

SCHOLARLY ARTICLE

Lack of Emotional Intelligence Causing the Familial Disaster in

D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*

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Abstract

Love, responsibility, respect, and trust are generally considered the most important factors to make a marriage successful. But emotional intelligence is a factor also in making an individual successful not only in the workplace but in familial relationships as well. In D. H. Lawrence's epoch-making novel, *Sons and Lovers* disastrous marital relationship between Walter Morel and Gertrude Morel is emphasised throughout the novel and the male partner has generally been held responsible for the said disaster. However, a careful study of the text and the analysis of the characters, especially, Mrs Morel and Mr Morel will reveal that it is not Mr Morel only but Gertrude also who is responsible for the failure. As Walter fails to understand Gertrude, so does Gertrude.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, emotional quotient, sons and lovers, Lawrence, familial disaster, familial relationship, marital relationship.

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Emotional Intelligence (hereafter EI) is a social intelligence which includes “the utilization of emotional content in problem solving.” (Mayer and Salovey *The Intelligence* 433). Mayer and Slovey identified EI as emotional competence suggesting that it empowers the individual in facilitating success in different spheres of life. E. L. Thorndike defined social intelligence (an umbrella term that includes EI) as the efficiency to recognise one’s own and other’s behaviours, motives, and mental condition. An emotionally intelligent person can recognise one’s own and other’s emotional conditions to solve problems at personal and social levels. Such a person can understand the emotional responses of other human beings around and can control his/her own emotions according to the situation. A person with EI can manage different situations, relationships as well as problems easily. People with low EI find it difficult to handle any situation as well as their social relationships. People with low EI often fail to create a healthy atmosphere not only for themselves but also people around them. Much research has been done on the realistic ground to substantiate the role of EI in the way to success. However, this paper will examine the role of EI in the fictional world of literature by analysing D. H. Lawrence’s canonical work, *Sons and Lovers*.

In *Sons and Lovers*, the lack of EI causes a massive disaster in human relationships. The novel is centred around the familial life of Morels, especially of Mrs. Morel. Gertrude Coppard and Walter Morel fell in love with each other and got married at a young age. Gertrude Coppard belonged to a much more well-to-do family than Mr. Morel. Though she was aware of Mr. Walter Morel’s profession as a coal miner. She got married to Walter for his charming

and attractive personality, and with the thought that though Morel had nothing very expensive, at least he possessed a small house. But after a few days of their marriage, she came to know about the fact that the house they were living in was not of her husband but a rented house, and he even had not paid their marriage's unpaid debts and was hiding this truth from her all time. As a result, her faith in her husband was completely shattered, and she felt betrayed. Moreover, being a Puritan by heart, Gertrude had a high sense of morality, right and wrong. Gertrude fell in love with Morel's good side but she is now unable to take his bad side for granted.

She tries to resist her husband from drinking when she comes to know about it and wants to change him. Mrs. Morel's realisation of the undesirable habits changes her completely. Hence, her behaviour towards Morel also changes. Just within a few years after their marriage and just after the birth of William, Mrs. Morel feels "lonely with him" and his presence only makes the loneliness more intense (Lawrence 14). Here it is found that she lacks EI and does not try to understand the feelings of her husband. From the perspective of Mrs. Morel's Puritan spirit, she is right, what her husband did to her was no doubt wrong. But she fails to look at Walter from his perspective and realise his emotions and behaviour. Thus, the spark of domestic misunderstanding enters their house. Here we can witness how both husband and wife lack EI and fail to understand the emotions of each other, and this ultimately leads to their mental separation.

If Mr. Morel was emotionally strong enough to tell his wife about his financial condition then maybe Mrs. Morel never lost her faith in him. On the other hand, if after knowing everything about her husband, Mrs. Morel at least tries to understand why her husband hid his financial condition from her, maybe their relationship could be safe. However, both of them fail to understand each other and lack EI. Accordingly, their separation becomes more intense day by day. It is not that Mr. Morel never tried to sort out anything but he could not get the proper response from the side of Mrs. Morel. For instance, we may refer to the incident of

a dispute after Walter's return from Nottingham. Mr. Walter Morel, driven by anger, locked her outside of their house and nearly after an hour he opened the door. On the next day, the narrator recounts how Mr. Morel was repentant about the previous night's incident:

But now he realised how hard it was for his wife to drag about at her work, and, his sympathy quickened by penitence, hastened forward with his help. He came straight home from the pit, and stayed in at evening till Friday, and then he could not remain at home. But he was back again by ten o'clock, almost quite sober.
(Lawrence 25)

Walter might have expected a little warm acceptance of his politeness and soberness from his wife. But, in spite of supporting such behaviour, Mrs. Morel rejected it spitefully. So, when Mr. Morel made tea and brought a cup of it for Gertrude, she was reluctant. However, she took the cup of tea which made Walter happy. If her acceptance was a little bit warmer and she continued in such a manner it would probably change him.

Actually, Mrs. Morel's trust had been broken long ago and her faith had been shaken. As a result, life became bitter for her. Instead of her husband's presence and care during her first childbirth, she felt that she was miles away from her own people. In this moment of disillusionment and loneliness, her first child entered her life and after the birth of her first child, William, Mrs. Morel started ignoring her husband and, on the other way round, She started loving the child so much that it caused the jealousy in Mr. Morel. So, day by day Mr. Morel also started neglecting his wife. Their behaviours towards each other started changing. It was the beginning of a silent battle between them which lasted till the death of one. Actually, Mrs. Morel wanted Mr. Morel to take his own responsibilities, and fulfil his obligations but Morel was the opposite of her. When his wife forced him to face things and to change himself, he could not endure it and it drove him out of mind. Here, we find this couple not trying to understand each other's feelings and emotions. For them, they both were correct and were not

ready to compromise even for the sake of their love. Their emotions were not under their control, but they were controlled by their emotions. Moreover, both of them fail to understand their own emotions as well. We may cite an instance of Walter Morel's growing irritable at home after his return from a trip with Jerry. The narrator writes: "He did not know he was angry" (18). Again, Morel was unable to express his concern with his wife and love for her: "...he wanted to kiss her, but he dared not. She half wanted him to kiss her, but could not bring herself to give any sign" (30). So, one can notice how both of them fail to show their emotions to the other one which was very much necessary to compensate for their broken relationship.

Mrs. Morel tried to forget the bitterness of her relationship by the excessive love for her son and Mr. Morel became jealous of that. The frustration between the husband and wife was now slowly reaching their children. The father's jealousy and bitterness had reached such a point that he could not even tolerate his own offspring. He bullied them and sometimes in a bad temper beat them. Because of this reason, Mrs. Morel started hating him even more and more. When after a long day of work, Mr. Morel came back home Mrs. Morel teased him with her harsh words. In the meantime, a strange incident happened that caused the final separation of Mr. and Mrs. Morel. One day, Mr. Morel cut the hair of his son William; Mrs. Morel became completely dumbfounded by this incident. This further made a separation between them. Here we find Mr. Morel lacked emotional intelligence and could not be able to understand his wife's feelings and emotions and also unable to express his own sentiments in front of his wife. Mrs. Morel on her part also never tried to understand how her husband felt and why he was growing very rude and insensitive day by day. For Mrs. Morel, her high moral sense was more important than her relationship. She was not even guilty nor thought about her own behaviours towards Morel. Whenever Morel tried to make up anything again she never reciprocated with him.

Despite all of these, we should consider that sometimes Mr. Morel acted wisely like an emotionally intelligent person. Though his relationship with his wife was almost on the verge

of despair, he never neglected his duties towards his wife and children. Every time after getting a salary he first used to give the larger amount from his salary to his wife to run the household, which is really appreciable. But he also sometimes never thought twice to steal coppers from his wife's purse while running out of money. This caused familial disappointment between husband and wife. Though Mr. Morel was completely well aware of the condition of their family and how his wife always struggled to run the entire household, despite knowing everything he used to steal coppers from his wife's purse, which obviously caused a dispute between them. So, we can say he really lacks emotional intelligence, otherwise, he should have stopped stealing.

Mrs. Morel always disliked her husband's drinking and it was among one of those reasons for which they used to fight daily. One day after drinking, their argument reached such a point that Mr. Morel locked his pregnant wife outside of the house at night, and he himself fell asleep. After a long time, he woke up to his wife's calling and let her come into the house. This odd incident shows how emotionally unintelligent Walter Morel is. It was really an inhuman act. In the morning, though Mr. Morel, for some time, felt ashamed for what he had done to her but within a few days he resumed his same bullying manner.

However, not only Mr. Morel but Mrs. Morel also lacked EI which caused the disaster in the relationship. When Mr. Morel found it hard for her wife to manage the household chores during her pregnancy he tried to help her at work, but Mrs. Morel was not pleased with such domestic help from her husband. Mrs. Morel overlooked all the efforts of Mr. Morel to please her by helping. Actually, in her mind, she had already got separated from him. So, she never really tried to cooperate with her husband. It is a very prominent sign of her lacking EI.

Again, when Mrs. Morel required Mr. Morel's help and affection most after Mrs. Morel's weakness due to excessive labour of childbirth, Morel's behaviour towards her was completely indifferent. After returning from work he was not concerned about his wife and

children but about his food and rest. Which was not really an expected behaviour on the part of a responsible husband and father. Here Mr. Morel's lack of empathy towards his family proved that he is not an EI person. The disturbance between husband and wife very soon reached their children and it became almost unbearable for Mr. Morel to tolerate his children's crying, talking, and even chattering. Thus, he not only alienated himself from his wife but also from his children. Here, not only as a husband he failed but as a father also. Probably Mrs. Morel always expected her husband to utter a word of repentance and regret from her husband after their quarrel. But though Mr. Morel also felt guilty for his behaviour he never said sorry to his wife. And if Mrs. Morel felt guilty for any of her behaviour; she also never said sorry to his husband. In this way, they both refused to be submission to each other. When sometimes, a single apology could fix their broken relationship, but none did really care about it. Actually, they both were egoistic and lacked EI, they were unable to recognise their own emotions as well as failed to understand each other. Their ego never permitted them to say sorry to each other. For Mrs. Morel, her feelings of betrayal were more important than her relationship. Gradually, this flame of hatred between them touched their young children. It seems like the air was poisoned in which the children were breathing. Their children became the most undeserving sufferers. They feel distressed and afraid. They didn't understand what they should do now. They were so connected with their mother which caused their separation from their father. In fact, the main reason for their separation was they felt oppressed in the presence of their father. Though Morel was well aware of the fact that his rudeness alienated him from their children, it seemed Morel no longer cared about what his family thought about him. The children remained calm and silent in his presence, and after his departure, they sighed in relief. In spite of knowing everything Mr. Morel never took any initiative to fix his ruined relationship with his wife and children, rather he never cared about this separation. So, as a result of lacking EI, the whole familial relationship broke down.

Mrs. Morel was sure that she was living with her husband only for money because she had nowhere to go. There was nothing left between them. Though sometimes Mr. Morel tried to get his wife's love back he failed every time. She developed a deep emotional attachment with her first son William and started to consider him as the substitute for her husband. From this, the Oedipus Complex developed between Mrs. Morel and her sons. After her complete separation from Mr. Morel, Mrs. Morel became completely dependent on her first son William. William also became so close to her mother that he started hating his father. Accordingly, when William got engaged in a relationship with Ms. Louisa Lily Denys Western she became jealous. Her jealousy was clear by her behaviour with the girls with whom William was engaged. When William went to London and came back with his new girlfriend Ms. Western, Mrs. Morel became jealous of Louisa. Initially, she could not even suppress her dislike for Louisa and expressed it in her letter to William. It is evident that she cannot control her emotions even for her son's love relationship. However, finally, when she met Louisa she somehow suppressed her emotions and acted like an emotionally intelligent woman here which she could not do for her husband.

But, Mrs. Morel's relationship with her third child Paul had something which is very much different from any other mother-son relationship. One day, when Paul was a toddler and the children were aware of the financial condition of the house, they decided to help their mother by collecting mushrooms and blackberries from the forest, and while returning by picking those Paul also specially brought a spray as a special gift for her mother. And her mother received that gift as a "woman accepting a love-token" (62). From the very beginning, Mrs. Morel was fond of William but after his sudden death from pneumonia, her world shattered completely. It seemed like he lost the purpose of living and also her desire to live became faint. She became careless and indifferent about everything and almost forgot to care about her other children, till one day he almost lost Paul. Paul was also affected by pneumonia,

that time only she got her senses back by Paul's continuous crying for attention, "His whole will rose up and arrested him. He put his head on her breast, and took ease of her for love" (Lawrence 123). The sexual undertone in this scene reveals the intensity of their relationship. From now onwards, Mrs. Morel's world shifted from William to Paul. And for Paul, nothing but her happiness mattered the most. They both became inseparable. But ultimately this bond became fatal for Paul. Their interdependence led to another disaster in the life of Paul. When Miriam entered Paul's life, they fell in love with each other and started spending much time together. Paul's life is now centred around his mother and Miriam. This caused jealousy for Mrs. Morel. When Paul told his mother that he was going to teach Miriam algebra, his mother replied, "I hope she'll get fat on it"(136). Mrs. Morel never wanted to lose her hold over Paul. So, when Miriam came to his life she immediately identified Miriam as her competitor in seeking Paul's attention. Here, we again see she lacked EI and forgot about her son's happiness and was unable to realise his desires and feelings. As a consequence of her excessive interference in Paul's life, his life and relationship turned into a disaster.

Along with the development of Paul's relationship with Miriam, Mrs. Morel's hatred for Miriam increased. Miriam's only fault was that Paul liked her. Miriam became her competitor for her son's attention. Mrs. Morel wasn't ready to accept anyone with Paul. Here, she behaved more like a jealous lover than a mother. Paul on the other side, did not really understand the inherent cause of her mother's dislike for Miriam, he was swayed between his feelings for Miriam and his mother. But no matter what happened, he made up his mind that if Miriam really caused her mother suffering he would definitely leave her for the sake of his mother. Here he failed to understand his own emotions as well as his mother's and Miriam's. Though he too had feelings for Miriam and was aware of the fact that she loved him, he was ready to reject her for her mother. Here we find another instance of Paul's lack of EI, and his failure as a lover. Even when Paul questioned his mother why he disliked and hated Miriam,

Mrs. Morel was unable to answer him. Actually, she had no proper reason to hate her. As per her statement, she tried not to hate Miriam but was unable. Probably the inner reason behind it was her typical psychology, as he already started considering her sons as a substitute for her husband. So, when she saw Paul with another girl, her anger was not in her control. So, we can say it happened because of her lack of EI.

One day while convincing his mother that he did not love Miriam, Paul said – “You’re old mother, and we’re young” (185). It seems like either Paul could not understand his own emotions or he could not convince his mother. It is very clear that both the mother and her son lacked EI and could not understand Miriam or her emotions. Mrs. Morel forgot about his son’s happiness and behaved selfishly in order to keep Paul close. The same lack of EI is found in Paul’s relationship with Clara—he could not perceive what he wanted from her.

Even after the death of Mrs. Morel, Paul failed to realise himself. So, he became lonely and frustrated as if he was lost in the world of aimlessness,

Everything seemed to have gone smash for the young man. He could not paint.

The picture that he finished on the day of his mother's death – one that satisfied him – was the last thing he did. At work there was no Clara. When he came home he could not take up his brushes again. There was nothing left.”

(Lawrence 356)

Though he was aware of the fact that his mother had already gone and now he must have to move on, in his mind there was a conflict and in the end, he wanted to go with his mother and her influence. He started drinking and wished to die. Amid this sorrow, Miriam appeared as a saviour with a ray of hope, and she was ready to marry him but Paul was not. He did not want her to sacrifice herself for the sake of him. And at the end, we find he became abandoned by everybody and left alone.

So, we can conclude through this novel we witnessed how a lack of emotional intelligence can destroy a person's life and the whole family. Mr. and Mrs. Morel's lack of emotional Intelligence not only affected their familial life and caused their separation but also their children. Not only Mr. and Mrs. Morel but Paul also lacked emotional intelligence. Thus, we find D H Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* a novel of complete destruction of familial life due to the lack of emotional intelligence.

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