individual has put into the bond and would lose if the relationship ends (Rusbult et al., 2011: 9). When someone's character consistently fosters a heavy accumulation of resources, it significantly

increases the psychological cost of abandoning the relationship, thereby providing a measurable indicator of a powerful intent to persist.

Characterization operates as a critical tool to assess whether commitment possesses the structural integrity of a long-term orientation. A resilient and forward-looking character structure enables an individual to perceive the relationship far beyond immediate circumstances or situational fluctuations. Evaluating commitment through this lens demonstrates that when the immediate rewards of a relationship decline due to external hardships or conflicts, it is the stability of the individual's underlying character that maintains their devotion. Characterization is not merely an external variable, but the foundational psychological engine that drives all components of the Investment Model to sustain a permanent commitment.

2.3 Research Method

This section outlines the research methodology employed in this study. It explains the research approach and the method of data collection used to support the analysis. Research methodology is important because it provides a clear direction for how the study is conducted, how the data are gathered, and how the findings are interpreted. According to Creswell, qualitative research is concerned with exploring and understanding meaning, while the procedures involve collecting textual data and analyzing it systematically (2014: 186). Therefore, this section clarifies the steps taken in analyzing Noah Calhoun's characterization and his commitment in *The Notebook* novel in a structured and organized manner.

2.3.1 Research Approach

This research uses a Psychological approach to analyze the novel *The Notebook* by Nicholas Sparks. A psychological approach in literary studies is used to examine the internal world of the characters, such as their human behavior, motivations, and emotional states. In literature, characters are often created with complex personalities that mirror real human beings. Therefore, this approach is very useful to understand why characters act the way they do when they face certain conflicts in the story. In this study, the psychological approach is applied to analyze the main character, Noah Calhoun. Specifically, it focuses on how Noah's psychological traits and personality influence his long-term commitment to Allie Hamilton. By looking through this psychological perspective, the study can examine how Noah's internal feelings—such as his deep affection and emotional investment—help him maintain his loyalty despite facing major problems like social class differences, long separation, and Allie's memory loss. Thus, this approach does not just look at the plot of the novel, but deeply investigates the psychological reasons behind Noah's decision to stay committed.

2.3.2 Method of Collecting Data

The primary data for this research are obtained from the novel *The Notebook* authored by Nicholas Sparks. The data comprise narration, monologue, dialogue, and events in the story that show the characterization of Noah Calhoun and his commitment towards Allie Hamilton. To collect these data, this study uses the close reading method. Close reading is a literary method that involves reading the text repeatedly, carefully, and critically to look at the deep meanings, words, and specific details within the novel. By using this method, the researcher does not

just understand the general plot, but pays close attention to the specific lines and interactions that reveal the characters' psychology. The process of collecting data begins by reading the novel several times to get a deep understanding of the whole story. Then, by applying the close reading technique, specific paragraphs, sentences, and quotations that portray Noah's characterization and commitment are identified and highlighted. After that, these selected quotations are extracted and grouped based on the elements of Rusbult's commitment model. Specifically, the data are categorized into three groups: satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size. Through this detailed close reading process, the text can be analyzed properly to answer the research questions.

