

Unleashing Pain in the Light of Affect Theory in John Grisham's *A Time for Mercy*

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Abstract

Human beings undergo a variety of emotions in their day-to-day lives. The emotional state of people should be analyzed to restore the eroding human values. Only some people know how to balance their emotions. American legal thriller writer John Grisham portrays how the protagonists survive and come to terms with their lives by balancing their emotions. In *A Time for Mercy* (2019), Grisham deals with gender issues and drives home the message that life is worth living despite the challenges and the significance of parents' role in shaping children's lives. The familiar character introduced by Grisham is Jake Brigance, the white lawyer who fights for justice without any prejudice. In this article, Grisham's book *A Time for Mercy* is analyzed in the light of Affect Theory to explore the emotional state of a few major characters and the effect of memories on them.

Keywords: Abuse; Affect theory; Crime; Legal thriller; Relationship.

Introduction

Literature is a form of art that mirrors the lives of people with their different kinds of emotions. Affect studies in literature deal with the emotions like pain and suffering the individual faces as he/she struggles with them. Legal thrillers are a part of the genre of crime fiction dealing with courtroom proceedings, trials, and the characters' lives. John Grisham, an attorney by profession, is a famous American legal thriller writer. *Sycamore Row* (2013) and *A Time for Mercy* (2020) are sequels to *A Time to Kill* (1989). *A Time for Mercy* deals with various themes like domestic violence, child abuse, divorce, murder, illegal relationships, drugs, and legal conflicts. The situation Josie and her children are driven to face because of Stuart Kofer is analyzed using affect theory to understand their psycho-

logical and physical conflicts, as psychological and physical well-being are important for leading a happy and healthy life. The struggles and challenges faced by Josie Gamble due to her emotional crisis and their effect on the children are vividly portrayed by the writer.

Affect Theory in Literature

Psychologist Silvan Solomon Tomkins developed affect theory in the first two volumes of his book *Affect Imaginary Consciousness: The Complete Edition* (2008). He uses the concept of 'affect' to refer to the "biological portion of emotion." He characterises affects by low and high-intensity labels. The physiological expression is analyzed in three ways: positive – enjoyment, joy, and excitement; neutral – surprise; and negative – anger, disgust, distress, fear, shame and dismal attitudes. Tomkins' idea is to maximize the positive emotions and minimize the negative. Affect theory is applied in the fields of philosophy, psychoanalysis, gender studies and literature. The emotion theory organizes emotions into different categories, sometimes used interchangeably with instinctively experienced emotions, and symbolizes people's physiological, social, interpersonal, and internalized symptoms.

Emotion has a lead role in affect theory. In the book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2015), the author Sara Ahmed states, "One way of reflecting on this history of thinking about emotion is to consider the debate about the relation between emotion, bodily sensation and cognition. One could characterise a significant 'split' in theories of emotion in terms of whether emotions are tied primarily to bodily sensations or to cognition" (5). The affect theory explores the mind of a human being who gets affected by some psychological or physical abuse. All three, Josie, Drew Gamble, and Kiera, faced physical and mental abuse by Stuart Kofer.

The terms "child abuse" and "child maltreatment" are quite often used in contemporary society. Child abuse is physical, sexual, emotional, or psychological maltreatment or neglect of a child, especially by a parent or caretaker. In this, it cannot be said that one country is better than the other. The Statista Research Department, in its survey on "Child Abuse in the USA", states;

Child abuse comes in several different forms, and includes physical, emotional, sexual, and psychological abuse. The signs of child abuse include unexplained bruises, overly aggressive behavior, lack of necessities, and drastic changes in behavioral and eating

habits. Unfortunately, child abuse remains common throughout the world, including in the United States. In 2021, there were 588,229 reported cases of child abuse in the U.S., with the most common form of maltreatment being neglect.

Regarding sexual abuse and domestic violence, the list of abuse is increasing every year. The novel *Sycamore Row* (2013) is set in the 1980s when racism was on the rise in the United States. The author is also concerned with the prevalence of child abuse during the period of 1990s in *A Time for Mercy* (2020). Even now, the cases of abuse have not decreased. A study by Dr Radhika Kapur on “Child Abuse in India” (2018) says,

India has the world’s largest number of sexually abused children, with a child below 16 years raped every 155th minute, a child below 10 years is abused every 13th hour and one in every 10 children are sexually abused at any point of time. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reported 14,975 cases of various crimes against children in 2005.

John Grisham portrays how the children Drew and Kiera were abused by Stuart Kofer, their mother being one of the reasons for their abuse.

Lives of Major Characters

John Grisham shows the structure of Stuart Kofer’s house in the opening of the novel, which is symbolic of Kofer’s character, indicating what one can expect in the forthcoming pages. It cannot be called a home because there is no real love or warmth in it. Grisham describes it:

The unhappy little home was out in the county, some six miles south of Clanton on an old county road that went nowhere in particular. The house could not be seen from the road and was accessed by a winding gravel drive that dipped and curved and at night caused approaching headlights to sweep through the front windows and doors as if to warn those waiting inside. The seclusion of the house added to the imminent horror. (1)

The cop Kofer, the villain, scored a good name among his colleagues before his real character came to light. Josie Gamble, his girlfriend, stayed with him with her two children, Drew Gamble and Kiera. On that particular day, Josie was waiting for the arrival of Kofer after sending her children upstairs. She sat with mixed emotions, wondering in what state

Kofer would come. "Josie took a deep breath, said a quick prayer, and eased to the window to watch the car. Was it weaving and lurching as usual, or was it under control? Was he drunk as always on these nights or could he have throttled back on the drinking?" (1).

Kofer came home drunk at 2.00 am, which was quite usual with him. Whenever he was drunk, he used to be violent, and the author describes his condition on that day: "Stuart was a sloppy, violent drunk. His pale Irish skin turned red, his cheeks were crimson, and his eyes glowed with a whiskey-lit fire" (2). As soon as he reached home, he started yelling at her calling her a whore and slapping her. This would be his way of treating her when he got drunk. Seeing his drunken condition, the children hid themselves.

The children who were aware of what was happening down were bewildered by the silence that followed. After hitting Josie, Kofer went up and slept without bothering about Josie, who had fallen unconscious. They went down and saw their mother lying on the floor; they mistook her to be dead. They thought that Kofer had killed Josie, who had been protecting them all along. Drew felt that the onus was on him to protect Kiera from Kofer. So, he acted quickly without even thinking twice. "Drew clasped the pistol with both hands. He held his breath and lowered the gun until the tip of the barrel was an inch from Stu's left temple. He closed his eyes and pulled the trigger" (12). Drew was imprisoned for the murder, where he underwent some kind of trauma. His mind was blank about the murder. Quite often, he asked his lawyer to confirm whether it was he who killed the cop, Kofer.

Josie was admitted to the hospital as she was badly wounded. When she regained her consciousness, she looked at Kiera with relief. Despite the pain and agony, she was happy that her daughter remained safe and secure. When her eyes searched for Drew, the cops narrated the incident and the arrest of Drew. One of them said, "Sixteen-year-old punk shot him with his own gun in his own bed. Cold-blooded murder" (74). She guessed what would have triggered Drew to act in the way he did.

Kiera was pregnant with the dead Kofer's child. The one who should have played the role of a father to Kiera became the father of the child in her womb. Josie tried to hide the matter from others. Their help and support, pastor Charles McGarry, suspected something unusual, which he shared with the lawyer Jake;

When we were driving down early Tuesday, Kiera got sick and threw up twice. Josie said she always got car sick real easy. I didn't think much about it. When I went back to get them at Whitfield on Wednesday, one of the nurses told me that Kiera had been sick that morning, nausea, throwing up, you know? I thought it was unusual because she had not been in a car that morning. (193)

As the case proceeded, it became strong on Kofer's side. It came to the circuit court for trial as a Capital murder case. Jake wondered if he would not win; moreover, the cops were reluctant to release Drew because that would be a betrayal. Things changed when Jake revealed the truth about Kiera's pregnancy and Kofer's abusing her, even in his uniform. Grisham skillfully added a finishing touch to the fiction as the protagonist Kiera, got through her emotional turmoil and discovered life's worth.

Growling in Pain

Sara Ahmed's book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2015) defines pain from The International Association for the Study of Pain:

- (a) pain is subjective;
- (b) pain is more complex than an elementary sensory event;
- (c) the experience of pain involves associations between elements of sensory experience and an aversive feeling state; and (d) the attribution of meaning to the unpleasant sensory events is an intrinsic part of the experience of pain. (Chapman 1986: 153) (26)

The sixteen-year-old Drew Gamble looked smaller and immature for his age, without any muscular development or change in his voice. The murder that took place was out of his control and done impulsively. He reflected, "I thought she was dead. So did Kiera. We both thought Stu had finally killed her. That's why I shot him..." (71). He was immature to make decisions, and the circumstantial evidence and the misunderstanding made him commit the crime. Stuart Kofer, who trained him to shoot, became the victim of his shot. Parents should teach only appropriate things to their children. Drew himself was not in a condition to believe that Kofer was shot dead by him. Drew's condition is described by Jake:

... that at times he remembers events, at times he forgets those same happenings. He asked me at least three times if Stuart Kofer was really dead,

but I did not answer him. He became irritable and on two occasions told, not asked, me to "Shut up." He was never aggressive or angry and often cried when he couldn't answer a question. Twice he said he wished he could die and admits that he often thinks of suicide. (150)

Jake Brigrance reached out to Drew to understand him, which he shared with his pal Lucien: ". . . this kid is suffering from something and needs professional help. He's not eating, bathing, is barely talking, and he can sit for hours staring at the floor and humming as if he's dying inside. Frankly, I think he needs to be moved to the state hospital and put on medication" (129).

Constant enquiries and living conditions make one's life difficult, particularly for those who enter without committing a crime intentionally. The law and punishments are given to the criminals to help them stay away from committing sins again. Drew Gamble was not mature enough to understand the enormity of his action. The safety of his sister and the well-being of his mother were his only concerns. His innocence and love for his family is seen throughout the novel. As he did not have anybody to share his feelings, he kept brooding. His distress, pain and suffering made him lose interest in life. He talked very little and remained silent; staring at the floor, he would start crying. The author describes his state:

Drew wiped his cheeks with the back of his hand. He closed his eyes tightly and began shaking, shivering as if the chills were sweeping through him. Jake pulled down another thin blanket from the top bunk and draped it over his shoulders. He was sobbing now, shaking and sobbing with tears dripping off his cheeks. He cried for a long time, a small, pitiful, terrified little boy so utterly alone in the world. More of a little boy than a teenager, Jake thought more than once. (72)

As Drew was preoccupied with the past, he could not come to terms with the present. At times, his mind became blank. The strenuous circumstances, along with the stress he underwent, traumatized him. Drew's psychological condition is portrayed as follows:

Drew closed his eyes and began to make a low humming sound, a soft painful groan that came from somewhere deep within. His lips began moving slightly, as if he was mumbling to himself. After a moment, Jake almost said something to interrupt him, but decided to wait. Drew could have been a monk in a deep trance-like meditation, or a mental patient drifting away again, into the darkness. (101)

The doctor who examined Drew says, "I learned that Drew and his sister have been neglected, physically abused, psychologically abused, and subjected to domestic violence" (150). Traumatic conditions lead children to depression, anxiety, swings of emotions like fear, loss of ability to eat or sleep, low academic performance, and many more. This not only happens in society or social gatherings but also at home. The affect studies analyze the family background and economic condition of the parents as they will have a bearing on the lives of children. Elizabeth Evitts Dickinson, in the article "Coleman Report Set the Standard for the Study of Public Education" (2016), states,

The physical amenities of a school weren't the most important factor in a child's educational success, and neither was funding, which, it turned out, was relatively equal within regions. Instead, a student's family background, coupled with a diverse socioeconomic mix in the classroom, appeared to be the biggest determinant of how well a child would learn.

Among Tomkins' three phases of study, the negative phase was greater than the positive in Drew's life. Once, Kofer gave his gun to Drew and asked him to shoot, but he missed the target, and Kofer beat him brutally. Like this, there were many other incidents which made him suffer physically and mentally. Unlike the other boys, who enjoyed the activities they did and developed leadership qualities, Drew led a loveless life because of his situations at home, and the difficulties he faced affected his subconscious mind. He was in a state of depression and an unknown but deep pain. All these things led to his low academic performance, loss of interest in things, and loss of his mind control.

The Pain of Abuse

Kiera, aged fourteen, is a precocious child. The novel describes her: "She was a pretty girl, tall for her age, with deep brown eyes and long dark hair. She looked nothing like her brother, and no one would have guessed that she was two years younger" (141). Her physical growth disturbed Kofer. The twists and turns are common in the fictional as well as real life of every individual. Kofer entered the house fully intoxicated and filled with desire. The evil and lustful thoughts of Kofer are revealed in the novel as, "Josie was barely breathing and not moving. He stood above her, looked at her breasts, and as always wished they were larger. Hell, even Kiera had a bigger rack. He smiled at this thought and decided to have a look" (6). Soon, he went upstairs, remembering Kiera's body and calling her out,

... he called out in a high-pitched, drunken, almost playful voice, "Kiera, oh Kiera..."

In the darkness, she shuddered in fear and squeezed Drew's arm even tighter. Stu lumbered on, his steps landing heavy on the wooden stairs.

Kiera, oh Kiera...

... "Ha, ha, Kiera, I know you're in there. Open the door." (6)

When Kofer called out her name, Kiera was frightened by the tone; she was wondering what would happen if he grabbed her: "Kiera was rigid with fear and crying quietly, but she was also thinking that this was unusual. On the prior occasions when he had come to her room, no one else was at home. There had been no witness and he had threatened to kill her if she ever told" (7). This clearly shows that he had already forced Kiera to have an intimate relationship with him. During such times of abuse, he used to threaten her, saying that he would kill her mother and brother if she tried to open up things.

Cynthia McDaniel in her article "Children's Literature as Prevention of Child Abuse" (2001) points out, "Perpetrators often frighten children into silence and secrecy by threatening to harm them, another family member, or a favorite pet, and/or they use their position of authority to convince their victims that the situation is "normal," and the victim has a duty to obey the adult" (205).

Grisham, as always, gives importance to law. Jake was able to understand Kiera when she failed to explain things as he had already seen Drew's condition. The psychologically affected Kiera, "At times . . . remembered details, and at other times she drifted away and seemed to lose interest. One moment she was engaged, the next she was frightened and withdrawn . . ." [Soon Jake understood that] "she too had been traumatized" (141). After many days, Kiera told Jake many things which impressed him:

Kiera managed to narrate the story while wiping her tears and not slowing down. She had tissues in both hands and spoke with emotion but her voice did not crack. Jake still had no plans to be anywhere near the trial of Drew Gamble, but the courtroom lawyer in him could not help but assess her as a witness. He was impressed with her toughness, her maturity, her determination. (171)

A child abused and made pregnant has become a very crude reality. If such a child has good people around her, that good environment would help her to rise above all problems. The pain of abuse did not devastate Kiera completely; instead, she was able to overcome the situation with the advice of her well-wishers. Thinking about her daughter's future, Kiera's mother asked her to terminate the child. Though this brings out the mother's concern, pastor Charles McGarry and his wife Meg are against this. They tried to make Kiera understand that killing a child in the womb is a sin: "Having an abortion is a horrible thing to do and the damage lasts for many years. As Christians, we believe that life begins at conception. The two you and I are carrying right now are living beings, little gifts from God. Having an abortion terminates a life" (271). Kiera understood that children are gifts from God, and hence, she decided to keep the baby, and her mother also agreed because she could not afford the huge sum for the abortion.

Neither the family nor their attorney wanted to disclose Kiera's pregnancy, so she was stopped from attending school, and a home tutor was arranged. In the advanced stage of her pregnancy, they stopped the home tutor also; she was stopped from attending the church service. Considering the future of Kiera and the baby in her womb, Jake made arrangements for them to move to a new county so that they could start their life afresh. Society often talks about child abuse but it is not ready to accept the child born through the abuse and call it a 'bastard' or 'illegitimate child' and the mother thus abused is called a 'whore.' In all such cases, the man behind the abuse is not affected in any way and is let free. The plight of Kiera's child is sympathetically addressed by Jake: "He would be the product of a rape. His real father had been murdered. His real mother was just a kid herself" (329). Somehow, they managed to pull on, and she was in her ninth month when she had to appear before the jury.

Kiera avoided the stares as she entered the court and confessed everything that happened to her, which made all the eyes in the courtroom fill with tears. She expressed the scene of abuse with tearful eyes:

... I had noticed him starin' at my legs and I just didn't trust him. I didn't like him and he didn't like us ... I unlocked the door and he came in. He was already undressed and was wearin' nothin' but his boxer shorts ... He said he wanted to have sex and wanted me to enjoy it with him. I said no. I was terrified and tried to back away from him, but he was very strong. He grabbed me, threw me onto the bed, ripped off my T-shirt and shorts, and he raped me. (494-95)

Asking a daughter-like girl whether she enjoyed the relationship with him would have been a cruel moment for the girl. Society says that female children do not have safety when they are in the company of strangers, but the irony here is that they are not safe even when they are with their caretakers. A similar incident is quoted in the book *Contemporary American Literature: Poetry, Fiction, Drama and Criticism* (2002) in an article of N.G. Meshram's "Incest as Trauma – A Reading of Michelle Morris's *If I Should Die Before I Wake*":

Carla, a small girl lives with her father who is a rich salesman. Carla is given an understanding that her mother died in the childbirth. The father keeps an eye upon the girl. He waits for the first menstruation of Carla, . . . He considers Carla as a woman and he is a man. . . As a result he makes sexual advances towards her and the poor girl submits. . . Under bewilderment and helplessness she remembers her mother and pleads for rescue. (83)

John Grisham's books, *A Time to Kill* and *A Time for Mercy*, talk about instances of child abuse. A ten-year-old black girl Tonya Hailey in *A Time to Kill* was beaten badly and raped brutally by two demonic rednecks due to her race. That incident is described as,

She was ten, and small for her age. She lay on her elbows, which were stuck and bound together with yellow nylon rope. Her legs were spread grotesquely with the right foot tied tight to an oak sapling and the left to a rotting, leaning post of a long-neglected fence. The ski rope had cut into her ankles and the blood ran down her legs. Her face was bloody and swollen, with one eye bulging and closed and the other eye half open so she could see the other white man sitting on the truck. She did not look at the man on top of her. He was breathing hard and sweating and cursing. He was hurting her. (2)

Tonya got raped because of her inferior race, while Kiera was raped because of her mother's sense of insecurity; in both cases, the assailants were drunk. Noel Bush-Armendariz and T'Shana McClain, in their article "Alcohol consumption plays a big role in sexual assault" (2018), point out "...that between 50 and 77 percent of sexual assaults involve alcohol consumption by either the victim or offender and many times both... sexual assault victims do not disclose because they are more likely to be blamed... they feel shame, guilt or embarrassment; or they fear they will not be believed." Because of this, many female children remain silent and helpless, and some out of shame decide to end their lives.

The article "The Lifetime Prevalence of Child Abuse and Sexual Assault Assessed in Late Adolescence" (2014) states,

The lifetime experience of 17-year-olds with sexual abuse and sexual assault was 26.6% (95% confidence interval [CI] 19.8–33.5) for girls and 5.1% (95% CI 2.6–7.6) for boys. The lifetime experience with sexual abuse and sexual assault at the hands of adult perpetrators exclusively was 11.2% (95% CI 6.4–16.1) for females and 1.9% (95% CI .5–3.4) for males. For females, considerable risk for sexual abuse and assault was concentrated in late adolescence, as the rate rose from 16.8% (95% CI 11.5–22.2) for 15-year-old females to 26.6% (95% CI 19.8–33.5) for 17-year-old females. For males, it rose from 4.3% (95% CI 1.9–6.8) at 15 years to 5.1% (2.6–7.6) at 17 years.

While analyzing Kiera's life through the lens of affect theory, it could be clearly understood that she was much affected because of sexual abuse, which created a negative impact on her. The psychologist Tomkins wants to maximize the positive impact of things. The positive ideas given by Meg, McGarry and Jake, during Kiera's distress and moments of despair helped her to overcome her negative thoughts and lead a good life afterwards. Such positive support shows that society plays a vital role in the lives of people.

The Lawmaker Turning into a Lawbreaker

Legislation is the act of creating or implementing laws. It has a top priority from ancient times to contemporary period in making and shaping the society. But the matter to be considered here is that most of the times the laws are not followed by the persons holding high positions in the society. In *A Time for Mercy*, Kofer, a cop uses his position to abuse a family.

The authors of the article "Psychodynamics of Father Daughter Incest" (1962), while talking about incest, give the following arguments:

In these decades, the marital relationship is more subject to change through death, separation and divorce than in the earlier years of the marriage. Marital stress is also more likely to develop during this period. With time, a marriage may become increasingly frustrating, and where there is the presence of a daughter who has reached puberty and become appealing, incest may occur.

Stuart Kofer earned a good name in his professional life, whereas he proved otherwise in his personal life. His two marriages did not last long.

After his divorce, he found Josie attractive and accepted her as his girlfriend, and they started living together, which is quite common in the United States. In spite of her being his girlfriend, "Kofer had demanded two hundred dollars a month for rent and food, and she had always been in arrears. The original arrangement had been based on plenty of sex and companionship in exchange for food and shelter, but the intimacy had not lasted long" (145).

The real character of a person will be known only to those who are close to him. Kofer also revealed his real colour, after Josie and her kids came under his shelter. He was a drunkard and drank even in his uniform, while on duty, which was a crime. He not only stopped with that but felt relaxed only after beating Josie hard and yelling at her "You're a little whore and you got old boyfriends hangin' around" (3). He expressed his suspicion about her character. Though Josie dialed 911 thrice, she did not file any complaint as Kofer threatened her. His hatred towards Kiera and Drew is the reason for all the problems that ensued. Parents have a huge role in the development of a child. Kofer abused Kiera more than five times; once he abused her in his cop uniform and threatened her using his service pistol. The one who needed to follow the law here became a "lawbreaker." Grisham narrates,

It was very dark out there, not another light anywhere. He told me to get in the backseat. I had no choice. . .

"And he was in uniform?"

"Yes. He took off his gun and just pulled down his pants. I was wearin' a skirt. He wrapped it around my neck. When we were drivin' home I couldn't stop cryin', so he took his gun and punched it into my ribs, said to stop it, said he would kill me if I breathed a word" (497)

Kofer's lack of responsibility and disregard for his position and uniform, are revealed here. Moreover, he had a good name among his colleagues. The slackness of Kofer's colleagues is also one of the indirect reasons behind the abuse and crime. The dual sides of Kofer are revealed by Grisham.

In this fiction, *A Time for Mercy*, the author brings out another incident that happened in the life of a drunkard. Gordy Wilson, a twenty-year-old drug addict, who killed his grandparents for not giving him the eighty-five dollars he required to buy more drug. This shows that when people are inebriated, they will act according to their whims and fancies. The

intake of alcohol is not only dangerous and harmful to one's health but also for the people around them. Josie says about Kofer as, "Stu was a good man when he wasn't drinking" (5). He turned bad only when he consumed liquor and hit Josie and the children aggressively.

When life hits hard, some people start consuming alcohol, thinking that it will reduce their stress, and this becomes an addiction with them over time. Some, with their indomitable spirit, shine better than before, using their hard times as touchstones. With his alcohol addiction, Kofer inflicted pain on Josie, Kiera, and Drew, which reverted like a boomerang.

During the trial, everyone supported the dead cop Kofer and wanted to see Drew sentenced for the cold-blooded murder he had committed until they came to know that Kiera was abused by Kofer and was bearing his child. When Kofer's darker side was revealed to the jury and judge, they understood the reasons behind the murder. He, too, had undergone some pain psychologically; the agony of his divorce, his hatred of the kids, his loveless life, and his drug addiction did not allow him to have a balanced mind; he might have done things impulsively.

Addiction and Agony – Relationship Issues

Marriage is a sacred institution and family is a significant outcome built with proper relationships. The step-relationships somehow affect the lives of children. Misunderstandings mar the happiness and peace of the entire family. When parents fight without properly understanding each other, the children are affected. The parents' love and care, free and friendly movement, and help to distinguish between right and wrong, will help the children feel safe leading to their overall development and personality. Instead of being exemplary, if the parents have a negative attitude, the children will be affected.

Josie's past life was filled with tragic incidents. When she was fourteen, she started fooling around with Barber, and soon she got pregnant and gave birth to Drew at sixteen and dropped out of school. Two years later, she gave birth to Kiera, married Kolton, divorced him when he went to prison, then married a drug dealer along with whom she worked, and got arrested by the police. After all these, she fell into the hands of Kofer seeking security. Kofer beat her unconscious, and she regained consciousness only in the hospital. Her condition shows how a woman's life would be if she were homeless, economically weak, and without any support. Even in that condition, when Kiera came to see Josie at the hospital, "She tried

to smile at Kiera, but her face was swollen and covered with gauze" (123). That was the spirit of a mother, who always hides her pain and smiles at her children.

Zhonglu Li and Zeqi Qui in their article "How does family background affect children's educational achievement? Evidence from Contemporary China" (2018) discuss the way children are affected by their families: "Families affect children's learning behaviors and academic achievement in important ways, as they are the primary and most significant environments that the children are exposed to." As a mother, it was her responsibility to protect her children, but she failed because she did not have a good partner.

When Josie came to know about Kofer's abuse of Kiera and her pregnancy, she felt guilty about being the girlfriend of such an abuser. As things were not in their control now, they needed to move on, and they looked forward to Jake arguing in their favour. He adopted Kiera's baby. The writer portrays the traumatized condition of the mother and her children. The children put up with physical and mental suffering for the sake of their mother. Kofer's house proved hell as he wanted to enjoy life at their cost.

The book brings out the dual nature of Kofer, the legal issues the characters faced, the oppression Jake underwent on account of taking up the case of Drew, and the racism prevalent at that period. A reviewer of *A Time for Mercy* points out the difficulty of getting a fair trial in an unfair world: "In addition to the legal quagmire illustrated by Drew's case, Grisham explores societal issues, including the appropriateness of the death penalty, abortion, the manner in which poverty impacts a defendant's ability to receive competent representation and a fair trial, and faith."

Conclusion

The agony of the mother, daughter, and son was brought out realistically in *A Time for Mercy*. Silvan Tomkins' affect theory highlighted the instances in which the children were abused by Kofer and how those experiences hurt them. Alcohol addiction is injurious to health, and overcoming drug addiction and developing a strong mind will help an individual to lead a good life. Because of their improper upbringing, Josie and the kids, in particular, experienced trauma. Their dire financial needs make them tolerate abuse and violence.

One should think well before choosing a path or a partner and be ready to face the consequences of the choice once it is made. Josie's family managed to overcome the challenges and sufferings only because of the support of good-hearted people. People should not be disheartened when they face troubles and get stuck up, but rise. The article demonstrates that the affect theory ranks as one of the finest theories to understand the root cause of psychological issues.

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