

Independence Versus Interdependence: Analyzing the Dynamics of Indian Immigrant Couple in Jhumpa Lahiri's "A Temporary Matter"

Bilal Zakarneh^{1,2}, & Nagaletchimee Annamalai^{2,3}

¹ Department of Languages and Culture, College of Humanities and Sciences, Ajman University, Ajman, UAE

² Humanities and Social Sciences Research Center, Ajman University, Ajman, UAE

³ School of Distance Education, Universiti of Sains Malaysia, 11800 Penang, Malaysia

Correspondence: Bilal Zakarneh Department of Languages and Culture, College of Humanities and Sciences, Ajman University, Ajman, UAE. E-mail: b.ibrahim@ajman.ac.ae

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Abstract

Independence and interdependence are two important considerations in a marital relationship. In particular, interdependence is considered an important consideration, witnessed by existing literature. Based on the relevant consideration, this research article examines independence and interdependence as prevailing themes in Jhumpa Lahiri's short story "A Temporary Matter" under Reader's Response Theory. The researcher used the intrinsic case study method and critically analyzed the short story and its relation to independence and interdependence. Thus, it is found that both themes are prevalent as the story title is direct yet has deeper meanings for the readers. Although the power outage is depicted as a minor inconvenience, it amplifies the emotional distance caused by past traumas. The power outage symbolizes the event of interdependence when both spouses sit together and share their experiences. This interdependence becomes especially apparent when Shukumar shares his grief, and Shoba, despite intending to be part of her residence, becomes aware of her husband's plight. Notably, this story is based on an open ending that implies the readers' choice of conclusion. This indicates how Lahiri's work also focuses on readers' ability to generate interpretation and acquire an understanding of marriage, independence, and interdependence as important aspects.

Keywords: Case Study, Immigrant, Indian American, Independence, Interdependence, Literary Analysis, Reader-Response Theory

1. Introduction

People get married for different reasons. Mostly, this decision is based on beneficial reasons beyond obtaining a marriage certificate. Despite the large emphasis placed on the economic aspects of marriage, apart from the financial gains, (Powdthavee, 2004) considers marriage as a commitment of intra-household sharing of certain things, including partner's care and love, emotional attachments, and communication, as important. These specific aspects of marriage directly influence individuals' welfare and health, holding the concept of interdependence integral to a marriage commitment. In this regard, literary research and theory (Syahril, 2018) also highlight marriage as one of the substantial themes. Specifically, issues of love and marriage are considered important themes in contemporary literature (See Brontë et al., 2023; Connell & Lisa, 2011; Dolan, 2011; Eberle & Uk, 2011; Jain, 2019), reflecting theme as an important aspect of literary consideration. Several literary works, such as Sylvia Path's "The Jell Bar," Jane Austin's novels *Pride and Prejudice*, and others, are based on similar themes (Zhang, 2019). Several research studies also indicate marriage as a source of reducing several psychological disorders due to stress and loneliness, leading to lower risks of mortality compared to others (Givertz et al., 2016). The effects of marriage on health are significant, as some studies have witnessed marriage positively affecting happiness data worldwide (Chapman & Guven, 2016; Grover & Helliwell, 2019; Lawrence et al., 2019). Sels et al. (2016) link this interdependence with emotional independence as an important aspect of marriage. It is argued that one individual's feelings are associated with another person's feelings, indicating interdependence as transpiring in synchrony, emotion transmission, and others. These emotions typically arise from intrapersonal aspects of emotions. Accordingly, one individual's feelings may further influence another person across time, indicating a temporary yet contingent relationship between people's emotions, also known as emotional transmission (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). In this context, interdependence can be attributed to cognitive interdependence, reflecting marriage quality. This cognitive interdependence provides information about the quality of relationships. This interdependence also helps determine how individuals perceive themselves as a part of commitment and consider commitment as declining their sense of individualism. For instance, people with a higher sense of interdependence would like to use "we" language and consider relationships the more important and central part of their lives.

Reeder and Hart (2019) consider interdependence a significant quality of a relationship as it is linked with higher levels of happiness, healthy communication, good quality relationships, and lack of negative behavior even during a crisis. Responsiveness, on the other hand, is another prominent aspect of independence and emotional transmission in marriage. Scholars (See Arican-Dinc & Gable, 2023; Finkel et al., 2017) agree that mutually responsive behavior is crucial to a stable and satisfying marital relationship. Responsiveness is a key

attribute and one important feature of marital relationships as partners are interdependent (Murray et al., 2011). As individuals are interdependent, a relationship can involve several situations, including social coordination. In each situation, these individuals have needs or goals that they cannot reach on their own, leading to acquiring help and support from the other. Interdependence involves partners coordinating actions on their different levels, including life tasks, personality and personal preferences, and relationship goals. The first level shows interdependence on basic levels.

Further, the second level includes interdependence about personal choices and decisions. Finally, the third level involves emotional support and assurance by each other, including cognitive support, ensuring psychological well-being among partners. Thus, based on the literature witnessing the importance of marriage, particularly from the lens of independence and interdependence, this literary study extensively analyzes Jhumpa Lahiri's short story "A Temporary Matter." The selected piece of literature is not merely a story but also a clear message on marriage as an important part of life, requiring mutual commitments and bonding. Applying the intrinsic case study method, the selected short story's subject remains the main focus to indicate further how interpretation and meaning-making can be done under the propositions of Reader-response theory.

Notably, the content is directly taken from Jhumpa Lahiri's short story, which is the focus of the research. The phrase "A Temporary Matter" reflects both the literal and symbolic aspects of the story. On the surface, it refers to a temporary power outage that the characters experience. However, the title also carries a deeper meaning related to the couple's relationship. The power outage becomes a brief pause in their daily lives that allows them to reconnect and share their feelings, which had been buried due to past traumas. The title is justified as it captures the essence of the story's exploration of independence and interdependence within a marriage. It suggests that, like the power outage, the emotional connection between the couple might also be temporary, leaving the ending open to interpretation. This idea of something being "temporary" resonates with the themes of the story and the overall analysis, making it a suitable and meaningful choice for the title of the study.

1.1 Study Gap and Significance

Existing research has given much attention to the themes of independence and interdependence in marital relationships, particularly in literature. However, a more focused analysis of how these themes are presented in specific literary works, particularly in Jhumpa Lahiri's short stories, needs to be conducted. While many studies explore the broader cultural and psychological facets of marriage, few provide deep details regarding how these dynamics are portrayed through narrative techniques and symbolism in fiction. This study is significant because it allows for a detailed examination of how independence and interdependence are depicted in Lahiri's short story "A Temporary Matter." By analyzing this story through the lens of Reader's Response Theory, the research highlights the nuanced ways in which these themes are woven into the narrative. This approach not only contributes to a deeper understanding of Lahiri's work but also offers insights into how readers might interpret and relate to the complex dynamics of marriage, making it a valuable addition to the existing literature on marital relationships and literary analysis.

2. Methodology

This research employs a textual analysis approach, specifically focusing on Jhumpa Lahiri's short story 'A Temporary Matter.' The story is analyzed in-depth to explore the themes of independence and interdependence as they are experienced by the characters and interpreted by readers. The textual analysis allows for a critical examination of the narrative elements, character dynamics, and symbolism, particularly how the power outage serves as a metaphor for the couple's emotional disconnection and eventual reconnection (Trombetta & Cox, 2022). Notably, current research explores the two main characters in the select piece of literature, "Shukumar" and "Shoba," that not only capture readers' attention but also provide a strong insight into marriage as an important aspect of life, significance of communication, responsibility of spouses, and emotions. Theoretically supported by Reader-Response Theory, this research presumes the primary role of readers in deriving meaning from the selected piece of literature and considers marriage as an interplay between independence and interdependence, further forming the social and cultural structures.

3. Reader-Response Theory

This research is theoretically supported by Reader Response Theory, which acquired popularity in the late 1960s (Connell & Lisa, 2011; Eberle & Uk, 2011), focusing on the audience or reader's response to a particular piece of information more than the information itself (Whiteley & Canning, 2017). This theory emphasizes the importance of readers' reactions as a primary concern for the literary culture, where readers are considered the main agents of interpretation and adoption of certain social-cultural behaviors (Kunjanman & Aziz, 2021; Woodruff & Griffin, 2017). Considering the current research, reader-response theory is applied to different literary genres, including plays, poetry, and others. Thus, this study also involves the relevant theory based on the literary analysis of "A Temporary Matter" to explore how independence vs interdependence is focused and highlighted. This theoretical approach acknowledges that each reader brings their own distinct experiences, background, and emotions, further affecting their interpretation of the story (Spirovska, 2019). Given the complex and deep personal themes of independence, interdependence, and grief, reader-response theory allows for various perspectives about the selected piece of literature. By focusing on how different readers interpret the characters' actions and the story's conclusion (Abdulaziz Alghanem, 2020; Causarano, 2021; Iskhak et al., 2017), this research highlights how cultural and personal contexts shape readers' understanding of the narratives. This is especially relevant for the story about an Indian immigrant couple, as readers' understanding and interpretation may vary widely based on their own social and cultural backgrounds and experiences with immigration, marriage, and loss. Particularly, the interpretation of marriage as an important aspect of life indicates how readers may interpret marriage,

conflicts, loss, and remorse as a part of the character's life in the story. Reader-response theory accommodates these variations and highlights the multiple layers of meanings, especially about marriage, that readers can attain from the same text (Lobo, 2013).

Furthermore, the relevant theory can further help reveal the story's psychological and emotional impact on readers. As Shukumar and Shoba tackle their grief and relationships (Lobo, 2013b), people can resonate with different aspects of their journey, providing a more empathetic perspective on marriage as an important part of one's life. This approach provides an in-depth understanding of the text and practical insights regarding how literature reflects and influences readers' personal lives and experiences (Woodruff & Griffin, 2017).

4. Analysis

This section analyzes the selected piece of literature based on the prominent theme of independence and interdependence (Iskhak et al., 2017; List & Vermeule, 2014; Lu & Gilmour, 2007; White et al., 2010). As a case study is employed, it is important to provide an extensive background of "A Temporary Matter." Further, the analysis is done based on each event in the story to provide a broader picture and then its relevance with the independence and interdependence in marital relationships that are assumed to provide the readers with a strong sense of interpretation of marriage as an important aspect of life under Reader Response Theory.

4.1 An Overview of "A Temporary Matter"

The world is primarily focused on the exploration of autonomy. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, independence can mean liberation from political control by other countries or the autonomy to organize one's own life and make determinations without requiring help from others. Independence is critical in a world divided into many nations governed by its political system. Throughout history, powerful nations have constantly overpowered and ruled others against the people's wishes, i.e., the British authority over America and India for over 170 and 200 years, respectively. After achieving independence, America developed into a highly developed nation, while India resumed advancing as a developing country.

In recent decades, many Indians have relocated to America, striving for economic prosperity. This migration increased particularly after the Immigrant Act of 1965, with many originally coming for higher education and later taking up jobs, forming a new identity as Indian Americans. The experiences of Indian Americans have become an essential subject for diasporic writers like Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, V.S. Naipaul, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, and Jhumpa Lahiri. Jhumpa Lahiri's short story "A Temporary Matter" examines the lives of Shoba and Shukumar, an Indian American couple living in Boston.

Shoba and Shukumar lead a happy life until the stillbirth of their child during Shukumar's absence at a conference in Baltimore. This catastrophe creates a detachment between them, leading to avoidance and silence. However, a momentary power outage brings them closer, shattering the silence and helping them better understand each other.

As described earlier, independence involves making decisions in all facets of life, a liberation initially granted to humanity. Autonomy is influential when there are choices, and these alternatives help one enjoy the fruits of independence. American society, in particular, offers extensive freedom to its citizens, highlighting independence, individualism, and self-identity. Nevertheless, individuals must also appreciate interdependence as part of a family and society. Stephen Covey underlines this by stating, "Interdependence is a higher value than independence." In "A Temporary Matter," these concepts are important to the lives of the Indian immigrant couple.

4.2 "A Temporary Matter"

In the story, Shoba reads a notice about a planned power outage for an hour each night, first considering its impact on her more than Shukumar. Shukumar, working on his dissertation during the day, is influenced by her preference for the outage to occur during the daytime, indicating her prioritization of her convenience over his. This incident aggravates the existing distance between them caused by their child's death. In a marriage, interdependence is indispensable for harmony, demanding consideration and sacrifice for each other's well-being. Following are the themes and results generated from the textual analysis.

Theme 1- Power Outage and Its Symbolic Impact

Shoba, influenced by the American emphasis on individualism, follows her path, while Shukumar feels overlooked. Interdependence, though demanding adjustments and sacrifices, is a higher probity than independence. In India, family relationships are strong and sturdy, with a cultural focus on interpersonal relationships, which is determined by the American prioritization of individual sovereignty. Shukumar and Shoba, caught between these cultural values, struggle with their independent American lifestyle and intrinsic interdependence. Tragic events can contest a marriage, demanding mutual understanding and support to overwhelm difficulties and lead a peaceful life. Shukumar, complying with Indian customs, wishes to stay with Shoba as her due date approaches, reflecting his desire to support her during a critical time. This confrontation between their cultural values and the challenges they face shows the complex background of independence and interdependence in their relationship.

"Shukumar attended an academic conference in Baltimore when Shoba entered labor three weeks earlier. Although Shukumar chose to stay with her, Shoba insisted he go, highlighting the importance of networking for future job opportunities. She assured him she had all his contact details and had arranged for her friend Gillian to drive her to the hospital if required" (1-2).

The above passage highlights a significant aspect of Shoba and Shukumar's marital relationship. Despite Shukumar's desire to stay with his wife during the critical time before her labor, Shoba insists that he attend the conference. This insistence is rooted in her practical mindset and concern for their future, reflecting her independent and strong-willed nature. It implies that Shoba understands the

importance of Shukumar making professional relations for his career and future job opportunities, showing her forward-thinking and supportive attitude as a spouse. However, this decision also demonstrates misalignment in their communication and emotional needs.

Theme 2- Cultural Influence of Independence and Interdependence

Shukumar's wish to stay back indicates his inherent need to be present and emotionally supportive during the impending birth of their child. His reluctance to leave shows his understanding that his presence would give Shoba emotional strength and confidence during a potentially stressful and life-changing event. This desire implies his commitment to their marital relationship and his importance of being a supportive partner. However, Shoba's insistence on attending the conference suggests a complex picture of independence and responsibility. Simultaneously, she acknowledges the emotional support Shukumar could provide; she prefers the long-term benefits of his career advancement. This decision indicates a pragmatic approach, despite inadvertently conveying Shukumar a sense of emotional detachment or independence that he perceives as dismissive or neglectful of his feelings. The following moment also reveals the tension between their priorities (independence) and the lack of explicit communication about their emotional needs. Shoba's insistence might be an attempt to maintain a semblance of normalcy and control uncertainty, underlining her mechanism of focusing on practicalities. Contrarily, Shukumar's preference to stay suggests that his coping mechanisms rely on emotional closeness and mutual support.

These aspects indicate a broader theme concerning the balance between independence and interdependence in relationships. Shoba and Shukumar's differing approaches to handling crises point to a misalignment in their emotional support and communication systems. Shoba's insistence on Shukumar attending the conference while he desires to stay works as a chasm between them. It shows the importance of aligning practical decisions with emotional needs as an integral aspect of marriage to maintain and support relationships. Also, it shows a conflict between independent decisions in marital relationships as needing mutual agreement and decision-making.

Theme 3- Conflict between Practical Decisions and Emotional Needs

"When Shukumar returned to Boston, he found that their baby had been stillborn. Shoba was resting in a small private hospital room, having undergone a cesarean section after complications with her placenta. The doctor, although kind, clarified that such catastrophes occur without warning and reassured them that Shoba could still have children in the future (3-4)."

The tragic loss of their child was an event in which neither Shoba nor Shukumar could be blamed, acting as a factor causing a drastic change in their relationship. Shoba's behavior towards Shukumar shifted after the incident, marking a significant emotional withdrawal. This reaction can be understood as a coping mechanism. By distancing herself from Shukumar, Shoba attempts to shield herself from the shared grief and painful memories attached to the loss. Her approach to independence in the relevant context is not just about physical detachment but is deeply intertwined with her psychological needs to manage trauma and regain control in isolation. While serving as a protective barrier, this withdrawal inadvertently pushes Shukumar away, further worsening the situation.

Theme 4- Divergence as a Coping Mechanism

On the other hand, Shukumar is acutely aware of the ongoing distance. He notices how they have become adept at avoiding each other within the confines of their shared home, a stark contrast to their previous intimacy. This avoidance manifests in their daily routines; they occupy separate spaces, engage in isolated activities, and rarely interact, even in the same house. These events also indicate Shukumar's observation, reflecting his deep sense of mourning and loss for the relationship they once had. He recalls their past when weekends were filled with shared activities and intimate moments. This nostalgia highlights his longing for the emotional relationship that Shoba's retreat into independence has served. Shukumar's internal struggle further highlights this disintegration of the relationship. He grieves not only for the loss of their child but also for the companionship and intimacy that has dissipated. Shukumar's reflections reveal his helplessness and sorrow as he witnesses the gradual loss of their bond. This scenario indicates how a traumatic event can change the dynamics of a relationship, especially when partners cope in fundamentally different ways. Shoba's turn towards independence and emotional seclusion contrasts sharply with Shukumar's need for closeness and mutual support, suggesting the complex tussle between grief coping mechanisms and relational dynamics after a tragedy.

"He reflected on how he and Shoba had become adept at bypassing each other in their three-bedroom house, each spending most of their time on different floors. He recalled how he used to look forward to weekends, but now she would sit for hours on the sofa with her colored pencils and files, making him feel that playing music in his home might be thoughtless. He thought about how long it had been since she had looked into his eyes and smiled or whispered his name during the occasional moments, they still reached for each other before sleeping (4-5)."

The above passage shows the shift in Shoba and Shukumar's relationship, indicating independence and interdependence as important aspects of the marital relationship. Their adeptness at avoiding each other within their own home symbolizes a retreat into personal independence, where physical distance shows a coping mechanism against emotional pain. The three-bedroom house, once a shared space of intimacy and closeness, turns into a setting where each floor shows emotional detachment and distance, indicating how grieving in isolation further increases their disconnection and loneliness. Shukumar's recollection of no longer looking forward to weekends marks a substantial change from when their interdependence brought joy and comfort. Shoba's solitary activities with her colored pencils and files and Shukumar's hesitation in paying attention to music mirror their efforts to maintain personal spaces and routines that exclude the other. This behavior illustrates a breakdown in shared experiences and interdependence. The fear that his actions might be seen as intrusive in his own home shows the extent to which their independent coping mechanisms have created a barrier to mutual understanding

and support.

In the above passage, Shukumar's memories of their diminishing intimacy further emphasize the emotional distance. The absence of shared smiles and whispered names during their rare physical interactions signifies the loss of physical and emotional closeness that once sustained their interdependence. This withdrawal from each other reflects their struggles and the failure to find strength and solace in their relationship. This passage critically highlights how the shift from interdependence to independence leads to an emotional void that cannot be filled alone.

Theme 5- The Loss of Child and Its Impacts on Relationship

The separation between them widens further, and the following lines attest to this: "For months now they'd served themselves from the stove, and he'd taken his plate into his study, letting the meal grow cold on his desk before shoving it into his mouth without pause, while Shoba took her plate to the living room and watched game shows, or proofread files with her arsenal of colored pencils at hand" (8).

Further, their routine of eating separately symbolizes their retreat into personal independence at the expense of their relationship with Shukumar, who isolates himself in his studies and Shoba in the living room. The act of serving themselves and dining alone reflects their avoidance of shared moments that were based on interdependence first. Shoba's engagement with the games shows and files and Shukumar's solitary meals also indicate their shift from mutual support and companionship to individual coping mechanisms. This shift further increases their emotional separation, indicating how the loss of interdependence can deepen the divide in a relationship struggling to withstand shared grief and trauma.

Theme 6- The Growing Emotional Distance

It is also observed that after the child's death, "They had stopped attending parties, went nowhere together.... After finishing the dishes, they leaned against the counter, drying the hands on either end of the towel" (15). Drying their hands on either end of the towel signifies that their relationship seems distant. All the events that take place in their life after the death of their child point out the fact that they are drifting away from each other physically and emotionally. Angalakuduru (2014) also shares this concern in his article: "Both of them deliberately avoid each other. They lived very happily before the tragedy happened in their life. Shukumar thought that this crisis in their relationship would pass soon. She was just thirty-three and was strong and on her feet again. The doctor also tried to console them by saying, 'that these things happen (pp. 72-73). However, each of them was not ready to bridge the gap created between them after the death of their child. It is time for both to come closer to console and comfort each other so that they become interdependent. If they share their sorrow, it will be halved. Instead, they live independently under the same roof, further broadening their distance. The gap can be cemented; that is, a harmonious and healthy life can be established only by their strong interpersonal relationships and not by their weak intrapersonal relationships. Notably, Pn 1(985) considers communication an important aspect of marital relationships. Emotion is believed to be a natural social interaction, implying it is a source of intimacy and resilient relationships.

Theme 7- Diminishing Intimacy and Growing Isolation

However, the story takes a significant turn, indicating interdependence as an obvious element in the subject relationship. Communication is an important factor in India due to certain interdependence, apart from emotions. The family members live together and perform most of their duties together. Sharing their interests, desires, and accomplishments is the day's order. So, speaking to one another on many matters and sharing the views of everyone with others is part and parcel of Indian family life. This practice is prevalent in India and is recollected by Shoba when she faces power failure in America.

I remember during power failures at my grandmother's house, we all had to say something," Shoba continued....

"Like what?"

"I don't know. A little poem. A joke. A fact about the world. For some reason my relatives always wanted me to tell them the names of my friends in America. I don't know why the information was so interesting to them. The last time I saw my aunt she asked after four girls I went to elementary school within Tucson. I barely remember them now."

Shukumar had spent less time in India than Shoba had...

"Let's do that," she said suddenly.

"Do what?"

"Say something to each other in the dark."

"Like what? I don't know any jokes."

"No, no jokes." She thought for a minute. "How about telling each other something we've never told before." (12-13)

Over time, Shukumar and Shoba's detachments became increasingly pronounced; they started eating meals in different rooms, where they spent most of the time detached from each other. Their social activities ceased, and even mundane tasks like drying dishes were done with emotional distance, symbolized by their use of opposite ends of the towels, highlighting their growing physical distance and emotional detachment. Their reconnection began when Shoba recalled her childhood in India, where power outages led to storytelling and jokes in her grandmother's house. India is rich in interpersonal relationships that instill respect, cordiality, and warmth between spouses, deeply rooted in marital relationships. Wanting to break the ice in their strained relationship, Shoba suggested they talk during a power cut,

hoping to recreate the sense of connection.

Theme 8- Rekindling Connection in the Darkness

For a long time, silence was the only thing they shared. Marriage is meant to share joys, sorrows, and personal histories to create a joyful and meaningful life. The metaphorical darkness from their child's death cast a shadow over their lives, but the literal darkness of the power cut offered an unexpected opportunity. They began revealing secrets they had never shared as they lit candles and sat together. Shukumar confessed to cheating on an exam, tearing a picture from a magazine, and personal anecdotes. Although these confessions seemed trivial, they provided Shukumar with a sense of relief and eased his guilty conscience. According to Kumbakonam (2022), sheltering in the darkness of an electrical failure develops a newfound relationship between the drifting couple, Shukumar and Shoba. This temporary phase without electricity draws them closer, allowing them to reveal secrets they had never shared before, opening their hearts.

On the fifth day of the power outage, Shoba tells Shukumar that she has found an apartment and plans to live alone. This shows her desire for independence instead of interdependence. Shukumar then conveys a truth Shoba did not know: "Our baby was redder than brown. He had black hair on his head, He weighed almost five pounds, His fingers were curled shut, just like yours in the night" (22). Hearing that Shukumar had held their dead son, whom she carried alive in her womb, deeply moves Shoba. This point presses her to reconsider her determination to live separately, suggesting a change toward a life of interdependence. The story's conclusion highlights that their resumed interdependence has relieved much of their tension, indicating that their harmony in confronting adversity could lead to a more restorative, balanced relationship. Thus, this movement highlights the tension between independence and interdependence in their relationship. The deep emotional connection challenges Shoba's initial move towards independence upon learning the truth, suggesting that true healing and connection may lie in embracing interdependence. The end of this short story has an open ending, as in other stories by Jhumpa Lahiri. Lahiri offers freedom to her readers to conclude as they perceive, indicating that the readers' perceptions are an important consideration to the writer. Based on the theoretical underpinnings of Reader Response Theory, Lahiri's work is supported, suggesting how audience response and perceptions are prioritized to interpret the ending. Notably, an open ending is an important fictional technique as the end is not in Lahiri's hands but the couple's choice to live together, forgiving and forgetting the lapses or part, carrying only the bitter memories. The title of the story is direct yet suggestive. Initially, it shows power cuts as a temporary issue that would not affect the distance caused by trauma in their lives. As darkness vanishes after restoring the power supply, interdependence emerges as a ray of hope, removing their temporary separation and suggesting an array of harmonies in life.

5. Conclusion

Independence and interdependence are important elements in a marriage. While independence allows individuals to maintain their identities and pursue their interests, interdependence encourages mutual support, emotional bonding, and understanding. A balanced marriage requires both partners to prioritize these aspects, ensuring that personal growth does not come at the expense of the relationship. This research paper also analyzed these themes in Jhumpa Lahiri's short story "A Temporary Matter." It explored the dynamics between Shoba and Shukumar's struggles with the loss of their child. The story vividly portrays their journey from emotional detachment and independence to a potential reconnection through even a small event of electricity power outage. Thus, the relevance of Reader Response Theory is apparent, emphasizing the role of readers in interpreting and concluding the end. This allows different perspectives and emotional responses from the readers; by applying the relevant theory, the background implications of marriage as an important aspect of emotional happiness and well-being can be easily understood. The open ending of the short story is also consistent with the Reader Response Theory, where the readers are allowed to decide between independence and interdependence, particularly when Shoba, as one of the main characters, rethinks about her decision of independence and her partner, Shukumar's grief about the loss of their child. Therefore, the significance of this research is in its ability to highlight the complexities of marital relationships, especially in the context of cultural displacement and personal trauma. By highlighting how Shoba and Shukumar handle their grief and emotional distance, insights regarding broader themes of human connection and a balance between independence and interdependence can be determined. Thus, this research highlights the importance of marriage and the role of literary analysis in understanding and addressing real-life relational issues, providing readers with a deeper appreciation of Lahiri's work and its relevance to their own lives.

5.1 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Despite this research being a significant contribution to the existing literature, it has some primary limitations. First, this research is based on a case study design. The relevant approach provides a comprehensive pathway to explore independence and interdependence, yet employing a single technique narrows its scope. Future research can use different approaches to broaden this scope, e.g., a mixed-method approach. The second limitation involves the selection of a single short story to conduct the analysis. This limitation can be overcome by including more literature to provide comprehensive insights about marriage and common themes in the existing literature. Finally, the third limitation is based on the geographical limitation of this research. The selected literature represents the Indian socio-cultural background, while different regions may vary. Further studies can delimit this scope and analyze the themes prevalent in content from other regions.

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Dr. Bilal Zakaneh and Dr Nagaletchimee Annamalai prepared the first draft, conducted the analysis, and made all the revisions together

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