

THE CONCEPT OF LOVE IN THE NOVEL *AL-NABIYY* BY KAHLIL GIBRAN: A LITERARY PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

*Love is a universal theme that functions not only as a subject of psychological inquiry but also as a central theme in literary works. This study analyzes the representation of love in *Al-Nabiyy* by Kahlil Gibran using Robert J. Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love, which consists of three components: passion, intimacy, and commitment. This research employs a descriptive-analytical method within a literary psychology approach. Data were collected from narrative quotations in the translated version of *The Prophet* (2022) and then classified and analyzed according to the three components of love. The findings show that passion is portrayed as an intense emotional and spiritual force that exists without possessiveness. Intimacy appears through empathy, emotional closeness, and openness, particularly in *Al-Musthafa's* teachings to the people of Orphalese. Commitment is reflected in the teachings of love that emphasize togetherness without eliminating individuality. Among the nine quotations analyzed, commitment emerges as the most dominant component. This study concludes that love in *Al-Nabiyy* is transcendental, functioning not only as a human emotion but also as a spiritual path toward harmony and self-purification. The novelty of this research lies in integrating Sternberg's framework with Sufi concepts such as *uns* (spiritual intimacy) and *fana* (self-surrender), providing a cross-cultural perspective on love. The findings contribute to literary psychology by bridging modern psychological theory with spiritual discourse.*

Keywords: love theory, Robert J. Sternberg, triangular theory of love, passion, intimacy, commitment, *Al-Nabiyy*, literary psychology, symbolic fiction

INTRODUCTION

Love is one of the most fundamental and complex emotions in human life. As a universal phenomenon, love transcends cultural, religious, and historical boundaries. Therefore, literary texts with love as a central theme provide an interpretive lens into human affectivity and social values. Southeast Asian literature portrays love through deeply cultural symbols and emotional patterns that differ from Western norms, a phenomenon that aligns with the varying romantic structures explored in contemporary cross-cultural research (Mukoro, 2023). It manifests not only in personal relationships between two individuals who love each other but also emerges as a central theme

that is continuously explored across disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, and literature, which aligns with findings on the cognitive universality of love mechanisms (Song, 2025). In psychology, love is understood as an emotional response involving attachment, attraction, and affective involvement with another person. From this perspective, love reflects the human need for connection and intimacy and serves as a vital mechanism in personality development and mental health, findings that resonate with the emotional dynamics found in global relationship studies (Cassepp-Borges et al., 2023).

According to Myers and DeWall (2018), love contributes significantly to psychological well-being and is a core component of human social development

and identity. Love is also central to psychosocial development across the human lifespan, particularly in fostering emotional maturity and interpersonal stability, as supported by empirical findings on romantic experiences in contemporary contexts (Ralte, 2024). Furthermore, in psychological science, love is increasingly viewed as a multidimensional construct encompassing affective, cognitive, and behavioral components (Almeida & Rodrigues, 2024), supporting its application in clinical and literary analyses and reflecting the multidimensional romantic attitudes observed in contemporary non-monogamy research (Paccagnella et al., 2024).

Recent views emphasize that love is shaped by contextual and cultural influences, where emotional closeness remains universal. Cultural variations pose challenges because collectivist cultures prioritize commitment, whereas individualist cultures emphasize passion, a contrast also identified in large-scale international studies of romantic dynamics (Żelaźniewicz et al., 2025). This is evident in digital-age relationships, where passion is expressed differently through communication technologies, paralleling emotional mechanisms observed in online romantic contexts (Tran et al., 2025). Literary expressions of love in Eastern cultures are shaped by communal values and spiritual ideals, requiring cross-disciplinary approaches, which aligns with thematic analyses of romantic depictions within regional literature (Sudhakaran, 2025).

In literature, love frequently appears as a primary theme explored aesthetically and symbolically. Literature provides a rich medium for expressing the many dimensions of love, both profane and sacred, personal and universal. Through literary works, love can be interpreted not only as an emotion but as a philosophical and spiritual idea revealing deeper meanings of existence, reflecting the interpretative flexibility seen in gendered romantic narratives (Ablana et al., 2024). Novels possess reflective power in conveying human experiences, including multidimensional and intricate love. They create space for emotional exploration through character development, plotlines, conflicts, and symbolism, similar to interpretive findings in analyses of Eastern poetic depictions of love (Mukoro, 2023).

One writer who illustrates love with spiritual and philosophical nuance is Kahlil Gibran, a Lebanese-born literary figure who later lived in the United States. His works blend Eastern and Western values and exhibit distinctive spiritual depth, a blend mirrored in studies on contemporary literary spirituality (Santoso & Pramesti, 2023). Among his most renowned works is *Al-Nabiyy (The Prophet)* (Gibran, 2022), a poetic novel presenting reflections on human life, including love. This work elevates love as a divine force transcending earthly reality and providing inner enlightenment, consistent with interpretations of love as a multidimensional phenomenon across cultural texts (Calista & Pasopati, 2024).

In *Al-Nabiyy*, Gibran, through Al-Musthafa,

conveys philosophical teachings rich with symbolism and Sufi undertones. These elements appear in the emphasis on mahabba (divine love), spiritual purification, and fana' (self-annihilation). By framing love as both a human emotion and a path toward union with the Divine, Gibran draws on Sufi concepts that complement psychological interpretations and resonate with accounts of intimacy and transcendence in modern multicultural romantic studies (Joy & Nashwan, 2024). Love is positioned as a transcendental power capable of purifying the soul and guiding morality. From an Islamic psychological perspective, love is not only an emotion but also a path to divine nearness (Haque, 2004). "In Arabic mystical poetry, love functions as both a spiritual ascent and a psychological expression of the self, where identity dissolves and is reborn through divine longing." Hence, love in the novel requires an interdisciplinary analysis that bridges psychology and spirituality, a holistic approach aligned with recent analyses of cross-cultural romantic ethics (Akshaya & Niranjani, 2025).

These Sufi undertones extend throughout the narrative. Love appears as a transcendental force capable of purifying the soul and guiding morality toward spiritual truth. From an Islamic psychological lens, love is an emotional and spiritual path toward divine nearness (Haque, 2004). "In Arabic mystical poetry, love functions as both a spiritual ascent and a psychological expression of the self." Love thus cannot be interpreted merely in literal or romantic terms; it requires a deep interdisciplinary reading connecting psychological and spiritual dimensions, a methodology compatible with symbolic interpretations observed in Asian literary studies (Loinar & El Risman, 2024). Love in modern Arabic spiritual literature often symbolizes the bridge between earthly relationships and divine union, a perspective consistent with contemporary analyses of emotional narratives in cross-regional texts (Mukoro, 2023).

This study posits that although love in *Al-Nabiyy* appears spiritual and philosophical, its emotional structure can be analyzed through modern psychology. Bhargava (2023) emphasizes that lived experiences of love often defy rational categorization. Such an approach is necessary to scientifically explain the meaning of love in the novel without neglecting religious nuances, thereby paralleling diverse emotional portrayals in Southeast Asian romantic studies (Singal et al., 2025). Interdisciplinary perspectives suggest integrating psychological models with literary analysis to enrich interpretations and enhance cultural literacy, aligning with similar methodological frameworks applied in film-based love theory research. Thus, Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love becomes a relevant analytical framework for dissecting emotional and structural components in the novel.

Love as a universal theme continues attracting thinkers and scholars. Gibran, through *The Prophet (Al-Nabiyy)*, presents love as emotional and spiritual reality. This study draws on modern psychological theories, particularly Sternberg's triangular theory of

love (1986), along with Fromm's (1956) view that love is an art requiring knowledge and dedication. While Sternberg offers an emotional-structural model, Fromm provides an ethical-practical lens, a combination reinforced by analyses of romantic structures in global relational studies (Żelaźniewicz et al., 2025).

Robert J. Sternberg introduced the Triangular Theory of Love in 1986 and later expanded it in *The New Psychology of Love* (Sternberg & Weis, 2018). In his seminal work, Sternberg (1986) stated: "Love can be understood in terms of three components intimacy, passion, and commitment" (p. 119). This theory explains that the components interact to form different types of love. The model's relevance is further supported by contemporary adaptations such as the TLS-15 validation study across 37 languages (Kowal et al., 2024), as well as its application in AI-related emotional attachment research (Pal et al., 2023).

However, only a few studies have attempted to connect this theory with Sufi discourse and Eastern literary works, even though similar cross-interpretive approaches appear in modern analyses of South Asian poetic traditions (Arisar & Buriro, 2025). This research is significant because it bridges two domains: psychology and literature, a methodological direction that has also expanded in contemporary media-based romantic analysis. *The Prophet* conveys Sufi nuances through the concepts of *maḥabba* (love), *uns* (spiritual closeness), and *fanā'* (self-annihilation), which can be examined alongside Sternberg's components of love, echoing recent explorations of triangular love structures in technological and AI-mediated contexts (Tran et al., 2025). Thus, this study not only analyzes a literary text but also highlights the relevance of psychological theory to the interpretation of spiritually oriented works. The aim of this study is to identify the representations of passion, intimacy, and commitment in *The Prophet* and to demonstrate its contribution to the development of contemporary literary psychology, a development increasingly evident in research on cross-cultural psychological representations of romantic attachment (Nabila & Gunawan, 2023).

Recent perspectives emphasize that these components do not operate in isolation but interact as a unified cognitive-emotional process, consistent with findings on triangular components in international relational samples (Paccagnella et al., 2024). Empirical validations confirm the reliability of Sternberg's three-component structure across various relational contexts, including studies of love development in older adults (Ribeiro-Gonçalves et al., 2025). Evidence also suggests that commitment increases across long-term relationships while passion becomes more stable over time, and intimacy peaks mid-relationship unless consciously maintained, a pattern also noted in South African validations of the Triangular Love Scale (Nel & Govender, 2025). Further research supports the structural validity of Sternberg's model across cultures, demonstrating its broader applicability and reinforcing observations from neural and

psychological examinations of romantic relationships (Das & Rao, 2022). These insights are strengthened by findings suggesting Sternberg's triangular theory remains relevant when both cognitive and affective dimensions are considered, which corresponds with large-scale psychometric examinations of Sternberg's constructs (Kowal et al., 2024).

Fromm (1956) emphasizes that love is not merely a feeling but an art requiring knowledge, discipline, and dedication, a notion supported by recent perspectives showing that triangular components influence emotional development and well-being (Joy & Nashwan, 2024). Contemporary analyses also argue that love research today prioritizes dynamic relational processes and examines how commitment, passion, and intimacy evolve over time, a perspective aligned with qualitative accounts of online intimacy among unmarried adults. Passion refers to the emotional and physiological components of love, encompassing sexual desire, physical attraction, and the excitement of being close to a loved one, findings that parallel those on passion-related expressions in digital relationships (Ralte, 2024). Intimacy relates to emotional closeness, trust, mutual understanding, and the comfort of sharing feelings, while commitment involves the conscious decision to maintain love over time despite challenges, a dynamic also seen in interpretations of relationship satisfaction among emerging adults (Nabila & Gunawan, 2023). This psychological structure is supported by neuroscientific insights that explain how intimacy, passion, and commitment involve distinct yet interrelated neural systems, consistent with multidimensional analyses of fictional romantic psychology (Najam et al., 2024).

According to Sternberg, combinations of these three components result in seven primary forms of love. 'Infatuation' involves only passion, typically strong but superficial, a structure also reflected in analyses of romantic portrayals in modern fiction (Ro'is & Wulandari, 2023). 'Liking' refers to intimacy without passion or commitment, while 'empty love' relies on commitment alone, a form echoed in the representation of emotionally constrained relationships in literary and film analysis (Antikha & Hasyim, 2025). Other forms include 'romantic love', combining passion and intimacy without commitment; 'companionate love', involving intimacy and commitment without passion; and 'fatuous love', which combines passion and commitment without true intimacy a structure also explored in intercultural studies of love confirmation mechanisms (Song, 2025). The ideal form is 'consummate love', balancing passion, intimacy, and commitment, consistent with findings on predictors of consummate love among married students (Setyawati et al., 2024). Sternberg's theory is dynamic, recognizing that each component may evolve over time; it is a flexible model supported by evidence from empowerment-based interventions that reduce marital conflict (Rostami et al., 2025). This adaptability makes the theory suitable for analyzing both real-life relationships and fictional characters, aligning with

recent applications of the triangular model in Southeast Asian literary contexts (Sudhakaran, 2025).

Applying Sternberg's theory to literary analysis is not new, underscoring the flexibility of this framework for examining diverse forms of love in realist and symbolic fiction, as in its application to narratives of homosexual love in contemporary Chinese contexts (Jia, 2022). Long-term research demonstrates its enduring influence across cross-cultural and interdisciplinary contexts, reaffirming the model's relevance to both empirical and interpretive domains, a pattern that parallels studies exploring love in AI-interaction frameworks (Pal et al., 2023). However, recent perspectives suggest limitations in the theory's universal applicability; digital contexts indicate that expressions of passion, intimacy, and commitment can still align with traditional dimensions of love, a pattern observed in telecommunication relational models grounded in Sternberg's theory (Amani, 2022). Other findings indicate that the Triangular Love Scale does not fully capture alternative relational models, suggesting expanded conceptualization may be needed, as demonstrated in multilingual structural validations of the TLS-15 (Kowal et al., 2024). Symbolic expressions of love across languages reveal emotional universals and culture-specific nuances, indicating metaphorical and semiotic approaches can broaden Sternberg's psychological lens—a direction also pursued in comparative poetic analyses (Mukoro, 2023).

Sorokowski et al. (2020) conducted a cross-cultural study across 25 countries confirming the universality and psychometric strength of the Triangular Love Scale, findings consistent with updated multilingual adaptations of the scale (Kowal et al., 2024). Regional adaptations support its relevance in collectivist contexts, paralleling African applications of the TLS and demonstrating contextual consistency (Nel & Govender, 2025). Numerous studies have explored emotional dynamics in literary characters, showing that passion, intimacy, and commitment shape narrative arcs, conflict, and moral choices, a trend observed in novel analyses applying Sternberg's framework (Calista & Pasopati, 2024). Classical traditions also demonstrate that love can be analyzed through modern theories, whereas cultural/spiritual traditions shape emotional experiences, as illustrated in Southeast Asian literary depictions of devotion (Singal et al., 2025). Literary works across cultures reveal symbolic portrayals of love reflecting evolving values, consistent with cross-cultural studies of commitment and passion in online dating (Juneja, 2024). Analyses of Middle Eastern spiritual literature show love emerges not just as emotion but as metaphysical and moral construct aligning with psychological theories, similar to depictions in South Asian poetic heritage (Arisar & Buriro, 2025). Sternberg's contributions in *The New Psychology of Love* (Sternberg & Weis, 2018) provide quantitative analyses across cultures and genres, reinforcing the model's versatility and aligning with recent theoretical expansions such as the

RELIC theory of love (Sternberg & Sternberg, 2024).

Accordingly, this study affirms prior findings but also expands the scope by applying Sternberg's theory in a spiritual-Sufi context, an area rarely addressed in literary psychology, similar to applications of the model in Qur'anic family harmony research (Anam & Bakar, 2024). This contributes to the development of love theory within Eastern literature enriched with transcendental meaning, a significance mirrored in empirical applications of triangular structures to explore AI-based emotional attachment (Tran et al., 2025). However, applying this theory to spiritual or Sufi contexts remains uncommon. Gibran's *Al-Nabiyy* offers fertile ground for examining how Sternberg's three components may be interpreted within elevated, transcendental love, reflecting processes similar to symbolic meditations within cross-cultural poetic traditions (Mukoro, 2023). In this work, love serves not only interpersonal bonds but also relationships between humans and the Divine and universal humanitarian values, echoing patterns identified in global analyses of passion, intimacy, and commitment (Ribeiro-Goncalves et al., 2025). Romantic love in a spiritual context serves as a means of self-transcendence and purification, elevating personal attachment into a transformative experience, a concept evident in fictional analyses drawing on Sternberg's model (Najam et al., 2024).

In *Al-Nabiyy*, love is articulated through orations delivered by Al-Musthafa to the people of Orphalese. On one level, love binds people in intimacy and compassion; on another, it purifies the soul, capable of wounding and healing patterns consistent with emotional narratives captured in various literary applications of the triangular model (Ro'is & Wulandari, 2023). Such representations demand deeper analysis to understand how passion, intimacy, and commitment manifest not merely as ordinary emotions but become spiritual and moral values, a transformation similar to interpretive analyses in Asian romance literature (Sudhakaran, 2025). Therefore, this study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach to identify and analyze how Sternberg's components appear in *Al-Nabiyy*, and how these elements are framed within Gibran's Sufi spiritual framework. Through an interdisciplinary approach combining psychology and literature, this research contributes to advancing literary psychology studies, aiding understanding of love as both emotional and spiritual entity in Eastern literary works, an approach reinforced by cross-media triangular theory applications (Santoso & Pramesti, 2023).

METHODS

This study applies a literary psychology framework by employing a descriptive-analytical method to explain the use of psychological theory, specifically Robert J. Sternberg's triangular theory of love, within the context of a literary work. This literary-psychological approach is particularly suitable

for analyzing Middle Eastern literature, in which emotional and philosophical elements are frequently embedded in symbolic narrative structures. The primary data consist of selected excerpts from Kahlil Gibran's *Al-Nabiyy*, based on the English translation *The Prophet* (Gibran, 2022). The data collection process relies on textual material from *Al-Nabiyy* (*The Prophet*), particularly passages that illustrate the components of Sternberg's triangular theory of love: passion, intimacy, and commitment. These data were gathered through close reading and systematic note-taking, during which relevant quotations were identified, highlighted, and categorized thematically. Unlike empirical studies involving human participants, data collection in literary research is grounded entirely in textual analysis. Each excerpt serves as an analytical unit, functioning as the instrument that links the literary portrayal of love with Sternberg's psychological model.

The compiled data were subsequently grouped by component and analyzed interpretively to uncover the emotional and philosophical expressions of love within the narrative. This research falls within the third category of literary psychology outlined by Wellek and Warren (1949): the application of psychological theories to literary texts, with a focus on the representation of Sternberg's triangular theory of love within the storyline.

The primary source of data is *Al-Nabiyy*, a translation of Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet*, first published by Alfred A. Knopf in 1923. The data consist of narrative and dialogic excerpts relevant to Sternberg's components—intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment. Data collection was carried out through close reading and systematic note-taking, followed by the use of classification tables to organize the excerpts according to aspects of the love theory. Data analysis was performed using a descriptive-interpretative approach through several steps: (1) identifying textual data associated with each of the three components of love, (2) categorizing the data into Sternberg's three-dimensional model, (3) interpreting the psychological significance of each excerpt within the narrative, and (4) drawing conclusions. The defining characteristic of the descriptive analysis technique is the breakdown of data according to similar elements, enabling the analyzed material to be presented as a structured research report that answers the research questions and identifies the dominant form of love as well as the message the author seeks to convey through the depiction of love in the text.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the systematic analysis of the data, the following table summarizes the representation of the love component, drawn from quotations from the novel *Al-Nabiyy*. There are three components of love analyzed in Kahlil Gibran's novel *Al-Nabiyy*: passion, intimacy, and commitment. This classification refers to

Robert J. Sternberg's triangular theory of love, which states that love consists of three main interrelated elements. To clarify the interpretation of meaning in the text, each component is represented through the following indicators: Passion relates to the emotional aspect, such as a strong inner drive, intensity of feeling, and a burning spiritual attraction.

Table 1 The Representation of Love Components in Kahlil Gibran *Al-Nabiyy* (Author's analysis, 2025)

No	Components of Love	Aspect	Amount of Data
1.	Passion	Emotional	3
2.	Intimacy	Openness and Empathy	2
3.	Commitment	Determination and Loyalty	4
Total			9

Based on the identification results presented in Table 1, it was found that, of the nine data points analyzed, each love component occurs with varying frequency.

Intimacy is shown through openness and empathy, namely, deep emotional closeness, mutual understanding, and respect for each other's personal space. Commitment represents steadfastness and loyalty, that is, a conscious decision to love consistently and unconditionally, even in challenging situations. The passion component, which relates to the emotional aspect, consists of 3 data points. Meanwhile, intimacy, representing openness and empathy, is identified in 2 data points. Commitment, which reflects steadfastness and loyalty, is the dominant component, comprising 4 data points. In total, 9 quotations were analyzed, all of which are found within the love narratives of the novel.

Love in Kahlil Gibran's novel *Al-Nabiyy* presents a complex emotional, spiritual, and philosophical dynamic. By employing Robert J. Sternberg's triangular theory of love as an analytical framework, the three main components of love, passion, intimacy, and commitment, can be identified in the text. The analysis examines the narrative, dialogue, and symbolism that reflect emotional relationships among characters and the narrator's conceptions of love.

Passion appears three times, intimacy twice, and commitment four times. This indicates that commitment is the most prominent aspect in the novel's representation of love. The following discussion elaborates on each of these three components.

According to Robert J. Sternberg (1986), passion is a strong emotional drive that involves both physical and psychological fascination. Passion often serves as the primary entry point in the dynamics of love, characterized by intensity and turbulence. In *Al-Nabiyy*, Kahlil Gibran portrays the passion of love as a burning spiritual energy, one that not only brings

joy but also demands courage. As demonstrated in the following data:

الحب لا يعطي الاذاته, ولا يأخذ الا من ذاته

“Love gives nothing but itself and takes nothing but from itself.” (Gibran, 2022, p. 12)

Love in *Al-Nabiyy* is depicted as an inner force that resists the logic of possession. In several passages, Gibran emphasizes that love cannot be controlled, owned, or demanded in return. Love exists as a complete entity, sufficient in and of itself.

وان الحب لا يملك, ولا يريد أن يمتلك: لأن الحب
مكتف بالحب

“Love possesses not, nor would it be possessed; For love is sufficient unto love itself.” (Gibran, 2022, p. 13)

Love gives naught but itself and takes naught but from itself. Love possesses not nor would it be possessed. (Gibran, 2022). This data illustrates Kahlil Gibran's view of love as a force unbound by possession or the desire to dominate. In the quoted passage, love is positioned as an independent and complete entity, content with its own existence without the need to control or possess the other. Gibran rejects the concept of possessive love and replaces it with love as an energy of freedom and openness. Furthermore, the data also reveals the paradox of love that can both wound and heal, reflecting the passionate nature that is intense and vulnerable. This mirrors the passion component in Sternberg's theory (1986), which manifests as a profound emotional drive—intense yet filled with existential challenges. Neuroscientific perspectives on emotional experience similarly note that strong affective states involve complex interactions of emotional and cognitive systems (Almeida & Rodrigues, 2024). As contemporary research indicates, emotional intensity in love is often linked to heightened psychological arousal and deep affective processing (Bhargava, 2023).

This expression reinforces the idea of love as a burning yet non-possessive force. Gibran rejects the notion of love driven by the desire to possess, instead presenting it as a liberating energy. In this sense, passion appears not only as attraction but also as an existential impulse that enlivens the soul. Furthermore, Gibran states:

كثيراً ما جرحك الحب، فهل له إلا ذاته يضمدها
جراحه؟

“Often it is love that wounds you, so is there anything but love itself that can heal its wound?” (Gibran, 2022, p. 13)

This data reveals the paradox of love in *Al-*

Nabiyy by Kahlil Gibran as both a source of pain and a means of healing. The quotation shows that passion carries a force that not only shakes but also has the power to heal. In Sternberg's view (1986), passion can indeed be so dominant that it creates vulnerability. Gibran conveys that love is not merely about beauty and happiness, but also the courage to accept and experience pain. Thus, passion in *Al-Nabiyy* is not merely affection or attraction, but a spiritual force that demands courage, awareness, and acceptance of all the possibilities that love may bring.

The intimate relationships described by Gibran highlight respect for individuality while nurturing closeness, a view that extends Sternberg's conceptualization of intimacy. This resonates with findings showing that emotional security and interpersonal openness are key elements in fostering relational stability (Nabila & Gunawan, 2023). Moreover, in Sufi literature, intimacy parallels the concept of *uns* (familiarity with the Divine), where closeness emerges from empathy and surrender (Haque, 2004). By presenting intimacy as openness and non-possession, Gibran challenges Western romantic norms and instead aligns with Eastern spiritual traditions that prioritize compassion over control. This dual framing allows readers to perceive intimacy as both psychological security and spiritual nearness, expanding the interpretive scope of Sternberg's model.

Sternberg (1986) defines intimacy as emotional closeness and openness between individuals. Intimacy reflects a sense of mutual trust, understanding, and the depth of a non-physical relationship built between two parties. This view aligns with Gibran's following expression:

أولادكم ليسوا أولاداً لكم، انهم أبناء وبنات الحياة
المشتاقة الى نفسها

“Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.” (Gibran, 2022, p. 20)

This data illustrates Gibran's view that children are independent beings and should not be regarded as their parents' possessions. In the context of intimacy, it shows that emotional closeness is not the same as ownership, but rather a respect for the other's independence within the relationship. This quotation emphasizes the importance of recognizing the existence and independence of others within an intimate relationship. Research affirms that intimacy is strengthened through respect for autonomy and emotional understanding (Paccagnella et al., 2024). Intimacy in this context does not imply possession, but rather understanding and acceptance. In Sternberg's theory, intimacy involves empathy, openness, and emotional closeness, all elements reflected in Gibran's teachings about a parent's love for their child as a relationship between open souls. Contemporary literary analyses also highlight that depictions of intimacy frequently blend emotional connection with

spiritual transcendence (Arisar & Buriro, 2025).

Furthermore, Gibran illustrates the intimate relationship through the analogy:

أنتم الأقواس وأولادكم سهام حية قد رمت بها
الحياة عن أقواسكم

“You are the bows, and your children are living arrows sent forth by Life through your bows.” (Gibran, 2022, p. 21)

This data uses the analogy of the bow and arrow to describe the parent-child relationship, where parents provide direction and support without restraint. It illustrates healthy intimacy characterized by emotional closeness and freedom within the relationship. Gibran portrays the relationship as a force that guides without restricting. Such a relationship symbolizes healthy intimacy: there is closeness and influence, yet without destructive control. This aligns with studies showing that intimacy thrives when support is offered without limiting autonomy (Ribeiro-Gonçalves et al., 2025). This balance between closeness and individuality is also highlighted in analyses that explore how cultural narratives portray intimacy as a connection that honors independence while maintaining emotional unity (Najam et al., 2024). As noted in spiritual and literary interpretations, intimacy often reflects a form of nearness shaped by compassion, humility, and non-attachment (Anam & Bakar, 2024).

The bow-and-arrow analogy reflects a love that liberates and understands each individual's life purpose. This reflects emotional closeness within Sternberg's theory of intimacy, in which relationships are built on mutual respect for differences. In Sternberg's view (Sternberg, 1986), commitment is a conscious decision to maintain love consistently over the long term, including when faced with suffering. Research grounded in Sternberg's framework emphasizes that long-term romantic commitment is closely tied to emotional security, mutual reassurance, and sustained psychological investment (Nabila & Gunawan, 2023). This is supported by findings showing that emotional regulation significantly contributes to sustaining commitment during periods of interpersonal strain in long-term romantic relationships (Juneja, 2024). Recent studies demonstrate that the sustainability of commitment relies heavily on emotional regulation and shared life goals (Ribeiro-Gonçalves et al., 2025). Gibran emphasizes that true love contains elements of sacrifice and loyalty. This is evident in the following quotation:

ليملأ الواحد كأس الآخر، ولكن لا يشربا من كأس
واحدة

"Fill each other's cup, but drink not from the same cup." (Gibran, 2022, p. 15)

These data emphasize the importance of sharing love without sacrificing individual identity.

Commitment in love does not mean merging into one, but rather supporting each other and maintaining each person's wholeness. Studies on cross-cultural relationships indicate that commitment involves mutual negotiation of values and emotional resilience, enabling couples to maintain harmony while honoring cultural differences (Braida et al., 2023). In Sternberg's theory, this illustrates a commitment that allows each individual to remain whole within the relationship.

The quotation underscores the importance of sharing in love while also emphasizing the need for healthy boundaries in a relationship. Commitment is not total assimilation that erases individual identity, but an awareness to support one another. In the context of Sternberg's theory, this quote indicates that committed love preserves each party's integrity. Gibran also writes:

غنوا وارقصوا معاً وكونوا فرحين، ولكن ليكن
كل منكم وحده

“Sing and dance together, and be joyous, but let each one of you remain alone.” (Gibran, 2022, p. 16)

This data portrays commitment as a balance between togetherness and individuality. The spiritual framing of commitment in literary narratives often portrays enduring love not merely as decision-based loyalty, but as a form of inner devotion and soul-centered integrity (Arisar & Buriro, 2025). Gibran invites couples to enjoy love together without losing their sense of self. Sternberg views commitment as a conscious act to continue loving without sacrificing personal identity.

Gibran encourages couples to celebrate love together while preserving their own identities. This is the essence of committed yet non-possessive love. From Sternberg's perspective, commitment is a deliberate choice to remain loving under all circumstances. In this quotation, Gibran shows that the best form of commitment is one that maintains the balance between togetherness and independence. Furthermore, Gibran conveys a musical analogy:

كما أن أوتار العود قائمة وحدها، غير أنها ترتعش
بنفس الموسيقى

“Like the strings of a harp that stand alone, yet vibrate with the same music.” (Gibran, 2022, p. 17)

This data uses the analogy of two individuals who stand independently yet harmoniously. According to Sternberg's theory, commitment need not result in absolute dependence but rather in a shared awareness and will to remain united as whole individuals. The analogy suggests two complementary individuals, each standing alone but in inner harmony. Commitment is grounded in mutual awareness and a shared desire to remain united while remaining complete individuals. Zohar and Marshall (2001) describe spiritual intelligence as the capacity to find meaning

and transcendence in experience, a conception that resonates with Gibran's narrative, which frames love as a form of higher awareness. It shows that commitment does not necessarily mean total dependence. In an ideal relationship, according to Sternberg, commitment is based on mutual awareness and the shared desire to stay united while remaining complete individuals. The conclusion of this section is marked by Gibran's advice:

أعطوا من خبزكم لبعضكم لبعض، ولكن لا تأكلوا
من الرغيف الواحد

"Give one another of your bread, but eat not from the same loaf." (Gibran, 2022, p. 18)

This data implies love that gives without demanding anything in return. Gibran emphasizes commitment as a voluntary sacrifice and the continuity of love in all circumstances. In Sternberg's theory, commitment is a conscious choice to love maturely and responsibly. The love expressed in this quotation is giving without expecting anything back. Gibran suggests that true love is about continuity and voluntary sacrifice. In Sternberg's theory, commitment involves a conscious decision to keep loving through all situations. Thus, this quote affirms mature love, giving sincerely, remaining independent, and walking together based on a sustained conscious choice.

In summary, the analysis indicates that the three components of Sternberg's triangular theory of love are explicitly and implicitly present in *The Prophet*. Passion is not limited to physical desire but is transformed into spiritual ecstasy, manifested in Gibran's aesthetic expressions of divine beauty. Intimacy emerges as profound closeness aligned with the Sufi concept of *uns*, signifying deep familiarity between the soul and God. Commitment is consistently oriented toward transcendental values, resonating with the Sufi idea of *fanā'*, or total self-surrender.

These findings enrich Sternberg's theory and correspond with recent research. Contemporary psychological research highlights how affective and cognitive dimensions of love extend beyond biological responses, supporting the view of passion as a spiritual experience (Almeida & Rodrigues, 2024). Studies also emphasize emotional regulation in long-term relationships, echoing the intimacy in Gibran's text (Juneja, 2024). Research on spiritual and transcendent dimensions of romantic love further aligns with the commitment revealed in Gibran's work (Anam & Bakar, 2024). Thus, the discussion demonstrates that *The Prophet* is not only relevant within literary studies but also contributes to cross-disciplinary psychological scholarship. Therefore, the following conclusion synthesizes these findings to highlight the study's main results, novelty, and implications.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that love in Kahlil Gibran's *Al-Nabiyy* is effectively analyzed using Robert J. Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love, which includes passion, intimacy, and commitment. The textual analysis demonstrates that passion is expressed as a pure and spiritual force; intimacy is reflected through empathy, closeness, and openness; and commitment is represented by teachings of love that sustain togetherness without erasing individuality. From the nine quotations analyzed, commitment was found to be the most dominant component, while passion and intimacy complemented it within a spiritual framework.

The novelty of this study lies in showing that Sternberg's model can be expanded through Sufi perspectives such as *uns* (spiritual intimacy) and *fanā'* (self-surrender), which transform psychological categories into transcendent experiences. Therefore, this cross-disciplinary insight bridges psychology, literature, and Sufism, thus enriching literary psychology with a broader cultural and spiritual dimension. The implication of this research is twofold. First, it illustrates that literary texts can serve as a medium for psychological exploration beyond cultural boundaries; and second, it provides a foundation for future studies to integrate literary psychology with spiritual and cross-cultural perspectives.

Furthermore, This study contributes by showing how Sternberg's triangular theory of love can be expanded through Sufi spirituality, offering a model for future interdisciplinary and comparative studies in spiritual literature. Moreover, literary works such as *Al-Nabiyy* affirm their role as reflective media for understanding psychological dynamics. Future research may employ other love theories, such as humanistic psychology or psychoanalysis, or compare *Al-Nabiyy* with other spiritual texts to broaden the scope of analysis. Accordingly, the following references provide the scholarly foundation and supporting evidence for this study.

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Data Availability Statement:

Data openly available in a public repository that issues datasets with DOIs. The data that support the findings of the research are openly available in published editions of *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran (1923/2022) at <https://archive.org/details/the-prophet-gibran>

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details/the-prophet-gibran.

Data derived from public domain resources. The data that support the findings of the research are available in published editions of *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran at <https://archive.org/details/the-prophet-gibran>. These data were derived from the following resources available in the public domain: *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran (1923/2022), available at <https://archive.org/details/the-prophet-gibran>, *The New Psychology of Love* by Robert J. Sternberg & Karin Weis (Yale University Press, 2006), Various scholarly articles cited in the reference list that are publicly accessible via CrossRef and Google Scholar.

Data generated at a central, large-scale facility, available upon request. Raw textual data were obtained from *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran (Penguin Classics, 2022). Derived data supporting the findings of the research (Such as classification tables and analyses) are available from the corresponding author **D.K.D** on request.

Data available on request from the authors. The data that support the findings of the research are available from the corresponding author, **D.K.D**, upon reasonable request. Explain the reason why the readers must request the data.

Embargo on data due to commercial restrictions. Not applicable. The data supporting the findings are publicly available and do not require embargo or commercial restriction.

Data subject to third party restrictions. Not applicable. The data used in this study are publicly available and were not obtained from any third-party source.

Non-digital data available. Non-digital data supporting the research archive of the corresponding author (**D.K.D**).

Data not available due to [ethical/legal/commercial] restrictions. Not applicable. The supporting data are publicly available and do not have ethical, legal, or commercial restrictions.

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