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**Title- Medicine and Literature: Exploring Illness and Intersectionality of Gender and Class**

## **FINDING**

Illness is not merely a biological condition but a lived experience deeply intertwined with the social realities of gender and class. This interdisciplinary research examines how contemporary English and Urdu novels portray the intersection of illness, gender, and class, revealing the nuanced dynamics of human suffering and resilience. Literature, through its narrative depth, becomes a vital medium to explore these complexities, offering insights into personal and societal perceptions of health and identity.

Grounded in Narrative Medicine and Medical Humanities, this study also draws upon Cultural Studies, Feminist and Marxist theory, Postmodernism, Queer Theory, and Critical Disability Studies. Eight novels—*Life is What You Make It* (Preeti Shenoy), *Trying to Grow* (Firdaus Kanga), *Tulip* (Sumaira Hameed), *Parizaad* (Hashim Nadeem), *Handle with Care* (Jodi Picoult), *The Fault in Our Stars* (John Green), *Sick Kids in Love* (Hannah Moskowitz), and *Still Alice* (Lisa Genova)—have been selected for their thematic focus on illness, postmodern narrative structures, and authors' personal connections with illness.

These novels portray a wide range of medical conditions—physical disabilities, chronic illnesses, and mental health struggles—while addressing how these experiences are shaped by gender roles and class hierarchies. Characters like Hazel, Alice, Parizaad, Abu Bakr, Isabel, and Ankita navigate societal stigma, personal identity crises, and relational complexities in the face of illness. The narratives challenge traditional medical discourse by offering first-person,

emotionally resonant accounts that foreground the lived reality of illness and disrupt the notion of a universal medical truth.

The thesis is structured into nine chapters. It begins with a theoretical and methodological overview, including research questions that interrogate literature's role in shaping our understanding of illness and its intersection with social determinants. Subsequent chapters explore the historical representation of illness in literature, the psychological and linguistic dimensions of trauma and silence, identity disruptions, relational dynamics, and open-ended illness narratives reflective of postmodern sensibilities. The study further investigates how class and gender mediate illness experiences—affecting access to care, quality of treatment, and narrative visibility—through the lenses of theorists like Virginia Woolf, Susan Sontag, Michel Foucault, Kathy Charmaz, and Judith Butler.

Ultimately, this research argues that literary narratives are crucial for unpacking the entangled experiences of health, gender, and class. These stories humanize illness, offer empathy, and question dominant socio-medical ideologies. The thesis emphasizes that illness transcends geographical and cultural boundaries, connecting people across divides through shared suffering and resilience. In doing so, it calls for a more inclusive, empathetic, and socially aware understanding of healthcare as not just clinical but fundamentally human.