

Criminality: As an Aspect of Psychological Conflicts in Alex Michaelides' *the Silent Patient*

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Abstract:

The main objective of the research paper is to explore the hidden relationship between one's psyche and his actions. The person looking very normal from his external appearance might have a lot going on off his mind. Alex Michaelides' novel *The Silent Patient* develops the prevailing idea that chiefly talks about a relationship between traumatic childhood and criminal behavior. The central characters of the story Theo Faber and Alicia Berenson, both being a very prominent professionals grab our attention when both of them get engaged into the criminal activities they were never expected to be in. The instant actions and the instant results of any action is not the matter of concern. But the real concern is when the negative imprints are carved very deep upon one's mind and they don't find any outlet to vent it out. The feeling when unable to find any outlet makes place in one's mind and resides there for a long time. The residing feeling then takes many forms to find a way out. It causes frustration, aggressive nature, negative thinking, and feelings of comparison, enmity and jealousy. Throughout the research paper we will discuss how Theo and Alicia's troubled childhood lead them to the criminal paths.

Keywords: childhood trauma, mental health, development, criminality,

INTRODUCTION:

In Alex Michaelides' novel *The Silent Patient* the central character, Theo Faber, comes across the case of Alicia Berenson who is very prominent painter and is happily married turns into a criminal after murdering her own husband. While studying the case of Alicia, Theo gets the idea that Alicia was having a troubled childhood and none of her parents liked her. This troubled childhood has left negative scars upon Alicia's mind. He believes that this traumatic childhood played a substantial role that came out through her actions leading up to the capital crime of murder.

Taking the above novel as a basis, It is conveyed that the traumatic experiences of childhood lead to the development of some mental health issues such as aggression, depression, insecurity, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which can increase the risk of criminal behavior in adulthood. On the other hand we have Theo Faber who too was the victim of traumatic childhood and out of the experiences of those past incidents, he succumbed to the above said feelings and walks on the illegal path. Additionally, it creates a kind of insecurity in the person that may later become a hurdle in the formation of his healthy relationship along with trust issues which may have played significant role in the dynamics of Alicia's marriage.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

The importance of the topic cannot be underestimated as it explores the relationship between childhood trauma and criminal behavior because of the potential impact it can have on individuals, families, and communities. Childhood trauma can have long-lasting consequences on a person's mental and physical health, equally, it is also associated with an increased risk of criminal behavior in adulthood.

- 1) Understanding the link between childhood trauma and criminal behavior can help in the development of interventions and prevention strategies to reduce the number of individuals affected by both childhood trauma and criminal behavior.
- 2) Additionally, studying this topic can also help in the development of more effective treatment and rehabilitation programs for individuals who have a history of childhood trauma and have been involved in criminal activity. It can also aid in understanding the circumstances that lead to criminal behavior and might help in reducing the recidivism rate.
- 3) Moreover, research on this topic can also contribute to the larger body of knowledge on the impact of childhood trauma on an individual's life. This can help inform public policy and programs aimed at reducing childhood trauma and its associated negative outcomes, including criminal behavior.

In short, studying the relationship between childhood trauma and criminal behavior is important because it can lead to the development of effective interventions and prevention strategies, improve treatment and rehabilitation programs, and inform public policy.

METHODOLOGY:

For finding out the impacts of childhood in leading towards criminal acts in *The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides, a qualitative research would be appropriate. Here are further stages to be followed.

1. Conducting a review of literature in order to collect data on the present research on relationship between childhood trauma, experiences and criminal behavior.
2. Conducting a range of comprehensive interviews with the example of individuals who have involved in criminal acts and equally were the victims of some childhood trauma or have gone through any such negative experiences.
3. Evaluation of the data gathered from the interviews of the above said individuals and figure out throughout that the patterns and outlines related to the consequences of traumatic childhood in leading towards criminal acts.
4. Expanding the current case studies of Alicia Berenson and Theo Faber, the actual research characters from *The Silent Patient* to further illustrate the findings from the interviews and support the argument made in the research paper.
5. Developing a conceptual framework which connects the outcomes from the literature review and the interviews to elucidate how traumatic childhood experiences may drive one towards criminal deeds.
6. Drawing conclusions and making references for further additional research in this area.

PREVALENCE OF CHILDHOOD TRAUMA:

Childhood trauma is one of the issues nowadays that is quite prevalent and causes to affect many individuals worldwide. The detailed prevalence of childhood trauma varies depending on the type of trauma and the population being studied, but research suggests that a significant proportion of the population has experienced some form of childhood trauma.

According to the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-being (NSCAW), an estimated 60% of children in the United States have experienced at least one traumatic event before the age of 18. Some studies have found that up to 90% of children in the child welfare system have experienced some or the other form of abuse or neglect.

Research also indicates that certain populations are at a higher risk of experiencing childhood trauma, such as children from low-income families, children of color, and children from certain geographic regions. For example, one study found that 50% of African American children and 60% of American Indian children have experienced at least one traumatic event.

Furthermore it is also important to note that childhood trauma can have a wide range of negative consequences on an individual's physical, mental, and emotional health, as well as their relationships and overall well-being. Some potential impacts of childhood trauma include:

- i) Mental health issues: there are a lot of risk factors that is reflected as a result of childhood trauma. They are seen as an increased risk of developing mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and measurable abuse.
- ii) Physical health problems: Childhood trauma has been interconnected to a range of multiple physical health problems which includes, heart disease, diabetes and chronic pain.
- iii) Difficulty in establishing relationships: one of the important impacts to discuss about is it becomes a disturbing factor while maintaining relationships. Negative past experiences affect an individual's ability to form and maintain healthy relationships, which directly or indirectly falls a negative impact on their social and emotional life.
- iv) Difficulty in working: Childhood trauma leaves the person disturbed thus spoiling his aptitude to work anywhere and thus his social life becomes affected.
- v) Increased risk of criminal actions: Research suggests that people who have experienced some negative experiences and trauma in childhood are easily prone to engage in criminal activities as adults.
- vi) Difficulty in managing emotions: Childhood trauma which makes an individual weaker emotionally can further affect an individual's ability to manage their emotions, making them more prone to intense emotional reactions and mood swings.
- vii) Difficulty in trusting others: disturbed childhood leaves an individual broken from within. This may lead to trust issues in later life and may be proved to be a threat for his healthy relationships.

Many of the above symptoms are clearly found in the characters of Alicia Berenson and Theo Faber as well. The good-hearted Alicia Berenson remains fearful throughout all her life while in Theo Faber we get to see the everlasting insecurity, these ultimately become a threat to both of them.

There is a significant body of literature on the topic of the relationship between childhood trauma and criminal behavior. Research on this topic has been conducted in various settings, including the United States, Europe, and Australia, and has investigated different forms of childhood trauma, such as physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as neglect and exposure to violence. Some studies have found that individuals who have experienced childhood trauma are more likely to engage in criminal behavior as adults. This relationship has been found to be particularly strong for individuals who have experienced multiple forms of childhood trauma. Additionally, research suggests that childhood trauma increases the risk of developing mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD, which can, in turn, increase the risk of criminal behavior.

Other studies have also investigated the specific mechanisms by which childhood trauma may lead to criminal behavior. Some researchers suggest that childhood trauma can affect an individual's cognitive and emotional development, making them more prone to impulsive and aggressive behavior. Additionally, childhood trauma also affects an individual's ability to form and maintain healthy relationships, which can increase the risk of involvement in criminal activity.

CONCLUSION:

From the above given discussion it gets us clear to understand for sure that there is a certainty of the strong relationship between one's existing mental condition and his past occurrences. Difficult childhood leaves the scars not may be upon one's body but surely upon one's psyche which later become the conflicting factor turns the whole track of the person's life. Though the trauma doesn't have any direct and obvious results at the same time but in future whenever the person gets an opportunity or is haunted with the same fear that he has developed as a result of the traumatic childhood, all the curtains of legal and illegal blurs before his eyes and he doesn't bother to care about the validity of his action.

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