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Psychological Implications of Sexism: A Critical Analysis of Plath's *The Bell Jar* from Fredrickson's Perspective of Objectification Theory

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Abstract:

This research analyzes Sylvia Plath's novel *The Bell Jar* from the perspective of sexism in American society in 1950's, and examines its psychological effects on women. The research is quantitative in nature. The dialogues of the characters in *The Bell Jar* are critically analyzed through the use of language and female representation. The novel is critically viewed under the concept of sexism and objectification, and its psychological impacts on the protagonist. Fredrickson and Roberts's (1997) "*Objectification theory: Toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks*" is a framework for this research to show how the protagonist of the novel Esther faces mental health issues just because she is a woman. The stereotypes that existed in the 1950s have contributed a lot to her mental suffering and the research intends to study sexism in the 1950's through the lens of objectification theory and how badly it has affected the mental health of a young student.

Keywords: Mental Health, Objectification, Sufferings, Sexism.

Background of the Study:

Plath's novel, *The Bell Jar* (1963) is the renowned account of mental failure or nervous breakdown to have emerged in American narratives. As the narrative interacts with the life of Esther Greenwood in the 1950s, it is hard to understand how Plath analyzes the dilemma of the

female artist who tries to overcome the ideals of household in a uni-polar world before the feminism glory days in the latter 60s and 70s. In New York City, Esther and her peers are victimized partially because of the culture prevailing at that time: women should stay at home, cook food, clean the house, and bear children. The streets and neighborhood were dominated by this docile tone *The Bell Jar* (1963) focuses on 'Sexism' that has existed long ago. Sexism can be seen from various perspectives whether it is through an image or a movie. Sexism is the bias, inequality, or prejudice, conventionally at odds with women, based on sex. Anyone can be affected by sexism, but it in the first place affects women and girls. The word "sexism" originated in 1965 by Pauline M. Leet. It was first used in a "Student-Faculty Forum" at Franklin and Marshall College. Specifically, the word sexism opened to the view in Leet's forum contribution "Women and the Undergraduate", and she characterized it by juxtaposing it to racialism. It harms a woman from multiple points of view; one can envision it either rationally or physically. We know that females have at last earned the privilege to cast a ballot, to work, and even to grab a chair at council, that the world has truly made some amazing progress since. Despite everything it takes far to be on equality to men, it can prompt various ramifications if females are not seen as equivalent. They are maltreated just because they are women. Before the feminist movement in 1950s, females were experiencing these prejudices but they were happy with that. Many women activist labeled 1950s to be loaded with generalizations and these women revolted against this by saying that women should not live for being a sovereign of domestic life only. "I want something more than my husband and my children and my home" (Friedan, 1963, p.32)

Women have to maintain the house, make dinners, take care of kids, and help them with their school work, be the perfect spouse, while at the same time stay well dressed. That made the day of most American ladies in the 1950s. Step by step a sentiment of inadequacy showed up: "Is that everything to life?" The principle theme of this explanation is to show that the development of this inclination toward a genuine guaranteeing battle for women's' privileges made the 1950s an important period frame for female liberation

Since the 1950s is the post-World War II era, ads depicted the image of joyous families as troops landed back after the War and needed to begin family life. We see its consequence in *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan who has been the major figure in the women's development and her book is frequently credited for beginning the 'Second Wave of American feminists'. She says that towards the end of 1950s, the average American got married at the age of twenty years, at times during their teens. Only 47% women, as compared to men studied in college during 1958. However, a century earlier, women had fought for the higher studies.

Similarly gender discrimination in 1950's literature can be clearly seen through the advertisements of that time period, which shows that biased treatment was on peak in 1950's in American society. There are many advertisements which are an example of sexist advertisements of the time i.e. a woman posed with shoes on the ground and it was written "keep her where she belongs. Clearly the female representation even in the advertisements was portraying women unequal to men.

Hence this research intends to study *The Bell Jar* from the perspective of sexism. The theorists in particular Jost and Kay (2005), Swim et al. (2001), and Matteson and Moradi (2005) have spotlighted the damaging psychological condition and mental health and consequences for women who are liable to endless sufferings caused by sexism. For example, Atwood vindicates in her research of gender discrimination in families, that sexism merged with more stressors of life to create sufficiently great psychological suffering in ladies, which results in them to feel under the compulsion of "seek therapy, most frequently for despair and anxiety" (2001, 169).

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

1. To analyze Sylvia Plath's novel *The Bell Jar* from the perspective of sexism in American society in 1950s.
2. To examine the psychological effects of sexism on women in general and women in 1950s USA.

Research Questions:

This study attempts to answer the following questions.

1. What are the elements in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* that can be traced back to Sexism in 1950s' American society?
2. How does Sexism affect the psychological health of women in general and in context of the novel?

Literature Review: Sexism and Its Psychological Implications on Women

Sexism has existed long ago. It harms a woman in variety of ways. It can prompt various ramifications if females are not seen as equivalent. They are treated less than an individual just because they are women. This can lead to generalizations, lewd behavior, segregation, and even assault. This has continued for such a long time and it's something that needs to change. Sexism is a significant representation of what females confront, even today. Sexism alludes to the bias, stereotyping or segregation based on sex, typically against accordance with the definition of

the dictionary. Sexism can be seen either in the workplace, in sports, in media and literature, and even in social activities. It fundamentally happens almost everywhere and whether it is public and private, social and educational, economic and legal or religious and psychological; it can influence females' lives. Subsequently, in order to understand sexism, the numerous manners by which sexism is depicted in literature, two of the accompanying inquiries must be considered all through.

- 1) Does sexism exist in the 1950s' literature, if yes, how does literature interpret or portray it?
- 2) How has sexism affected the psychology of women?

Does sexism exist in the 1950s' literature?

Sexism in 1950's literature can be clearly seen through the advertisements of that time period, which show that sexism was on peak in 1950's in American society. The link given in the references is an example of sexist advertisement of the time in which a woman posed with shoes on the ground and it was written "keep her where she belongs".

In majority of cases, women were delineated as exquisite housewives during the 1950s, continually grinning, superbly dressed for the whole day. She could fundamentally deal with the jobs of a dedicated lady, a mother minding, a cook and a housekeeper. More females were demonstrated to be household sovereigns. We can also get a better idea of how the press represented women, from William H. Youth and Nancy K. Young's book "The 1950s." "All through the fifties, prominent media depicted American ladies as perhaps the best-dressed housekeeper ever seen." (Youth & Young, 2004, p.10)

1950s were tough for women, as this age was brimming with generalizations and sexist behavior against females and despite the fact that promotions and advertisements demonstrated the women as inferior to men and that they were supposed to stay at home, females and furthermore males also endured it. Moreover, women liked to live as such as they set off for colleges with a motivation behind which is "finding a man". Notwithstanding, there were females who were not of such view point and were not experiencing thus, these women send diverse descriptions of females that they have capabilities like males, and can have a job or seek for a profession.

The Feminine Mystique describes the problem as buried and unspoken for long. "It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States". Every American woman went through this problem

alone, as she made beds, did groceries, made sandwiches or lay with her husband at night. "Is this all?" was her question. (Friedan, 1963, p. 15)

Maintain the house, get dinners ready, deal with the kids, help them with their schoolwork, be the perfect spouse, do the dishes and the clothing while at the same time staying well dressed; that made the day of most American ladies in the 1950's. Step by step a sentiment of inadequacy showed up: "Is that everything to life?" The principle theme of this exposition is to show that the development of this inclination toward a genuine guaranteeing battle for women's privileges made the 1950's an important period frame for female liberation.

As history specialist Meyerowitz clarifies, Friedan "presented domesticity as a problem," and she "downgraded full-time home life to the lower status of a false consciousness." Looking down on ladies' job in the home, Friedan whined that "the incredible lion's share of American ladies have no other aspiration than to be housewives." She continued not exclusively to disparage housewives, but additionally to affront American culture all in all in her hypothesis that "Maybe it is just a debilitated or juvenile society that decides to make ladies housewives, not individuals." (Christina, 1993)

It is important to remember that the perfect image of home life was based on working-class average white ladies. Shaded American ladies, just as ladies of lower financial standing, were not depicted in mainstream society as spouses and moms; actually, these ladies were not depicted by any means. Although African Americans have been greatly recognized in mainstream society throughout the twentieth century, the nineteen fifties were a "whitewashed" decade from the perspective of the broad interactions. In addition, numerous African American ladies were constrained by the budgetary need to work outside of the home and were in this manner avoided from the after-war perfect image of family life.

How does literature interpret or portray sexism?

Women have been portrayed in many distinct ways throughout American literature. In American Literature, the portrayal of females is often affected by the personal experience of an author or by a frequent stereotype of females and their place in society. Male writers often interpret the opinions of females in society in a distinct manner than female author. While Zora Neale Hurston depicts her principal female character as a solid, free-lively, and autonomous lady just a decade after the 1930s, F. Scott Fitzgerald speaks to his primary female character as an unfortunate casualty in the 1920s.

For a considerable length of time young, grown-ups have been impacted by course books and writings. History books principally contain records of the lives of men, and the lives of females are disregarded simply because they influence men. Men have a larger number of accounts than

females, and ladies once in a while add to science reference books. For instance, out of the 1,195 researchers in Asimov's Science and Technology Biographical Encyclopedia, only ten are women (Nobles, 1996). Female writers in the past were uncommon and they were found characteristically in most women's books. This equivalent imbalance is exhibited by fiction. A few studies in young adult literature show that most of books have a male chief. Pipher (1994) accepts that "It's significant for young females to be presented to more women journalists; however, it's similarly critical to change how females are depicted." Most have been delineated as feeble, expecting to look for answers to issues from others instead of finding the appropriate responses inside themselves. Overstreet (1994) takes note, "The omnipresent generalization of a female injured individual as a woman in trouble, inactive and trusting that a ruler will save her, has its underlying foundations in the hundreds of years old overlay stories that ruled early oral conventions." Disney films and storybooks, alongside prominent fiction, proceed with this thought females hold back that a resilient man will protect them.

Mitchell (1995) points out that these equivalent measures do not seem to apply to males who are permitted to consider themselves. Young females are denounced on the chance that they commit mistakes, and boys are pardoned from botches since they are permitted the "boys will be boys" adage. These customary pictures raise the viewpoint that young females will compare themselves to the women who appeared in the books and cruelly judge them against a bogus standard. The revival of drama in the late sixteenth century took into account the introduction of female jobs on stage, and these arrived at their peak in the ladies depicted by Shakespeare and Webster in particular. Women were acted by young males, which implied there were fewer parts composed for them and they regularly had less to state – in the prior plays, in any case. Romeo talks considerably more than Juliet. There is additionally a surprisingly high extent of single parents in the plays. Strikingly, some of them are most lucid when camouflaged as men, e.g. Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Viola in *Twelfth Night*, and Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*. 'Unending assortment' appears to summarize the different female jobs – it is difficult to make speculations about Beatrice, Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra, and Desdemona. Most are viewed as spouses or daughters; however, nieces are frequently progressively understandable, and there is at any rate one predominant mother: Volumnia in *Coriolanus*.

As per Hamilton et al. (2006), —Stereotyped depictions of the genders and underrepresentation of female characters contribute adversely to kids' advancement, limit their professional desires, outline their mentalities about their future jobs as guardians, and even impact their personality (p. 757). Shockingly, hardly any examinations look at sexism in top-of-the-line books; most of

the investigations center around award winners only, which may not be the most generally coursed books (Hamilton et al., 2006; Tepper and Cassidy, 1999)

Here are a few books composed on females representing sexism in the 1950s. These books likewise show how sexism is deciphered in writing during the 1950s.

The Years of Grace, altered by Noel Streat field in 1950, this eye-opener on female goals of the post-war period was published as a guide for ladies of "awkward time." Think again if you believed the picture of women as a modern issue. "In all respects I want you to be lovely..." is trailed by a fulfillment of an ideal prescription. Guidance includes how to wear flawlessly and how to be comparable to Princess Margaret. There is likewise a lifelong part, however clearly, "the best profession for each female is dealing with her significant other and family unit."

Her Brilliant Career by Rachel Cooke is fun to read. It portrays a recognizable image of a housewife, an image very much prevalent in the 1950s. This stereotype is challenged by Cooke through giving ten mini-biographies of amazing women who refuse to be conventional.

How has Sexism affected the psychology of women?

Almost in every aspect of contemporary culture, sexism is transparently shown. Especially ladies and little girls have the destructive effects of gender. Wherever female images are shown, it's about their looks and dresses, and people react, regardless of whether it's a model in a magazine, a TV entertainer, or a mannequin in a shop window. Finding and accepting their characters and bodies makes it difficult for females to grasp the ridiculous and regularly various models of society of the ideal females. As a general rule, females have been associated with numerous issues of physical and emotional well-being, including melancholy, nervousness, gorging, cleansing, and anorexia, through their negative and positive sexist views.

As indicated by Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) stress and coping model, subjective examinations of distressing circumstances are identified with people's genuine adapting techniques (Lazarus 1999). That is, the individuals assess the circumstances and choose how to react. Further research has featured the importance of this model to ladies' adapting to sexism (e.g., Ayres et al. 2009; Cortina and Wasti 2005; Foster 2000; Kaiser & Miller 2004). When all is said and done, scientists have discovered that proactive (commitment) methodologies, for example, going up against or looking for help, are more powerful than avoidant (disengagement) systems in decreasing the negative impacts regularly connected with stress in general (Lazarus, 1999) and sexism specifically (Foster, 2000).

There are a few circumstances when encounter may not be a suitable reaction to sexual harassment, for example, when the culprit embodies a risk to the female's physical or mental security (Kaiser & Miller 2004; Shelton & Stewart 2004). Subsequently, a corresponding

proactive procedure is to look for social help after a misogynist occasion. For instance, a lady may approach others for functional exhortation or she may look for passionate consolation. Stephenie Chaudoir and Diane Quinn (2010), from the University of Connecticut, distribute their work on the impacts of onlooker sexism and gathering level responses to sexism in Springer's journal *Sex Roles*. Women are frequently observers to misogynist comments directed at other ladies. Research shows that ladies frequently experience an assortment of negative emotions when they are the objectives of sexism and other ladies who witness the censorious comment can likewise be influenced. Chaudoir and Quinn inspected women's responses to catching a heckle comment and, specifically, how watching a particular chauvinist episode influences women's emotions and demeanors toward men. They asked 114 undergrad female understudies to watch a video and envision themselves as onlookers to a circumstance where a man made either a misogynist whistle comment ("Hey sarah, your boobs look incredible in that shirt!") at another lady or essentially welcomed her ("Hey sarah, what's up?"). The researchers at that point requested that the understudies rate their tension, wretchedness, and threatening vibe levels, their annoyance and dread toward men, how biased they thought the remark was, and their longing to move against or away from men all in all, just as how emphatically they felt about their sexual orientation way of life because of seeing the chauvinist comment.

Depression is a typical mental issue that has an extraordinary effect on a person's capacity to work beneficially. Universally, over 300 million individuals experience the ill effects of despondency, the main source of handicap, with a significant number of these individuals additionally experiencing manifestations of tension. An ongoing WHO-drove study evaluates that downturn and anxiety issues cost the worldwide economy US\$ 1 trillion every year in lost efficiency. Gloom in the work environment is a main source of lost work profitability, wiped-out leave, and early retirement. Studies show that nonattendance, inability, and lost efficiency because of depression cost businesses on multiple occasions the expense of restorative treatment for a worker which shows that treatment is less expensive for the foundation as well. (Bendt et al, 1998)

Sexism, bigotry, ageism, and different types of segregation in the work environment frequently place individuals at the less-than-desirable end under extraordinary mental pain. Sexism in the work environment has been connected to depression, nervousness, psychoactive substance use issues, personality change, and rest issues (Watson et al, 2015).

Women encounter about one to two impactful sexist events a week, comprised of traditional sex role stereotypes and bias, demeaning and degrading remarks and behaviors, and sexual

objectification. These events influence the psychological well-being of women by reducing their convenience, improving their emotions of anger and depression, and reducing their self-esteem.

Sexual objectification occurs when the sexual capacities and body parts of a female are considered as disengaged from her entire and complex being and treated as items just to be desired for, or contacted (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Once clearly externalized, the value of a female body is easily likened to its physical manifestation or prospective sexual ability and is dealt with like it exists exclusively for others to utilize or devour (Fairchild and Rudman, 2008; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Szymanski, Moffit, & Carr, 2011). The emotional wellness repercussions of consistent sexual objectification have just reasonably as of late been addressed and investigated inside the field of psychology, with scientists regularly submitting general direction to feminist's writings and theories (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997; Szymanski and Henning, 2007; Szymanski et al., 2011). Under twenty years back, Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) displayed objectification theory as a system through which to more readily comprehend the encounters of and mental dangers looked by females in a culture that is always taking a gander at, assessing, and generalizing the female body. Through the central focal point of objectification theory, this study looks to distinguish and investigate the different cycles of sexual generalization and their joined effect on women's' psychological health.

This research recommends that demonstrating gravity to females' bodies additionally activated cliché convictions about their sexual orientation. Fredrickson has likewise added to explore for the Objectification Theory which sets that ladies disguise an outsider's perspective when seeing themselves and their bodies. She contends that this objectifying of female bodies may have added to the high predominance of psychological wellness chances that plague women. Sexism is a more extensive term it's been talked about in the writing beforehand. Everybody has seen sexism as gender inequality, separation, and bias against ladies yet this investigation is seeing sexism through Fredrickson's theory of objectification. The extraordinary type of chauvinist belief system is sexism, the hatred of females. A society wherein scorn for ladies has resulted in most noteworthy paces of barbarity against ladies—for instance, in the types of aggressive behavior at home, assault, and the objectification of ladies and their bodies. Where they are viewed as assets or as subordinates, ladies are frequently treated seriously at the person just as the institutional level. For instance, a lady who was compellingly assaulted (the individual or individual level) may be told by a judge and jury (the institutional level) that she was liable as a result of how she was dressed.

Theoretical Framework:

This research study intends to see the novel *The Bell Jar* by Plath through the lens of objectification theory. This research study will explore gender discrimination, objectification of a woman's body, and serious mental illness caused by these two. Frederickson and Roberts (1997) proposed that these life experiences of women lead to mental health problems such as depression, sexual dysfunction, and eating disorders. The same happens with the protagonist of the novel where she faces sexism and objectification which leads her to severe depression, and she attempts suicide.

Objectification Theory is a feminist theoretical framework for understanding the experiences of women who live in a culture that objectifies the female body. This theory posits that mental health risks may result from living in a culture that reduces the female body to an object. This can happen through external sexual objectification experiences such as commonplace occurrences like catcalls, advertisements featuring scantily clad women, or more extreme forms such as sexual victimization (i.e., rape, sexual assault). Sexual objectification can also lead to self-objectification in which women internalize this outsider view of themselves and thus treat themselves as object to be looked at or evaluated based on appearance. This theory is advanced in many areas like sexual objectification, depression, severe mental health issues, and body shame but sexual objectification and severe mental illness among women have not been given much importance and have not been fully researched. (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997)

The concept of objectification is a framework for understanding the reality of being a female in a society that exploits the female body sexually. The theory suggests that women and girls are more socialized than boys and men to internalize the viewpoint of an observer as their primary view of their physical self. This view is known as self-objectification, causing many girls and women to constantly monitor the external appearance of their bodies. It, in effect, leads to increased feelings of shame, anxiety, and self-disgust, reduces incentives for peak positive states, and decreases understanding of internal physical states. These experiences have accumulated and are responsible for various risks to mental health that affect women disproportionately: anxiety, eating disorders, and sexual dysfunction. The theory also helps to understand why improvements to these risks of mental health occur with changes in the life cycle of the female body, which increase during puberty and decrease after childbirth. (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997)

Objectification theory argues that girls are socialized to see themselves as objects for their appearance by objectifying the female body as the cultural medium in which girls are raised. There is plenty of external pressure that encourages girls' preoccupation with their bodily appearances. The evidence seems to indicate that sexy, distinctive women are receiving

enormous benefits in the US. culture. For example, heavier girls are rarely accepted and given admission to college compared to average-weight or slim girls. Physical attractiveness is also more closely related to popularity, dating, and even marriage opportunities for women and girls than men. (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997)

Text Analysis:

***The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath:**

Women are part of the kitchen, is a sentence used in many societies to put straight slap on the face of women's rights. What led to such a dehumanizing and unjust conception of the lives of women? It may go back to mankind's earliest days when females collected berries for dinner and cared for the kids while the physically strong males hunted game and brought the prize home. Was the chimney women's place to start because of the harsh circumstances of hunting and manly activities they were obviously unsuitable? Were they considered to be ideally suited for sitting around, taking care for children, and churning butter? Maybe, but what it was about the 1950s which encouraged this concept.

As the narrative interacts with the life of Esther Greenwood in the 1950s, it is hard to understand how Plath analyzes the dilemma of the female artist who tries to overcome the ideals of household in a unipolar world before the feminism glory days in the latter 60s and 70s. In New York City, Esther and her peers are victimized partially because of the culture prevailing at the time: women should stay at home, cook food, clean home and bear children. The streets and neighborhoods of the 1950s were dominated by this docile tone. The following passage from the novel says all about the protagonist

She stops writing, bathing, changing her clothes, and sleeping. This worries her mother, who sends Esther to a psychiatrist who prescribes her to shock therapy. But instead of having the shock treatment healing Esther, the doctors do the procedure improperly and terrify her, which leads her into a living hell. Now is the Nightmare Stage, the part of the story where the spell is in complete control of the protagonist and any chance of a happy ending is about as shrunken as the protagonist's free will. Esther, through suicide, tries multiple times to rid the burden of her depression, which has controlled her after the shock treatment. She first tries to cut herself, but fails after viewing her wrist as "white and defenseless." Esther continues by saying, "It was as if what (Esther) wanted to kill wasn't in that skin or in the thin, blue pulse that jump under (Esther's) thumb, but somewhere else, deeper, more secret, and a whole lot harder to get at, (Plath,1963, p. 147)

1950's American Society

Soldiers returned home from fighting in the post-World War Two period and required employment. Women were prompted to quit the workplace and become housewives again, who cared for their family's welfare only. The country wished for a return to normalcy that was not progressive. The primary character Esther receives a vision of this garbled life in Sylvia Plath's novel *The Bell Jar* and feels trapped. The social and economic circumstances of the 1950s merged with sexism develop the context for Esther's breakdown. Mental illness and a violent sexual incident lead her to the verge of death.

Plath herself had suffered from mental illness for a long time. Indeed, *The Bell Jar* is known to be her autobiographical novel having her lifetime experiences that led her to commit suicide. As *The Bell Jar* vividly explains, America in the 1950s was an incredibly suffocating and oppressive environment for females to grow up. The constraints imposed by sexism at every turn hindered Plath's talent. For most of her female readers, her life and death symbolically represent a narrative of the repression of women. Many women saw it as a tragedy.

Plath had experienced dysfunctional behavior for quite a while. Undoubtedly, *The Bell Jar* — Plath's self-portraying novel on the encounters that prompted her originally endeavored suicide ten years earlier, was discharged under the nom de Victoria Lucas not exactly a month before to her death. “So I began to think maybe it was true that when you were married and had children it was like being brainwashed, and afterward you went about as numb as a slave in a totalitarian state.” (Plath, 1963, p. 76)

The first portion of the novel portrays Esther's expanding uneasiness as an assistant at a Manhattan ladies' magazine living in the amusingly named "Amazon" lodging, in light of the Barbizon, an only female's inn where Plath dwelled during that time. The primary half of the novel is loaded up with images of American society's VIP culture and women exploitation. It traces the growing insight of Esther Greenwood about the contradictions between what she, as a female, is "expected" to want and her increasing discontent with her choices.

The magazine world's toxic environment is represented in a scene in which the fictional magazine Ladies Day harms her. Outside the universe of magazines, Esther points a break from the dual standards of sexism, however rather experiences viciousness and the continual risk of assault. Her involvement with New York City males shows the risky labyrinth she needs to consult to manage her sexuality. Through her association with Buddy Willard, Esther is handled with the world's hypocrisy in which she is to remain perfect, sinless, pure, and loyal, while not Buddy. Esther is enraptured by this deception. In the misogynist world of the 1950s, Buddy Willard makes Esther aware of the all-out distance and enslavement of female sexuality.

Plath accentuates that female bodies are exposed to brutality and torment inside the restorative foundation as maternity wards are transformed into a Poe-like jail camp in which females are detached from their bodies.

In the beginning of their relationship, Esther idealized Buddy as a moral and scholarly guide. "My trouble was I took everything Buddy Willard told me as the honest-to-God truth. (Plath, 1963, p.60). She also says in instance;

The main point of the article "In Defense of Chastity" was that a man's world is different from a woman's world a man's emotions are different from a woman's emotions and only marriage can bring the two worlds and two different sets of emotions together properly [...] This woman lawyer said the best men wanted to be pure for their wives, and even if they weren't pure, they wanted to be the ones to teach their wives about sex. (Plath, 1963, p. 72)

The above-mentioned passage is a depiction of the way to deal with sexuality that is won right now. The research promotes the possibility that the genuine contrast among people is that women must stay unadulterated and chaste and the men may not. The best men stay unadulterated. Others don't need it, yet all individuals need virginal spouses, regardless of their virtue or vice.

This sounds like sexuality is just an issue of the biographical or psychological distinction between males and females—nothing is about emotions and romance, or physical attraction towards each other, or a sacred relationship. Even though some of the male characters in the novel are thoughtful or possibly innocuous, many male characters in the novel strengthen the unpleasant sexual orientation imbalance in Esther's society and treat Esther and the ladies around them with articulated sexism. Buddy consequently accepts Esther is second-rate disapproved because she is a woman and expects that she will need to wed, have babies, and dispose of all her desire to turn into a housewife. Marco (and, to a lesser degree, Irwin) generalize Esther for their sexual satisfaction. Esther alludes to Marco as "a women hater." Indeed, he announces all ladies are similar and tries to rap Esther.

Psychological implications:

It's a complicated account of depressive psychosis in a young woman. *The Bell Jar* is the narrative of a girl's future, but it does not follow the usual course of the historical novel. The young Esther reverts to madness instead of passing on the usual developmental milestones leading to adulthood. She won an internship for a fashion magazine in New York because of her excellence while she was studying at the prestigious Smith College. Since Esther's ambition is to become a writer, at first, she welcomes this chance, but she finds herself in a severe

depression shortly after returning home to her mother. She experiences a severe nervous breakdown. She disintegrates psychologically when she sees humans reduced to animals by violent, dedicated, shamanistic behavior. Therefore, it is not shocking that Lenny's pervasive gendered pressure and demoralization of Doreen's body seem to have an overflowing effect on her. This novel also describes mental health treatment in the 1950s. Plath talks about her experience of mental health treatment through Esther's narrative. As this narrative makes way to the women's movement and questions women living in the nineteen fifties, it offers an in-depth investigation of a woman who has a mental health problem and how sexism has a role in destroying a woman's future. By presenting the narrative of Esther, Sylvia Plath highlights the predicament that a woman has to face in her life. A woman lacks power even in decision-making about her own life. Though Jay Cee, another character in the novel, takes control of her life but has to face a lonely existence. Or else a woman may hand over all her powers to a man and lose her identity as a woman. Through the analogy of the fig tree, Plath mentions that a woman can never get the ultimate control, and therefore, may choose one thing or the other. Men, however, may have 'it all'.

Instead of looking for sexual satisfaction, Esther discovers savagery, objectification or dread of a lifetime of domestic detainment. Esther depicts a confused record of burdensome psychosis in a young lady. She ends up in a severe depression soon after coming back to her mother. She alludes to a facility to buy a diaphragm by Doctor Nolan, the female specialist who is credited for her recovery. This is vital to her control of her sexuality, of her own body, and therefore of her own life. The anti-conception medication, particularly as an antifungal pill, became legal when the novel was composed and distributed. In any case, it wasn't during the 1950s when Esther was fit for a diaphragm.

Death by performance of Rosenbergs looks forward, later in the novel to Esther's nightmare experiment with electro-shock therapy. Their shared experience with them indicates that folly is not just a problem for Esther; let's say "poor electricity." Madness could be only another name for individuals, such as the Rosenbergs, who do not fit into the values of mainstream culture.

The following passage is an important vivid section about the fall of Esther into self-destructive or suicidal depression. Silence is alarming for a young lady who consumes her time on earth playing with words as an intern in a magazine, as distinguished in writing;

I saw my life branching out before me like the green fig tree in the story. [...] I saw myself sitting in the crotch of this fig tree, starving to death, just because I couldn't make up my mind which of the figs I would choose. (Plath, 1963, pp. 20-21)

She also mentions, "the silence depressed me. It wasn't the silence of silence. It was my own silence." (Plath, 1963, p. 37)

A Part of Esther's sadness and mental anxiety is she feels incapacitated, helpless, and unfit to carry on. The trees of fig in the novel speak about all the possible results she can't achieve and cannot run after. "A small answering point in my body flew toward it. I felt my lungs inflate with the inrush of scenery – air, mountains, trees, and people. I thought, "This is what it is to be happy."(Plath, 1963, pp. 121-122)"

Even though Esther admittedly is mentally sick, she has occasions in her life like that sketched out in these lines of practically visionary clearness. It is this clearness that emerges when she condemns the dual standards of contemporary culture in a blunt way. Her experience recommends that her "madness" isn't something, but rather a composite of physiological, passionate, and social elements. To put it society, the dual standards helped Esther to bring about her self-destructive wretchedness or suicidal depression. Esther states that she couldn't stand the idea of a woman having to have a single pure life and a man being able to have a double life, one pure and one not' (Plath, 1963, p. 74)

She was reading in the Reader's Digest that women should be chaste and pure while thinking about Buddy who told her that he slept with another woman, but he expected purity and chastity from her. She was puzzled by the dual standards of society. This passage talks about Esther's first encounter of electroshock treatment. She feels considerably it is not a treatment it's a penalty. These lines from the text show the pain through which she went during this treatment. Then something bent down and took hold of me and shook me like the end of the world [...] with each flash a great jolt drubbed me till I thought my bones would break and the sap fly out of me like a split plant. I felt dumb and subdued. Every time I tried to concentrate, my mind glided off, like a skater, into a large space, and pirouetted there, absently. (Plath, 1963, p. 53) Once again Esther loses their senses, her intuition, her intelligence, after her first encounter with electroshock treatment at Dr. Gordon's. She's unfit to assemble contemplations, and feels "moronic," another method for saying she even faced voice loss. The treatment shows up as awful as the suffering.

If Mrs. Guinea had given me a ticket to Europe, or a round-the-world cruise, it wouldn't have made one scrap of difference to me, because wherever I sat – on the deck of a ship or at a street cafe in Paris or Bangkok – I would be sitting under the same glass bell jar, stewing in my own sour air (Plath, 1963, p. 168)

The bell jar is a repeating image within the novel that represents Esther's sadness, disconnection and detachment, "To the person in the bell jar, blank and stopped as a dead baby, the world itself is a bad dream." (Plath, 1963, p. 215)

She was regularly thinking about suicide encouraging herself for it by giving examples of ancient Romans. She imagines it being acclaimed and easy like the ancient Romans. "When they asked some old Roman philosopher or other how he wanted to die, he said he would open his veins in a warm bath. I thought it would be easy, lying in the tub and seeing the redness flower from my wrists, flush after flush through the clear water" (Plath, 1963, p. 121)

However, she couldn't make herself do that, no matter how sad she was, her depression was so severe that eventually Esther started taking pills and she overdosed several pills and went to the darkness of her basement to die. "Wrapping my black coat round me like my own sweet shadow, I unscrewed the bottle of pills and started taking them swiftly, between gulps of water, one by one by one." (Plath. 1963, p. 138)

The body as an Object:

Living in a culture where the individuality of women is being erased, has caused the character to begin to see herself as an object. It can be compared with the traumatic situation when a person's body is objectified, which simply means the separation of body or parts of body from an individual. And as result a woman starts seeing herself as an object, "an object to be evaluated" (Muehlenkamp, Swanson & Brausch, 2005, p. 24). "I would be sitting under the same glass bell jar, stewing in my own sour air" (Plath, 1963, p. 178).

Typically, a bell jar is used for artifacts to be observed and examined in, so it's interesting that Esther selects this simile to explain how she feels about her environment. This is because society and its expectations turns a person into an object by removing the layers of one's own identity, part by part, until nothing remains. The societal pressure of being objectified led Esther to a miserable condition.

It causes Esther not to find a way out of the darkness she has entered through the reflections, she considers herself in connection with society. Esther eventually attempts to take her life many a times because of her depression and the most prevalent risk factor in her disease is suicidal behavior (Beautrais, 2002). She tries to take her own life because she thinks suicide will resolve all her problems.it was the only option in her mind. "It was as if what I wanted to

kill wasn't in that skin or the thin blue pulse that jumped under my thumb, but somewhere else, deeper, more secret, and a whole lot harder to get at" (Baker, Crawford, & Brown, 2010, p.142). It artfully shows the hypocrisy, cunning and authoritarian supremacy of patriarchal culture with Esther, the female protagonist's distinctive eyesight and bodily experience, referring to the intellectual female's opposition to and abolishing of the unjust social culture with her right to "look" and the absolute personification of female subjectivity. Her body and soul being psychoanalyzed and supervised reveal the social position of the female individual to be objectified and 'gazed' behind the political influence of patriarchy. The epitome of the "bell jar" is described as the whole social ideology of the patriarchy that regulates the females

The mind and body are constantly portrayed as distinct things throughout Western culture. The binary of body and mind portrays the secondary word as adverse and feminine. Aristotle, Plato and Descartes see the body as a prison or a cage. What is visible throughout *The Bell Jar* is the car image, so the body reads like a device. While traveling to the hospital in her scholarship sponsor's car, Esther considers the car a cage and she wants to jump out. Throughout the novel, she feels like an object trapped in a bell jar. But she's still struggling with her physical body. Esther explains how her body played little tricks on her, every time she attempted to pull the cord tighter, when she attempted to strangle herself with her mother's dressing gown cords. Then she pursues the concept of the body as restricting her by stating that "I would simply have to ambush it with whatever sense I had left, or it would trap me in this stupid cage for fifty years without any sense at all" (Plath, 1963, p.143)

When Esther loses her eyesight due to her devastating suicidal attempt, a nurse tells her not to worry you will find a handsome blind man one day to get married to. Esther feels that her body is still an object and property of man even without if without sight. While living in the Amazon hotel New York, Esther describes secretaries who were from wealthy families and they went to Posh secretarial schools in which they had to wear stocking like gloves and hats to class. Esther calls it objectification and she clearly rejects this objectification of women's bodies. She says it portrays a women's body as an object of the male gaze, adorned to please. Thus the female body is seen as a vehicle for childbirth, an object rendered docile by the experience of childbirth.

Doreen is also a character who can be seen as a sexual object of the male gaze. Esther, however, explains the psychotic dual norms in culture that equate females and their bodies as aberrant and defamed as sluts or whores when trying to liberate themselves sexually. Sexuality is

isolated from any indication of adoration or energy. Even marriage seems like a contract to have sex and bear children without any notion of intimacy.

Findings of the Study:

The study has focused on the psychological implication of sexism in *The Bell Jar* which contributes a new aspect to it, and it's never been discussed before. It is an important aspect that should be given importance because sexism is a never-ending concept, in different ages studies proved that sexism did exist even if we search for Sexism in the present time there must be work written on it but the important aspect that needs to be considered is not given importance.

Through this research, we came to know that sexism and objectification both are societal issues that can be very destructive. It can destroy the life of a woman; the research studies done previously by the researchers have mentioned topics like sexism, objectification, and its types in different periods. However, how badly it affects a woman, is the aspect which is remains unspoken or very little spoken about.

A young female could be put to death through the severity of biased treatment only because she is an aspiring woman. Sexism and objectification can cause severe mental health illness which most of the time leads a female to commit suicide. Furthermore, the treatment of such mental illness i.e. electroshock therapy is the most severe and the worst type of treatment which may cause the patient complete memory loss.

Conclusion:

The 1950s was a dreadful decade of oppressive social mores. Everyone was judgmental, especially about women. The rules were rigid, from the length of the hems to the shine on the kitchen floor. The theme song of an American late-afternoon radio show, "Hey little girl, comb your hair, fix your makeup ... day after day there are girls at the office and men will always be men ... run to his arms the moment he comes home to you, I'm warning you." These lines from the song even show what was expected from a woman in the 1950's. Gender role Ads from the Fifties show men spanking their wives and it wasn't any picnic for men.

The Bell Jar was published in 1961 but the main action of the story took place in the summer of 1953 so we can say that it reflects the society of the Nineteen Fifties, and it's a realistic picture of the sexist behaviors faced by women in the 50s. The mass media and popular culture be it any advertisement or any literary work of the Fifties, portrayed to which extent sexism existed in that time. The research intended to reflect upon the idea of the existence of Sexism through Sylvia Plath's novel *The Bell Jar*.

A society in which women are forced to get married and set in home, cook food and give birth to babies, the survival of an ambitious woman sounds impossible. Especially in a society where women have only two options, to get married do the house chores or do nothing at all, because the mindset is this that women are good at and capable for it only. In such case a career ambitious woman when forced and suppressed just because she is a woman, and she faces the dual standards that a man can do anything but because she is a woman she can't do anything. The woman will obviously feel like trapped in a bell jar and she will get disturbed mentally. This sexist behavior which makes a woman mentally ill, Sylvia Plath in the novel *The Bell Jar* reflects the same idea. Esther Greenwood faced the same and suffered severe mental health issues in the novel.

Another important contribution to the topic is sexism is hardly viewed through the light of objectification theory which means when a woman's body is objectified. It also shares grounds with sexism. Living in a culture where the individualities of women are being erased has caused the character to begin to see her as an object. It can be compared to the traumatic situation when a person's body is objectified, which simply means the separation of body or parts of the body from an individual, and as a result, a woman starts seeing herself as an object. The same happened in the novel proving that Sexism and Objectification are both the reason of Esther Greenwood's mental and traumatic situation in the novel. She tried to kill herself because she thought that it is the only reason to solve all these problems.

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