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<b>Article:</b>	<b>Exploring the Cultural Relevance and Pedagogical Practices of Mother Fixation in Reference to <i>Sons and Lovers</i></b>
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### **ABSTRACT**

Sons and Lovers has been among the most significant works of D.H. Lawrence which is being taught in many universities of Pakistan for several years. As a piece of art, undeniably, this novel conveys some moral values and an exact picture of life, but the dominant theme about the phenomenon of Mother Fixation exercises some adverse impact on students' perception for its being a taboo in our society. Thus, the present study aims at exploring the effective pedagogical practices of the Theme of Mother Fixation to Pakistani students through investigating the attitudes and opinions of teachers. It has adopted phenomenology as a research paradigm. Data was collected from two universities in Quetta city. The study examined some of the obstacles that teachers face in literature class, while dealing with this theme as well as how they tend to overcome these hurdles. There is some indication from the data that majority of the respondents expressed feelings of embarrassment and hesitation while discussing the Theme of Mother Fixation, especially in the presence of the opposite sex and preferred to avoid the sensitive aspect of incestuous relationships in the novel. The result has shown that the Theme of Mother Fixation, if handled properly while observing the ethical limitations of Pakistani society, would not harm the perception of the students about their family values. In addition to this, teachers cited valid concerns about giving a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the psychological aspect of the theme, taking into consideration the cultural reservations of Pakistani society.

**Key Words:** Mother Fixation, Relationship, Phenomenology, Sons and Lovers, Sigmund Freud

### Introduction:

D.H. Lawrence is one of the most prolific novelists of England. His novel *Sons and Lovers* is generally regarded as the first psychoanalytical novel in the history of English Literature. The entire story of the novel revolves around the Theme of Mother Fixation. By the last decade of the 19th Century, Freudian Theories exercised a profound impact on moral values, consequently weakening the religious faith. The major theme of the novel is the study of subconscious and unconscious. It is preeminently an autobiographical novel wherein the novelist has shared his life experiences about oedipal complications dealt by Freud with the readers. Though Lawrence himself declared that he did not read Freud while writing *Sons and Lovers* but only heard of him. In 1912 there were many discussions between Lawrence and Frieda (his wife) on Oedipus. A similar viewpoint was given by Edward (2010) when he argued that the undeniable fact about the novel is that it is an autobiographical account of Lawrence's life. However, it is very difficult to make a distinction in between Lawrence the Man and Lawrence the Novelist who is mostly considered as a sensualist.

### Mother Fixation in Reference to Cultural Relevance

In Lawrence's novels, the subjects of sex, psychology and religion have a paramount place. *Sons and Lovers* ranks very high as a piece of classic but at the same time illustrates a theory which is nothing less than shocking for a Pakistani reader. As Hough (1956) contends that *Sons and Lovers* presents before us many layers of experience. Fundamentally the novel is a "catharsis achieved by reliving an actual experience – reliving over and over again" (p.36). Freud interpreted the preference that mothers have for their sons in the light of this phenomenon, as he mentioned in "Totem and Taboo" (1913), which created many problems in ancient civilizations. He further added "The Battas of Sumatra" where a father may never be alone with his daughter or a mother with her son. Freud was under the deep impression of Sophocles tragedy and this swayed him to generalize a theory, as he wrote to one of his friends: "I have found in my own case too, falling in love with the mother and jealousy of the father, and I now regard it as a universal event of childhood. If that is so, we can understand the riveting power of Oedipus Rex" (Young 1995 p.79). Though Freud (1900) asserted that "people should accept the facts that myth reveals, like Oedipus accepts inevitable fate" (p.132) but mostly the love or fascination that male children display to their mothers is not seen in the light of Mother Fixation in our society. The cultural differences that exist between Eastern and Western worlds, make it difficult for students to read about this theory without developing any anxiety or mental disturbance. Besides, not only in Pakistan, even in Iran, once D. H. Lawrence was excluded by the compilers of *Norton Anthology* due to his sexual descriptions. Jeffers L. Thomas (1999) criticized Lawrence's writings for being controversial and termed him the forerunner of "sexual revolution." (p.191). He further mentioned that Freud damaged the principles which encourage youngsters to marry and stay married due to his overemphasis on the fulfillment of sexual instinct.

### Mother Fixation - Freudian Interpretation

*Sons and Lovers* is preeminently an autobiographical novel by D. H. Lawrence wherein he has shared his life experiences about oedipal complications with the readers. As Hough (1956) contends that *Sons and Lovers* presents before us many layers of experience. Fundamentally the novel is a "catharsis achieved by reliving an actual experience – reliving over and over again" (p.36). Though Lawrence himself declared that he did not read Freud

while writing “Sons and Lovers” but only heard of him. In 1912 there were many discussions in between Lawrence and Frieda (his wife) on Oedipus. A similar viewpoint was given by Edward (2010) when he argues that the undeniable fact about the novel is that it is an autobiographical account of Lawrence’s life. However, it is very difficult to make a distinction in between Lawrence the Man and Lawrence the Novelist as the tension that remains in hero’s sexual impulse might be because his creator Lawrence fails to manage his own personal issues with his mother, his wife and women in general. Whatever the case may be, as Horney (1980) revealed, there can never be a universal phenomenon because of the social variations in cultures what is considered as abnormal or healthy in one society may be normal in the neighboring culture and vice versa and concluded that the theory arriving from European origin cannot be regarded universal to human behavior in non-Western cultures. Lessa (1956) expressed somewhat similar views as he stated:

“The oedipal situation is one that is culturally determined and culturally modified and is not the result of instinct, racial memory, or engrams of the past. It is not universal, for there are many social systems not conducive to its development. There is good evidence to show that, at least in this area, the presence of the tale type is mostly the result of diffusion and not of some psychological mechanism inspiring people independently to create it” (p.212).

Thus, we might say that significant cross-cultural variations exist in the proper communication and assessment of the phenomenon, which takes its specific shape due to variety of environmental sources.

### **Mother Fixation; Social Context**

Freudian Theory of Mother Fixation had been severely criticized by other psychologists like Jung (1912), Horney (1937), Erikson (1950), Sullivan (1953), and Fromm (1959) because of Freud’s emphasis on sexual derives in explaining the theory. Furthermore, they elaborated the social sources of motivation in describing it.

Beginning with a sexual basis, Freudian Mother Fixation discarded the notion of a child being asexual. In reality, a child’s mental fiber is asexual in nature; it depends on the environment in which he has been brought up. In the formation of mental disposition, it scarcely has any significant role rather social milieu molds a psychological bent of mind of a son. Additionally, the role of sexuality emphasized by Freud cannot be denied but it only applies to adult life.

A cursory glance at the stages of development in human life by Hilgard and Atkinson (1953) further elaborates the idea of a child’s “development of interpersonal relationships.”

***Figure 1: Stages of Development in Human Life***

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Radius of Significant Relations</b>
Oral stage	The first year	Maternal person
Anal stage	The second year	Parental person
Phallic stage	The third year through sixth year	Basic family
Latency	Sixth year until puberty	Neighborhood School
Genital stage	Adolescence to adulthood	Sex, competition, cooperation

Source: Hilgard, E.R., Atkinson, R.C. & Atkinson, R.L. (1953) *Introduction to Psychology*, Oxford and IBH, New York, p. 477.

The above table shows that in oral and anal stages, a child's main interaction is with parents. However, it exerts an everlasting impact on his personality development. In phallic stage he gets the realization of his social relations apart from his parents. So, parents' attitude and behavior implant the seeds of child's future relationships with other members of family.

There are certain factors that caused the phenomenon of Mother Fixation to develop in society. It is quite evident that a mother is the first being with whom a child builds his/her physical, emotional and mental attachment. As Erikson (1968) mentions that the fundamental trusts that originate in the baby's relationship with his mother "in the unmistakable language of somatic interchange, that the baby may trust her world and himself" (p.82). However, in a fatherly dominated society like ours, a child's first realization is the distinctive role of father and mother wherein a child observes that the father dominates mother while she performs the task of in-house administration. Seeing father as always keeping an upper hand over his mother, a child gradually develops a sense of hostility toward father and sympathy for mother. On the contrary, Freud gives a sexual interpretation to the similar emotions as Carey (1996) stated that a child's pre- oedipal connection with his mother gets "sexually exciting" and he starts considering his father as his opponent for his mother's love and desires to take his place (p.86).

Besides, Freud's practice of generalizing this phenomenon has been subjected to adverse criticism. As Street (2000) observed that Freud himself was pre-occupied by his early life experiences and tried to make this analysis as a universal phenomenon. Fromm (1949) while disagreeing with Freud, considers Mother Fixation not as sexual longing of a son for his mother rather a strive between father and son for authority. He observes:

"Individual and anthropological data gathered since Freud formulated his theory, however, have shaken our conviction as to its validity. These data have shown that the Oedipus complex in Freud's sense is not a universal human phenomenon and that the child's rivalry with the father does not occur in cultures without strong patriarchal authority. Furthermore, it has become evident that the tie to the mother is not essentially a sexual tie -- in fact that infantile sexuality when not suppressed has as its normal aim auto-erotic satisfactions and sexual contact with other children" (p.321).

It is obvious from this observation that Fromm departed from Freud's assertion of the universality of Mother Fixation and held this phenomenon to be the creation of specific culture, having some special kind of social organization. He further opined that Freud, in his attempt to reassure himself about his own excessive attachment to his mother to be quite normal, devised this theory. The reality is that Freud's own personality development and his annoyance with his own father made him formulate the Theory of Mother Fixation.

Chodorow (1997) critically evaluated Freud's theory and explains that the phenomenon is not based on the "anatomical distinction" between the sexes as reflected in Freud's Theory, but on the basis of object relationships and the cultural construction of family dynamics. She further emphasized on the mother-infant relationship to be constructed socially and culturally (p.7). Moreover, Shrier, Tompsett & Shrier (2004) expressed somewhat similar views when they stated that a child completely relies on his mother to fulfill his physical and emotional needs and is unable to recognize any differentiation between him and the mother. This primary attachment is the foundation of all human capacity to love in adult life. They are of the opinion

that the only way to cope with it is “shared parenting”, when husband and wife assume the role of caregiver responsibly such psychological disorders would end.

### **Research Question**

The present study was guided by the following research question:  
How should a teacher address the phenomenon of Mother Fixation while teaching the novel *Sons and Lovers*?

It is expected to be fruitful for the theoretical development of the knowledge on the selected novel. Since it has used phenomenology as a research paradigm by using individual psychological approach so will assist teachers and experts of the novel in providing insight into the complexities of the phenomenon.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Freudian psychology exercised a profound impact on English novel than drama or poetry, since novel has greater scope for psychological interpretation of characters and representation of diverse human relationships. D. H. Lawrence's novel *Sons and Lovers* is considered to be the first Freudian novel in English literature. This autobiographical novel deals with two major relationships: between mother, son and their beloved and the relationship between son, mother and father. Salami (1999) observed in “A Study of Thirty Great Novels” that some readers have found avid attachment between Gertrude Morel and her sons. Lawrence was well aware with Freudian Theories, which later influenced his writings of *Sons and Lovers*. Since the publication of the novel in 1913, critics and psychologists thought it to be a penetrating study of the sexual insinuations of mother-son love and how it might destroy the man who couldn't transfer such feelings to a mate. Often, Paul's relationship with Mrs. Morel was excessively passionate, who hated his father and wished to live with his mother. Resultantly, he faced great problems in finding a satisfying relationship with any other woman, except his mother. The constant inclusion of *Sons and Lovers* in the syllabus of so many schools, colleges and universities is due to Kuttner's observation in 1916, where he first drew the parallel between this novel and the contemporary Oedipal Theory of Sigmund Freud. Kuttner argues that complete perception of the novel needs Freudian Theory, “For without the Freudian psycho-sexual theories, *Sons and Lovers* remains an enigma; with it we see that artist and scientist supplement each other, that each in his own way attests to the same truth.” He further mentions, “Where Mr. Lawrence particularizes so passionately, Freud generalizes.”

Moreover, there are critics like Aldington (1968) who opine that *Sons and Lovers* is the first illustration of Freud's Theories of Psychoanalysis (p. 90). Since his early childhood, Paul, the hero of the novel, has been suffering from mother fixation and it puts forth a deep impact on his adult life. His unresolved oedipal complex makes him experience a strange fascination towards his mother. D. H. Lawrence uses this Freudian Theory as its base for the exploration of Paul's relationship with his mother. Lawrence depicts many scenes between the mother and son that go beyond the limitations of traditional mother-son love and they also conform to Freud's idea of Mother Fixation in son's hatred for father while often fantasizing his death. According to Freud (1900), we all are quite ignorant of these hidden desires which are disgusted by moral values but have been enforced by “Nature” and as soon as they are revealed, we try to shut our eyes from the memories of childhood (p. 365). On 14th November 1912 Lawrence elaborated the central idea of this novel in a letter to Edward Garnett that the novel aims at portraying mothers' grasp: “As her sons grow up, she selects them as lovers-first the eldest,

then the second. These sons are urged into life by their reciprocal love of their mother-urged on and on. But when they come to manhood, they can't love, because their mother is the strongest power in their lives" (Coombes, 1973, p. 67).

Ruderman's (1984), analyses the fiction "unresolved pre-oedipal conflicts beneath the oedipal overlay", such as the conflict between Paul Morel's "wish to merge with the caretaker mother and a fear that...dependency on her will destroy him." The "devouring mother" is one "who engulfs her children to assuage her own narcissistic needs" rather than allowing children to develop their own egos (p. 155).

In a letter of December 3, 1910, he wrote to the poet Rachel Taylor: "I was born hating my father: as early as ever I can remember, I shivered with horror when he touched me. He was very bad before I was born. This has been a kind of bond between me and my mother. We have loved each other, almost with a husband-and-wife love, as well as filial and maternal" (Aldington 1968, Selected Letters, I, p. 190).

Though we observe that when we speak of mother-son love or mother as love object, we find little boy's behavior to be quite natural and do not justify the concept of an erotic complex. This bond is the keystone, on one hand for the personality development of a son, and on the other hand, for all the future relationships with other women. In *Sons and Lovers*, we find Paul to be the center of mother's emotional life. This over-attachment frustrates Lawrence and results in writing out a really great novel. Freud's Theory of Mother Fixation is a vital issue of the novel. The novelist depicts a very strange sort of mother-son or male-female relationship, which is quite unusual, even sometimes very odd to readers. These imperfect relationships of the novel are among hotly debated and most analyzed issues in the history of English Literature. In the present study the researcher has selected this important novel to study the impact of this unique work on students' perception. So far, no research has been reported on this topic in Pakistan.

### **Research Design**

The study employs qualitative research paradigm. The researcher has attempted to gauge the perceptions of teachers about the impact of the phenomenon of Mother Fixation in the novel *Sons and Lovers*. The researcher made an in-depth analysis of the two universities of Quetta city – Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University, University of Balochistan with reference to the selected topic. Since these universities, where the study was carried out, is a typical specimen of the universities in Quetta, hence all the Pakistani universities teaching the novel *Sons and Lovers* to Bachelors and Masters students shall be considered as the population to which the study conclusions may be applied. All the students and teachers of English Department in these universities comprise the population of the study.

### **Interview Schedule for Teachers**

In order to gather data from the teachers, an interview schedule was developed. Initially, this schedule contained 15 questions but few items were included during the course of interview and some were modified or dropped.

Q 1. What steps the teachers should take to save their students from any psychological disorder by their first interaction with the phenomenon of Mother Fixation?

Q 2. In case of counter arguments regarding the phenomenon of Mother Fixation, how do you handle students?

Q 3. How do students respond during the classroom discussion of Mother Fixation?

Q 4. What ethical principles do you try to inculcate in your students while teaching *Sons and Lovers*?

Q 5. What should be the proper pedagogical strategy to deal with the phenomenon of Mother Fixation in the novel *Sons and Lovers*?

**Item No.1 What steps the teachers should take to save their students from any psychological disorder by their first interaction with the phenomenon of Mother Fixation?**

Literature is generally considered to be one of the most difficult subjects to teach. Its versatility lies in the fact that its core idea is not just to get an answer but to get an in-depth, inciting answer. Here the task of a teacher is to inculcate desirable principles in students' character that society considers worthwhile. When queried about some steps that teachers might take to prevent their students from any psychological problem, some of the respondents remarked that matters pertaining to psychoanalysis i.e. psycho-sexuality, mother fixation etc must be dealt with ultimate care in the classroom.

Keeping into consideration the complexities and complications of this theme, one of the respondents shared his opinion as; "Before starting the novel „Sons and Lovers“, I try to take all the students into confidence while ascertaining their moral fiber. Because I think that once the understanding is developed, the teacher-student relationship will be strengthened and will be beneficial for the future interaction on the theme of Mother Fixation."

Furthermore, some other respondents opined that there is a world of difference between eastern and western cultures. Teachers, while discussing controversial issues in the class should deal with such issues carefully because the customs which prevail in western culture are not applicable in eastern culture. Though there may be some similarities, they are different in the broader spectrum. For example, prior marriage sex, homosexuality, mother fixation and so on may not be as intense in the western culture as compared to the eastern culture. Thus by identifying this difference, teachers should apprise their students to differentiate between right and wrong and also to evade the psychological disorders on the students' perception. But as described earlier, such themes should be discussed in the classroom with utmost care keeping in view the mental capabilities of the students.

Another fact which is also to be taken into consideration is the empowerment of independent judgment of the student. While discussing this in detail a respondent shared her views in the following words; "Teachers are the molders of students' personalities. They instill the same moral values in their students, which they themselves possess. Since they have in-depth knowledge of their subject, they should inculcate the sensitive issues i.e. mother fixation and the like by adopting a unique methodology, through which a student is empowered to form an independent judgment."

Somewhat similar views were also given by another respondent, who remarked; "Irrespective of other realities which one keeps into consideration during the teaching of "Sons and Lovers", it should also be borne in mind that Lawrence was severely criticized by a number of critics for promoting indecent exposure in his various novels, including the "Sons and Lovers." I, therefore, personally feel that prior to teaching this controversial novel to students, teachers, in an introductory class, should apprise students regarding Freud 's Theory of Mother Fixation so as to enable them to desist from its sexual implications."



However, the teacher should ensure that whatever the student imbibes through his or her studies is achieved by adopting a judicious approach towards the core issue. Similarly, the teacher should adopt all possible measures to preclude any probability by the student to form a negative judgment of the psychological disorder.

**Item No.2 In case of counter arguments regarding the phenomenon of Mother Fixation, how do you handle students?**

Dealing with serious issues in the classroom such as Mother Fixation is a sensitive task especially in eastern culture. In order to cope with it effectively teachers of the novel *Sons and Lovers* were asked how they handle their students if any controversy arises in the class. Some respondents observed that in an era where classrooms have become not only an important instrument of education but also the basic factor of personality development of students, teacher's role is quite sensitive. Today society expects from teachers not only to inculcate social and moral values to young citizens but also to determine the boundaries of what permitted and what is prohibited not only in action but in thought. The Theme of Mother Fixation in the novel sometimes invites controversy during classroom discussion. Thus, the researchers have tried to find out what should be the teacher's role while dealing with controversial issues in class.

One of the teachers expressed his views and answered in the following words; "Oh! Yes, this theme motivates few students to express their views freely (I used the word 'few' because the majority of the students are reluctant to utter something because of being shy, especially, female ones). During this free discussion of ideas, my responsibility is to give a right direction to their thought and make them tolerant to other's viewpoints."

One of the instructors, on asking the same question, shared the following views: "It was a nightmare when I first taught the novel „Sons and Lovers“ to my mixed students i.e. (male and female) in my literature class. Whenever, I recall that day I get embarrassed when one of my female students stormed out of the class, inciting other students also to leave the class forthwith. However, I tried to control them by adopting a "Not Retaliating" methodology and to pacify their anger. This weird behavior of my students thereafter forced me to reassess my teaching skills. I am thus of the opinion that to convert your classroom to more learner-centered environment, conduct pre-class discussion with your students, never discuss dissenting issues, provoking anger, openly in your class, if a 'Heated' discussion arises, adopt 'Not Retaliating' approach. Invariably, mishandling such sensitive discussion may even lead to altercations and serious repercussions." A similar viewpoint was given by one of the female teachers in the following words; "We should never forget that we are living in a traditional Pakistani Society. Before discussing this question, we have to understand that discussing controversial issues in the class can be extremely threatening, especially for female teachers. As far as the question of discussing and handling sensitive issues in the class is concerned, I would state that dealing with such situations a teacher must be unbiased, balanced (making sure not to favour one perspective) and candid (not taking sides and speaking the truth)."

**Item No.3 How do students respond during the classroom discussion of Mother Fixation?**

In a student-centered class environment, teaching issues concerning values generate diverse feelings in students. The Theme of Mother Fixation deals with ethical principles of our family so it is generally observed that either the students become highly emotional or get reticent. As one of the respondents shared her views; "While teaching *Sons and Lovers*, I always take care of students' sensitive beliefs and life experiences. Especially male students

sometimes indulge in hot debate about this theme. I found it very disturbing for students to learn such an idea which is in complete disharmony with our values. I emphasize that the real reason for reading this novel is to enhance students' judgment about what ails society. Furthermore, they have ample opportunity to appreciate a classical work of art which has attracted the attention of many since the time of its publication."

Sometimes students show extreme sensitivity about their moral values during classroom discussion. After encountering such situations, their students get offended, teachers need to know how to tackle emotional responses from students. As another respondent told his experience;

"Literature presents a platform for ethical education of students. The novel *Sons and Lovers* definitely fulfills this need of students but its major theme of Mother Fixation most of the time makes students uneasy. I remember the comment of one of my female students when she said, "Sir, I wish I could not have gone through this novel." I got shocked. On being asked what did she feel? She answered, "I am emotionally much disturbed after reading it. I thought she was outrageous enough to express her views but there are other students especially female students who do not utter a single word during class discussion. In my opinion teachers should always stand at a sensible level while dealing with Mother Fixation, otherwise their students might have the same shocking experience." Most of the respondents were of the opinion that being educators we make a tremendous impact on the lives of the students. Our role is primarily that of a facilitator.

The acceptability of the phenomenon of mother fixation as universal in-application is sometimes difficult for students. Thus, a teacher's job is important in providing their students' feelings in the right direction. As another teacher opined; "My observation about students' feeling regarding Mother Fixation is that sometimes they feel themselves in quite a problematic situation because of Freud's claim that this is innate and universal theme. So, we always try to make it clear that this is just a theory not a law. Instead of having any emotional attachment to this idea, I ask them to enjoy the classic study of Lawrence."

Another respondent felt that students are much more conscious about what their classmates perceive them, if they share their views about the existence of this phenomenon in society, especially about the mother's role. As he observed; "As far as my experiences about students' feelings are concerned, I mostly found that they are not much expressive during discussion – the reason I found out is that students are concerned with how their classmates think about them if they say anything against family values." To somewhat similar ideas were expressed by another respondent who encountered student's avoidance on discussing this theme frankly. As he said; "Since I impart education to both males and females, I have observed that sometimes students are quite reluctant to discuss this novel openly. Though all of them are not reticent, but my efforts to initiate healthy discussion often invite uncomfortable silence on the part of students."

#### **Item No.4 What ethical principles do you try to inculcate in your students while teaching *Sons and Lovers*?**

Being a teacher is so difficult a job as he or she is often required to deal, on one hand, with the universal truths, on the other, with a huge range of students' values, beliefs, opinions etc. On enquiring about how teachers of the novel *Sons and Lovers* try to cope with these two aspects successfully and what values they try to inculcate in their students, one of the respondents

replied; “While teaching this novel I always make up my mind that what students should learn and must acquire from the text in Pakistani scenario. The first concept that I make clear to students is that Freud’s Theory of Mother Fixation has been criticized even by his own followers like Adler and Jung. Freud was believed to be pre-occupied by his harsh childhood memories and so his self-experience universalized this phenomenon.”

According to another respondent; “Since the issue of Mother Fixation is a sensitive one, a teacher should be very cautious about class discussion. Teacher plays a critical role in enhancing judgment of proper versus improper. During my teaching of this novel, I emphasize on the weak filial relationships in family rather than putting stress on explicit sexual incest. Most of the time I have at least a few students in class who know such cases in society where the mother plays quite a destructive role in the son’s personality development as has been the situation in the novel. This makes the theme more approachable, so students are motivated to think rather than dismissing it altogether. In this way they enhance their understanding and broaden their vision.”

The moral decay of western society resulted in complete disintegration of ethical values. Some respondents opine that if religious orientation is given to students, it can prevent them from any mental disturbance. As one of the respondents remarked; “Since I always try to focus on religion, my discussion of Mother Fixation is based on what our religion says about such mental disorders and how we can prevent the purity of our cherished norms by implementing our religious teachings.” Some respondents were of the opinion that it is important to highlight the difference between eastern and western culture while dealing with the Theme of Mother Fixation. As one of them observed; “I am careful in giving students the understanding of this Theme of Mother Fixation by raising a wall between eastern and western culture. However, students need to be fully equipped with knowledge of real-life events, so that if they encounter such phenomenon, they might not be shattered and shocked.”

Another respondent shared his views in the following words; “I believe that as a developmental educator, teacher’s task is quite risky, especially in matters which are generally considered taboos of society. Since the theme of Mother Fixation involves a direct contradiction with morality and ethics, so I always attempt to emphasize only on those aspects of the novel which are not shocking for students like moral, psychological, social etc. but avoid its sexual implication, with the fear that too much of its discussions will annoy students. I try to stay at sensible level by emphasizing that Mother Fixation occurs only in those cases where distorted parent-child relationship exists in family environment.”

In an ever-changing teaching profession, the role of a teacher has become multidimensional and multifarious, consisting not only to teach but also to lead his or her students in the right direction. In order to avoid any disturbing feelings in students, a respondent shared his experience as follows; “I always find it very hard to make students clear about Freud’s Theory of Mother Fixation which is rather considered a taboo in our society. The important thing, in my opinion, to be told to students is that Freud was not the inventor of the idea of Mother Fixation; the Greeks had already its realization. Secondly, in order to avoid extreme emotional responses, I discuss only those aspects of the theme which are morally appropriate like Mrs. Morel’s role in personality development of her children, factors that lead Paul to become over-dependent on his mother, socioeconomic causes of his failure in love etc.”

**Item No.5 What should be the proper pedagogical strategy to deal with the phenomenon of Mother Fixation in the novel *Sons and Lovers*?**

There is a growing belief that education should be future oriented. It should concentrate on increasing students' connection with the demand of practical life. Each piece of literature influences its readers' perception about life inculcating certain values and norms. The teaching of *Sons and Lovers* is a demanding task in this regard. Teachers need to be very careful about how they are imparting morality in students. As a respondent said; "This is an interesting question. I believe that literature can never be taught effectively without connecting the ideas in the text to the lives of people but sometimes it creates a disturbance in class when students argue about the non-existence of Mother Fixation in our society. I always permit my students to express their views freely and determine their own judgments. In order to encourage productive discussions in the class my responsibility is to maintain the environment where exchange of ideas is quite respectful."

*Sons and Lovers* is the first novel in which Lawrence explicitly dealt with the theme of sexuality, thus, systematically he developed the language for the body and sexual urge. This aspect of the novel is mostly skipped by teachers, especially in co-educational institutions. The researchers had an informative dialogue with a respondent who referred to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs during the discussion on Paul's personality development in the class. As he observed; "First time when we taught this novel to our class having male and female students, We asked myself, "Should we have to limit our students to certain aspects of the novel?" To be very frank, we were afraid that our students would find the theme of Mother Fixation to be quite disgusting and shocking because of our cultural boundaries. We thought this theme to be immoral, anti-family type of thing which has the power to corrupt the minds of our students. So, we just give a brief introduction of Freud, and this theory of personality development and then we touch the Theme of Mother Fixation superficially, emphasizing on "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs." My students, in this way, have the knowledge of Freud and Maslow both."

On the contrary, some respondents totally disagreed with the notion of avoiding the discussion on mother fixation in the class. They opined that our students need to learn tolerance on diverse views. It is an important aim of education to teach students how to make distinction between opinion and fact. This can only be achieved by helping them find reliable information from various sources. As a respondent said; "We have been teaching this novel for many years to my Master's students. To be very frank, we personally believe in an open discussion of the Theme of Mother Fixation in class. Dealing with this issue has many advantages like when students are engaged in lively discussion, they develop their critical thinking, debating skills and explaining opinions and justifying ideas. But still we think that it should be the responsibility of the teacher to give right direction to their students" thought. Since this theme of the novel is not easily "digestible", teacher needs to define the moral and cultural limits of our society. Our classes are the places from where students absorb moral values. In today's world the teacher's task has become more difficult because of diverse sources which affect our mind and heart. Here we, being teachers, are responsible for promoting what is healthy and constructive in students' personality."

Somewhat similar views were expressed by another respondent when he said; "Not discussing the Theme of Mother Fixation in the classroom is remiss and quite inappropriate. As far as the complexities of the controversial themes are concerned, researches have shown

that in-class conversations on controversial issues assist in the personality development of the students. Teachers should make them analyze this theme dispassionately. I am, therefore, of the opinion that by avoiding the Theme of Mother Fixation in the classroom we do injustice with the classical work of art. Whereas discussing it openly in class is a contributing factor in enhancing students' moral fiber while broadening their vision."

Some respondents were of the view that in order to make the theme of Mother Fixation explicit to students, teachers should make them read the novel not only for personal enjoyment but also for the enhancement of critical enquiry. Moreover, students should be given the opportunity to form their own viewpoints after a thoughtful discussion. They further opined that they always try to be mindful towards that reading material which is appropriate for students' age, gender and religion. As a respondent viewed; "It is very important to devise a teaching strategy of novels like *Sons and Lovers* because they are generally thought of, as taboos. Sometimes students avoid participation in class for fear of being embarrassed. We always encourage our students to visit me after class if they have anything to discuss which they cannot before their classmates. We remember the coming of a group of female students who stated that they consider their honor and politeness to be more important than getting good marks in presentational skills of *Sons and Lovers*, so they asked me to assign them quiz, instead of presentation on the Theme of Mother Fixation. We are of the opinion that certain parts of the novel which are likely to cause strong emotions in students should be skipped, especially description of Paul's erotic feelings towards his mother, certain scenes pertaining to Paul's sexual relations with Miriam and Clara. I usually avoid dealing with them due to my co-educational class."

### **Data Analysis**

In *Sons and Lovers* D. H. Lawrence dealt with his erotic attachment to his mother, emphasizing his confused sexuality. Since this novel is the part of English Literature curriculum in Pakistani Universities, most of the students are reluctant to discuss its Theme of Mother Fixation frankly. The main objective of the present study was to analyze the impact of the phenomenon of Mother Fixation on students' perception. As literature cannot be isolated from life, thus each piece of literature not only reflects human life, its way of thinking, feeling and emotion but also influences the human mind and its perceptions.

The findings of the study revealed that certain tinges of the phenomenon of Mother Fixation are found in Pakistani society though mostly people avoid discussing it. Our cultural values emphasize the mother-child relationships to be warm and close. Mother feels her status secured through a son and hopes for a better old age due to his support. Thus mother-son relationships are not only sincere but physically warm. According to Freudian precept, a child must quit his attachment to mother and seek identification with his father but in Pakistani society a son's prolonged attachment to his mother is highly appreciated and he is not able to identify himself with father due to his submissive relations.

The outcome of the study also revealed that many time sons' deep dependence on mother leads to his lack of judgment and thought. His mother becomes the centre of his life, whose place can never be occupied even by his consort. The study further indicated that the influences of early childhood mostly govern a son's selection of life partner and his liking for his wife sometimes is exactly the same as his mother, as depicted by Paul in *Sons and Lovers*. On the other hand, mothers also own their sons and become the controlling authority of their

lives. In a traditional family culture, sons live with their wives in their parents' home. In most situations, family conflicts arise due to the mother's over-possession and the sense of losing of their son's love and attention. This reveals the essence of Mother Fixation in our society.

Besides, the undeniable fact is that sexual implication strongly advocated by Freud can never be applied to our society. His theorization of sexuality encircling human life shocks his readers. As he stated; "It seems to be my fate to discover the only obvious: that children have sexual feelings which every nursemaid knows" (Ernest, 1953, p. 299). Freud was so much obsessed with the sexual origin of Mother Fixation that he discarded any other alternative interpretation. His overemphasis on sex as the fundamental driving force of human conduct and restraining the sexual emotions to be the cause of neurosis exercised a substantial influence on Western thought.

Analyzing the true picture of our society regarding the phenomenon of Mother Fixation and taking into consideration the results of present study, a rational conclusion can be deduced that the existence of Mother Fixation in our society cannot be denied but instead of dealing with its Freudian Sexual Interpretation, we must highlight the social factors contributing to its growth in our family culture.

The present study tried to illustrate various aspects and ideas regarding the pedagogical approach of the novel *Sons and Lovers*. It has been observed that in Pakistani Universities and Colleges, a traditional method is adopted by teachers which leave them with no option but to impart a huge amount of information to their students, compelling the students to gather the imparted information and reproduce the same in their examinations. Some educationists like Miller (2002) viewed this kind of teaching – learning process in literature class as a decline of literary studies. Since literature is a piece of work whose primary function is to be read, thus serving as a means of providing excitement of emotions to its readers and deep insight into the background of reality. It tells about the various experiences of life and helps readers discover meaning in their lives, which enables them to have a thorough understanding of the people and world around them. According to Bennet and Royle (1995), literature creates a world made up of fact and fiction. Though fact is subordinate to fiction, but a new world is also created collaborating with the already existing world which gives greater insight into life. As Hopkins (2001) shares the same opinion when he elaborated; "Literary study is not value free- but on the contrary presents a certain national picture, a class picture, certain views of history, and specific gender identities" (p. 56). Berten (2001) advocates same views and considers literature as a study of ideologies. The writer provides moral and intellectual glorification and resultantly creates a classical piece of art. In Barnett's (1996) view; "Poets, dramatists, and storytellers find or impose a shape on scenes...giving readers things to value (p. 78)." The readers experience moral and intellectual upliftment during their reading, because the world is constituted in a way that misbalance in values is prominent. Showalter (2004) rightly stated that teaching of literature has been considered as "a way of making people better human beings" (p. 22).

As mentioned earlier, *Sons and Lovers* has been taught in many universities of Pakistan for several years. As a piece of art, undoubtedly, this novel transmits some moral values and an exact picture of life, but the central theme about the phenomenon of Mother Fixation exerts some undesirable impact on students' perception due to its being a taboo in our society. Thus, an important objective of the present study was to devise an effective teaching approach. The

modern literary theorists have attempted to make a link between literature and psychology. It is also noteworthy that modern approaches to literature teaching seek to build up an interaction between text and the reader, encouraging the later to analyze the text from different creative perspectives. From the aforementioned observations, we might formulate an effective mode of teaching of the Theme of Mother Fixation in the novel *Sons and Lovers*.

The present study has shown that the Theme of Mother Fixation, if handled properly while observing the ethical limitations of Pakistani society, would not harm the perception of the students about their family values. The findings of the study also reveal that what is considered as taboo by major strata of society can be proved as an entertaining subject waiting to be discussed in the classroom. Furthermore, the research findings support the effectiveness of Reader Response Theory which encourages readers' own judgment as Probst (1994) states that this approach is "A respect for the uniqueness of the individual reader and the integrity of the individual reading." (p.38). Hirvella (2004) further elaborated the same idea by calling the reader inventor and voyager, each of whom interprets the text differently. Since every reader has various experiences, all have different perceptions about the same phenomenon depending on their particular circumstances.

For the present study, the researchers had the privilege to make an in-depth reflection and insight into students' understanding of the phenomenon of Mother Fixation not only in the novel *Sons and Lovers* but also in real life. The research findings further revealed that while teaching this theme, students' opinions and views should be welcomed to give them freedom of expressing their ideas. Saddawi (2009) considers "oppression and inhibition" two factors in education system which destroys the creative faculty of students. So, some of the approaches recommended by teachers deal with providing an open environment for students, where they do not feel reluctant to give voice to their ideas. It is further emphasized that if the ground rules are set in this regard, it will promote tolerance and mutual respect, which is conducive to reflective thinking for students (p. 34).

Moreover, in order to deal with the Theme of Mother Fixation effectively in literature classroom, students should be given the entire social context of the phenomenon by making it relevant to our real-life situation and local culture. As Wang (2012) viewed that different education cultures form different education paradigms and various fundamental beliefs about teaching and learning. These attitudes about teaching and learning thus standardize learning and teaching activities and lead to a variety of culturally accepted learning styles and teaching pedagogies in each individual culture. (p.1142). There is some evidence from the data that majority of the respondents expressed feelings of embarrassment and hesitation on the discussion of the Theme of Mother Fixation, especially in the presence of the opposite gender and preferred to avoid the sensitive aspect of sex and sexuality in the novel. It is interesting to note that in the open discussion of the Theme of Mother Fixation in literature class, mostly female respondents showed their concern for the feminine sanctity and honor to be at risk. Furthermore, teachers cited valid concerns about giving a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the psychological aspect of the theme, taking into consideration the cultural restraints of Pakistani society. All of them expressed more favorable attitude towards their moral responsibility of enriching their students' views about the world and its ailments to make healthy decisions about their behavior.

## Recommendations

In the present study the major emphasis revolved around comprehending the Impact of Mother Fixation on students' perception by analyzing Freud, "s Theory of Psychosexual Development. There is a need to conduct research by using some other theories like Maslow's "Hierarchy of Need." To enhance further understanding of the novel; This study is conducted in Quetta city only. Similar studies need to be conducted in other cities and also on provincial level. Recently in Pakistan there is not much awareness about analyzing various aspects of the Phenomenon of Mother Fixation i.e. social, economic, behavioral etc. so there is a lot of requirements to publish such studies. The researcher suggests conducting the research on other aspects of the novel, such as the psychological development of Mrs. Morel, Contributing factors for Paul, "s failure in love etc. Further investigation is recommended into teachers' beliefs about what is acceptable and what is not acceptable regarding the taboo topics like Mother Fixation. A more well-rounded guidance is needed for how to deal with sensitive issues in literature class, if they arise in the course of discussion. The way to promote teacher's ease in dealing with such issues is to provide teacher training modules at university level so that they can become more comfortable in managing the diverse aspects of the theme. This research is expected to help further researchers in utilizing the phenomenological research paradigm for exploring students' perception about various aspects of the novel. The researcher hopes that this study will enhance students' quality of learning by developing their cognitive processes and critical abilities. It can further inspire literature teachers to make their classrooms a place where students' independent opinions are encouraged. It can also help in bringing change in the existing teaching methods of literature in Pakistani universities.

## Conclusion

The present study is an attempt to explore the perception of students about the phenomenon of Mother Fixation in the novel *Sons and Lovers*. The research study proved to be an honor to involve with. It discovered the significance of students' critical responses during the teaching of this novel in both formal and informal environments. The phenomenological interviews provided an in-depth insight into students' understanding of the phenomena of Mother Fixation which was quite helpful and enlightening. The entire focus of the study was to encourage students to give voice to their own interpretations of the text of the novel courageously and independently. The novel *Sons and Lovers* is among D. H. Lawrence's masterpieces. The main objective of the study is to find out the psychological approach of the main character Paul Morel and his mother Gertrude Morel, focusing on the impact of their relationships on students' perception. Furthermore, it also analyzed the moral values that can be taken out from the novel. In the present world, the economy and structure of society is changing with leaps and bounds, which some people find difficult to pace with. The surprising reality is that many families suffer this phenomenon of son-mother knot. Psychologists point out that if such events continue to increase at such a quick rate, the development of human society will be seriously hampered or even taken aback.



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