

A STUDY ON EXPLORING THE DIMENSIONS OF LOVE IN HALF GIRLFRIEND BASED ON STERNBERGIAN THEORY

Pramila Pawar

Research Scholar

Changu Kana Thakur Arts, Commerce and Science College, New Panvel Autonomous
District- Raigad

ABSTRACT:

The study analyzed the dimensions of love in Half Girlfriend in the light of Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love. The theory has recognized three major components of love which are intimacy, passion and commitment and it provided a suitable psychology framework to examine the relationship between Madhav and Riya. The study used qualitative and descriptive research approach. The textual and thematic analysis was used to analyze the important incidents, interactions, emotional responses and relationship developments in the novel. Primary data were collected from the novel. Secondary data were collected from books, research papers, journal articles and scholarly works related to love, romantic relationships and Sternbergian theory. The study revealed that the relationship of Madhav and Riya had all the three dimensions of Sternberg's theory but the strength and expression of these dimensions varied at different stages of the story. Intimacy was defined in terms of emotional closeness, trust, understanding and companionship; passion was defined in terms of attraction, longing and romantic desire; and commitment was gradually established through persistence, emotional attachment and willingness to sustain the relationship even when apart and in the face of difficulties. The study concludes that the love in Half Girlfriend is dynamic, complex and developmental in nature, rather than being static or uniform. Thus, Sternberg's theory was helpful for understanding the emotional development of the relationship and for clarifying how intimacy, passion and commitment combined to form the image of romantic love in the novel.

Keywords: Sternbergian Theory, Love, Intimacy, Passion, Commitment

INTRODUCTION:

The Triangular Theory of Love, also known as the Sternbergian Theory of Love, was created by psychologist Robert J. Sternberg in 1986 as a means of explaining the complicated nature of interpersonal and romantic relationships. Sternberg explains that love is not a single emotion, but a multidimensional experience that varies with the interplay of three primary components: intimacy, passion, and commitment. These three things represent three points of a conceptual triangle. The quality of a relationship is defined by the relative strength and combination of these things. Sternberg said people may experience different types of love depending on whether one, two or all three dimensions are present in a relationship. Thus love can be as simple as liking or being attracted to someone, or it can be as deep as romantic and long-term committed relationships. The theory is significant as it explains that love changes in time and that emotional closeness, physical attraction and willingness to maintain a relationship may develop at different stages and with different intensity.

Intimacy is the emotional component of Sternberg's theory and reflects feelings of closeness, connectedness, understanding, trust, affection and emotional attachment between two persons. It is the result of a sense of safety that allows people to share their thoughts, feelings, experiences, fears, and dreams with each other. Intimacy also involves mutual respect,

support, caring and concern for the well-being of the other person. Emotional security and a sense of belonging are developed by people in close relationships, which strengthens the relationship. Sternberg argued that intimacy was essential for meaningful love, since relationships built solely on attraction could not sustain themselves without emotional understanding. Usually intimacy develops slowly as people spend time together, share openly, and get to know one another. So intimacy is the close emotional bond which changes a relationship from merely an acquaintance or attraction to a relationship of mutual dependence, affection, and psychological closeness.

Passion is the motivational and physical dimension of love and encompasses romantic attraction, desire, excitement, emotional intensity, and physical or sexual attraction to another person. In the early stages of romantic relationships passion often develops quickly and can lead to a strong desire to be close to the loved person. It can be characterized by excitement, longing, admiration, physical attraction and strong emotional response to the presence or absence of the partner. But, as Sternberg explained, passion is more fragile than intimacy and commitment because it can wax and wane depending on circumstances, expectations, conflicts, and the length of the relationship. Passion may be the strongest part of a love relationship at the beginning but can grow, change or lessen with the development of emotional closeness and commitment over time. Thus, passion is not always the cause of lasting love. Rather, it is the combination of passion, intimacy and commitment that determines if a relationship is short-term, romantic or a more lasting form of love.

Commitment is the cognitive or decision-making aspect of Sternberg's theory, and is the conscious choice a person makes to love someone and to stay with them for a longer period of time. Sternberg distinguished between short term and long term commitment. The short term is you love someone else The long term is you love that person enough to stay through struggles , conflicts , distance , or life changes . Commitment thus reflects loyalty, responsibility, persistence, emotional investment and willingness to work for the relationship to continue." Passion is like the weather, it can change quickly. Commitment is more stable and can provide continuity in relationships. A strong commitment is especially important when couples face emotional conflicts or difficult times because it urges them to stay connected instead of ending the relationship. Commitment is thus the constant aspect of love and is necessary to transform temporary attraction or emotional closeness into a stable and lasting relationship.

Sternberg says that different combinations of intimacy, passion and commitment make different types of love. If intimacy alone exists, the relationship is called liking. This is emotional closeness but not a lot of passion or commitment for the future. Passionate love without intimacy and commitment leads to infatuated love. Committed love without intimacy and passion leads to empty love. Romantic love is intimacy and passion without the commitment. Companionate love is intimacy and commitment without passion. It is seen in long-term relationships where emotional closeness and loyalty are still strong. Fatuous love is passion and commitment without enough intimacy. Consummate love includes all three components-intimacy, passion and commitment. Sternberg considered consummate love the most complete form of love. However, he also stressed that consummate love takes constant work to achieve and maintain as the three dimensions can change with the changing individuals and circumstances.

Sternbergian Theory is important because it describes how love can be dynamic and change. Intimacy, passion and commitment may increase, decrease, disappear and reappear at different stages of relationships, which may not always remain in one category for the entire duration. Two people can start with attraction and passion, develop intimacy through

communication and understanding, and reach commitment through continuing emotional involvement. Lack of understanding, separation, individual differences or social conditions may conversely weaken one or more elements and cause instability in the relationship. This flexibility makes Sternberg's theory especially useful for literary analysis, as fictional relationships can be analyzed in terms of the development of intimacy, passion and commitment through incidents and narrative phases. The theory is an apt framework in the setting of Half Girlfriend to analyze the emotional relationship of the principal characters especially their movement through attraction, emotional closeness, misunderstanding, separation, persistence and eventual commitment. Thus, from the Sternbergian point of view, the researcher has the means to interpret love not only as a romantic emotion but as a complex relationship created by the continual interaction of intimacy, passion, and commitment.

EMOTIONS IN THE BOOK OF HALF GIRLFRIEND:

Intimacy in Half Girlfriend: The intimacy in Half Girlfriend is the emotional closeness that develops slowly between Madhav and Riya. They start off as friends, with basketball serving as a significant medium that connects them and provides a way for them to spend time together. Riya is at ease talking about her thoughts, aspirations and personal worries with Madhav, and he also feels emotional solace in her company. They talk and are intimate and that creates trust and attachment but they see the relationship in different ways. Riya treasures the emotional connection and wishes to continue a close friendship, while Madhav hopes that the relationship will evolve into a more traditional romantic one. The difference is a source of tension, but it also reveals that, despite the lack of clarity about the status of the relationship, there is emotional closeness between the two.

The intimacy between Madhav and Riya is more apparent when they meet after separations. Despite the misunderstandings and emotional distance, Madhav still understands and cares for Riya and she keeps coming back to him in the difficult phases of her life. Hence, their relationship is not just based on physical attraction, but also on emotional understanding, companionship, and mutual care for each other's well-being. It's important that they have an emotional connection, even when circumstances keep them apart. The relationship, according to Sternberg, shows that intimacy can remain even if passion and commitment are not certain. Their ability to talk, to support one another and emotionally reconnect, suggests that intimacy is one of the important foundations of their relationship throughout the novel.

Passion in Half Girlfriend: Passion is one of the most dominant dimensions of Madhav's feelings toward Riya, especially in the initial phases of their relationship. Madhav is quite interested in Riya and wants to take their relationship to the next level which is beyond friendship. His attraction includes romantic longing, emotional excitement and physical desire. It is this passion that brings both intimacy and tension as Madhav is looking for more physical and emotional involvement while Riya is reluctant to define the relationship the same way. This difference in expectations brings out the idea of being a "half girlfriend". Madhav's strong attraction sometimes turns into a frustration, which results in impulsive behavior. It reveals that uncontrolled passion can produce misunderstanding when it is not backed up by enough emotional communication and mutual agreement.

Throughout the story, passion is greater than physical attraction. Madhav's desire for Riya after separation reflects the emotional strength of his attachment. His desire to find and connect with her again is proof that passion can survive distance and uncertainty. But the novel also hints that passion cannot alone sustain a relationship. The tension arises from Madhav's concern with romantic and physical intimacy, but the growth of knowledge and

emotional maturity brings them closer. The novel, from a Sternbergian perspective, shows that passion can be the source of romantic appeal, but its successful unfolding demands that it be balanced by intimacy and commitment. Thus in *Half Girlfriend*, passion moves from being a spontaneous attraction to a more profound, lasting desire for intimacy.

Commitment in Half Girlfriend: In *Half Girlfriend*, the commitment is slower than intimacy and passion. At the beginning of their relationship, Madhav and Riya are not on the same page regarding a commitment. Madhav would like Riya to be his girlfriend, but Riya shies away from any formal romantic relationship. Her preference for a limited or “half” relationship says that she is reluctant to make an emotional and romantic commitment. Their different expectations do not allow their relationship to settle down. Personal issues, family situation and the desire for independence also play a part in Riya's reluctance to get into a long-term relationship. Thus the early relationship has emotional connection and attraction but not the mutual decision that is needed for a fully committed relationship.

The commitment becomes more important as the novel progresses, especially with Madhav's persistence and readiness to hold on to his emotional bond with Riya, despite repeated separation and disappointment. His ongoing search for her is not just attraction, but a determination to hold onto the relationship. And Riya's eventual willingness to reconnect also reflects a move toward greater emotional certainty and acceptance. Their relationship gradually evolves from a wavering and incomplete relationship to one of stronger mutual involvement. This development may be seen in terms of Sternberg's theory as a progression to a more complete type of love, where intimacy, passion and commitment become more integrated. Thus the evolution of commitment is one of the great emotional developments in the novel leading to the final fulfillment of the relationship.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

1. Sternberg (1986), in the research paper titled “A Triangular Theory of Love,” A study proposes that love is not an ambiguous feeling, but can be broken down into three tangible core components. The first is intimacy, which refers to emotional closeness—that is, the state in which two people can open up to each other, share their true selves, and rely on one another emotionally. The second is passion, which refers to physical attraction, the instinctive fondness that makes one's heart race uncontrollably and creates the urge to get close whenever the other person is near. The third is commitment, which refers to the conscious, deliberate decision to sustain this relationship indefinitely. When these three dimensions are matched and combined in different ways, they do not produce a single form of love; instead, they give rise to completely distinct types of love. Some center on the stability of open emotional connection, some are brimming with the fervor of racing hearts, and some are rooted in the resolve to spend a lifetime together—all of these states are possible. This theoretical model provides a basic analytical framework for examining the romantic relationship between Madhav and Riya's in the novel *Half Girlfriend*, and any breakdown of this relationship can be structured around these three components.

2. Acker and Davis (1992), in the research paper titled “Intimacy, Passion and Commitment in Adult Romantic Relationships: A Test of the Triangular Theory of Love,” conducted an empirical test of Sternberg's three components of love among 204 adults who were in romantic relationships. The study revealed that the level of commitment was significantly higher among persons in serious relationships especially married respondents. Passion did show some tendency to change with relationship length but this was not the same for men and women. The researchers also found that commitment was the strongest and most consistent predictor of relationship satisfaction, particularly in long-term relationships. The study finds

that the three components of love – intimacy, passion, and commitment – do not necessarily develop at the same pace and that imbalance among these dimensions can influence the quality and stability of romantic relationships.

3. Lemieux and Hale (1999), in the research paper titled “Intimacy, Passion, and Commitment in Young Romantic Relationships: Successfully Measuring the Triangular Theory of Love,” examined the relevance of Sternberg’s theory among young people in romantic relationships. Factor analysis provided empirical support for the three distinct dimensions of intimacy, passion and commitment. This gave empirical support for Sternberg’s conceptual framework. Women also reported significantly higher levels of intimacy and commitment than did men. Moreover, all three components had significant relationships with relationship satisfaction. The scientists find that the Triangular Theory of Love provides a valuable structure for understanding young people’s romantic relationships and the different emotional and behavioral factors that influence their quality.

4. Lemieux and Hale (2000), in the research paper titled “Intimacy, Passion, and Commitment among Married Individuals: Further Testing of the Triangular Theory of Love,” Sternberg’s model was examined in more depth with 213 married persons. The analysis supported intimacy, passion, and commitment as three distinct but linked dimensions of romantic love. All three dimensions were significantly related to relationship satisfaction. This demonstrates that the three dimensions of emotional closeness, romantic attraction and willingness to maintain the relationship play a role in the quality of romantic relationships. The authors conclude that Sternberg’s model has considerable empirical validity and can be used to analyze how different components of love contribute to the development and continuation of intimate relationships.

5. Anderson (2016), in the research work titled “Sternberg’s Triangular Theory of Love,” presented and discussed the major assumptions of the Sternberg model. The research points out that intimacy, passion and decision/commitment are distinct but related facets of romantic relationships. Once intimacy and commitment have been established they tend to be relatively stable, while passion tends to fluctuate and is comparatively less predictable. Different combinations of the three dimensions result in different types of love and different relationship experiences. The study finds Sternberg’s framework to be particularly useful for understanding relationships with different levels of emotional intimacy, romantic attraction and long-term commitment, which makes the framework relevant for exploring the evolving relationship in Half Girlfriend.

6. Sawant (2016), in the research paper titled “Riya Somani: A Voice of Present Day Woman in Half Girlfriend,” looked at Riya Somani’s character and how she approached love, identity, relationships and personal independence. The researcher notes that Riya challenges Madhav’s initial assumption of physical intimacy and sets boundaries to the nature of their relationship. Madhav’s first idea of love is mostly romantic and physical expectations. But after their separation he gradually learns more about emotional attachment. The study finds the relationship between Riya and Madhav develops through emotional conflict, individual expectations, personal freedom, attraction and gradual understanding. These observations give plenty of room to explore their relationship through Sternberg’s dimensions of intimacy, passion and commitment.

7. Tantry and Jaoolkar (2016), in the research paper titled “Half Girlfriend: A Novel of Helplessness, Hardships and Success,” explored the personal and social conflicts of the main characters in the novel. The study shows differences in social background, language, culture, personality and individual aspirations that affect relationships and cause emotional problems

for the characters. Madhav's experiences reflect his persistence in his personal ambitions and in his relationship with Riya, despite repeated separation and disappointment. The authors conclude that the novel deals with the struggles of the modern day youth with relationships, social differences, inferiority, individuality and aspirations. This study is relevant to the present research as these challenges influence the development of emotional intimacy and commitment of Madhav and Riya.

8. Sunalini (2019), in the research paper titled "Dynamics of Love in Chetan Bhagat's Half Girlfriend," studied the change in nature of love between Riya Somani and Madhav Jha, especially their problems in understanding each other and in developing a relationship that was acceptable to both. The study focuses on the courtship, physical intimacy, emotional struggles, gender related issues and personal struggles of the protagonists. Their relationship shows that romantic attraction alone is not enough to form a stable emotional relationship, because individual expectations and emotional understanding do matter a lot. The study concludes that love, as portrayed in the novel, is a dynamic experience that involves emotional attachment, physical attraction, misunderstanding, personal identity, persistence, and changing expectations of the relationship. This directly supports an analysis based on Sternberg's 3 dimensions of love.

9. Anusri (2019), in the research paper titled "Love and Friendship: A Select Study of Chetan Bhagat's Revolution 2020 and Half Girlfriend," was to explore the intimate relationship of friendship and romantic love in the selected novels. According to the researcher, friendship and love need emotional engagement, caring, respect, devotion, mutual understanding and constant effort. These relationships also change with circumstances and go through different stages in time. In Half Girlfriend, the difference between friendship and romantic attachment is complicated by the fact that the two protagonists have different expectations about the relationship. The study concludes that love and friendship are developing emotional relationships, not fixed categories. Therefore, the exploration of the changes in intimacy, passion and commitment over the course of Madhav and Riya's relationship is justified.

10. Krishna Teja, Sunalini, Vinay Kumar and Ratnam (2022), in the research paper titled "Making the Incomplete to Complete – An Analysis of Chetan Bhagat's Half Girlfriend," investigated the development of the incomplete relationship in the novel to a more complete human relationship. The researchers consider the term "half" to be symbolic of the incompleteness in the relationship between the main characters. The researchers explain that personal differences, language difficulties, social circumstances and emotional misunderstandings initially prevent the relationship from being complete. But changing circumstances, growing understanding, perseverance and emotional connection all contribute to the eventual development of their relationship. To summarize, the study shows that human relationships can be evolved from emotional incompleteness to fulfillment by understanding and sustained connection. This finding is particularly important for Sternberg's theory as the progression can be seen as the gradual development and interplay of intimacy, passion and commitment.

RESEARCH GAP:

In isolation, the themes of love, friendship, relationships, female identity, emotional conflict, hardships and relationship completion in Half Girlfriend have been explored by various researchers as per the literature. Likewise, a wealth of research in psychology has identified Sternberg's dimensions of intimacy, passion, and commitment as important for understanding romantic love. Nevertheless, the studies examined do not systematically analyze the relation

between Madhav and Riya by classifying the different stages of this particular relation in terms of Sternberg's three dimensions intimacy, passion and commitment. Hence, the proposed research "A Study on Exploring the Dimensions of Love in Half Girlfriend Based on Sternbergian Theory" can fill this lacuna by applying the Triangular Theory of Love directly on the characters, events and changing phases of their relationship.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This study used qualitative and descriptive research methods to analyze the love dimensions in Half Girlfriend based on Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love. The primary data source was the novel, while the secondary sources included research articles, books, journal articles, and scholarly studies on love, intimacy, passion, commitment, and Sternbergian theory. The study used textual and thematic analysis to identify incidents, dialogs, character interactions and relationship developments that reflected the three major dimensions of Sternberg's theory, namely, intimacy, passion and commitment. The relationship of Madhav and Riya was followed through various phases of the story to understand how these dimensions emerged, evolved and interacted with each other over time. The results were discussed within the framework of Sternberg's theory to understand the nature and development of romantic love depicted in the novel.

CONCLUSION:

The study concluded that Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love can be applied to understand the love portrayal in Half Girlfriend, particularly on the dimensions of intimacy, passion, and commitment. Madhav and Riya's relationship evolved slowly and went through different emotional stages of attraction, friendship, misunderstanding, separation, emotional support and finally acceptance. Intimacy was expressed in closeness of feelings and mutual understanding, passion was indicated by romantic attraction and strong emotional desire, and commitment was more clearly expressed in perseverance and the desire to sustain the relationship through difficulties. The study also found that these three dimensions were not constant, but changed according to circumstances and the emotional maturity of the characters. Therefore, the novel depicted love as a fluid and developing experience, and Sternberg's theory provided a suitable framework to comprehend the complexity and development of the relationship in the novel.

REFERENCES

1. Acker, M., & Davis, M. H. (1992). Intimacy, passion and commitment in adult romantic relationships: A test of the triangular theory of love. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 9(1), 21–50.
2. Anderson, J. W. (2016). Sternberg's triangular theory of love. In C. L. Shehan (Ed.), *The Wiley Blackwell encyclopedia of family studies*. John Wiley & Sons.
3. Anusri, J. (2019). Love and friendship: A select study of Chetan Bhagat's *Revolution 2020* and *Half Girlfriend*. *International Journal of Trend in Research and Development*, NCMCR-19 Conference Proceedings.
4. Krishna Teja, P., Sunalini, K. K., Vinay Kumar, D., & Ratnam, G. G. (2022). Making the incomplete to complete: An analysis of Chetan Bhagat's *Half Girlfriend*. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(6), 6636–6640.
5. Lemieux, R., & Hale, J. L. (1999). Intimacy, passion, and commitment in young romantic relationships: Successfully measuring the triangular theory of love. *Psychological Reports*, 85(2), 497–503.

6. Lemieux, R., & Hale, J. L. (2000). Intimacy, passion, and commitment among married individuals: Further testing of the triangular theory of love. *Psychological Reports*, 87(3), 941–948.
7. Sawant, D. G. (2016). Riya Somani: A voice of present day woman in Half Girlfriend. *Literary Cognizance*, 1(4), 25–28.
8. Sternberg, R. J. (1986). A triangular theory of love. *Psychological Review*, 93(2), 119–135.
9. Sunalini, K. K. (2019). Dynamics of love in Chetan Bhagat's Half Girlfriend. *International Journal of Food and Nutritional Sciences*, 8(1), 1266–1270.
10. Tantry, J. A., & Jaoolkar, V. (2016). Half Girlfriend: A novel of helplessness, hardships and success. *Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics*, 28, 1–5.
11. Cassepp-Borges, V., & Teodoro, M. L. M. (2007). Propriedades psicométricas da versão brasileira da Escala Triangular do Amor de Sternberg. *Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica*, 20(3), 513–522. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-79722007000300020>
12. Chojnacki, J. T., & Walsh, W. B. (1990). Reliability and concurrent validity of the Sternberg Triangular Love Scale. *Psychological Reports*, 67(1), 219–224. <https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1990.67.1.219>
13. Hendrick, C., & Hendrick, S. S. (1989). Research on love: Does it measure up? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56(5), 784–794. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.56.5.784>
14. Lemieux, R., & Hale, J. L. (2002). Cross-sectional analysis of intimacy, passion, and commitment: Testing the assumptions of the triangular theory of love. *Psychological Reports*, 90(3), 1009–1014. <https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.2002.90.3.1009>
15. Overbeek, G., Ha, T., Scholte, R., de Kemp, R., & Engels, R. C. M. E. (2007). Brief report: Intimacy, passion, and commitment in romantic relationships—Validation of a triangular love scale for adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 30(3), 523–528. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2006.12.002>
16. Sternberg, R. J. (1996). Love stories. *Personal Relationships*, 3(1), 59–79. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6811.1996.tb00104.x>
17. Sternberg, R. J. (1997). Construct validation of a triangular love scale. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 27(3), 313–335. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-0992\(199705\)27:3<313::AID-EJSP824>3.0.CO;2-4](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-0992(199705)27:3<313::AID-EJSP824>3.0.CO;2-4)
18. Sternberg, R. J. (1998). *Love is a story: A new theory of relationships*. Oxford University Press.
19. Sternberg, R. J., & Grajek, S. (1984). The nature of love. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 47(2), 312–329. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.47.2.312>
20. Whitley, B. E., Jr. (1993). Reliability and aspects of the construct validity of Sternberg's Triangular Love Scale. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 10(3), 475–480. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407593103013>