



The Emotional Intelligence Analysis of the Main Character in Thao's You've Reached Sam

Ni Nyoman Ayu Sanjiwani¹, I Gusti Ayu Gde Sosiowati², Ni Ketut Widhiarcani Matradewi³

^{1,2,3}Faculty of Humanities, Udayana University, Denpasar, Bali

Abstract

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This article aimed to analyze the aspects of emotional intelligence experienced by the main character in You've Reached Sam novel written by Thao. To analyze the emotional intelligence aspects, this study used the Theory of Emotional Intelligence conducted by Goleman (1998). Furthermore, the data is collected from the utterances in the novel that presents the aspects of emotional intelligence. This study used the descriptive qualitative method, while the documentation and note-taking technique is also applied in order to collect the data. The finding of this study shows that the main character in the novel experienced the five aspects of emotional intelligence. Thus, the emotional intelligence contributed in solving the main character's problem throughout the story.

Keywords: *Emotion, Emotional Intelligence, Main Character*

(*) Corresponding Author: nyomanayusanjiwani@email.com

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INTRODUCTION

Literature, according to Hudson (2015) is an essential record of what individuals have seen, experienced, thought about, and felt about the aspects of life that are of the most immediate and long-term interest to all of them. As a result, it is fundamentally a language-based manifestation of life. Such expression is shaped into the many literary arts, which will draw people's attention when presented in the right context and at the right time. Nevertheless, it is crucial to realize that literature exists because of the life that it represents.

In the landscape of literature, it is then classified into two major types; fiction, and nonfiction (Sumardjo and Saini, 1997). Any literary work that is based on fact and aims to authentically portray genuine events and information is considered nonfiction. On the other hand, fiction is a work of imagination that is not portrayed as fact, but could be based on an actual event or circumstance. The writer's dream comes to life on the paper as fiction. It might be drawn from the author's personal experiences or just their imagination. The purpose of fiction is to captivate, instruct, and inspire readers and viewers. Fiction in particular and literature in general are able to engulf our emotions. Fiction provides readers with experiences outside of their ordinary life. The example of fiction works are drama, prose, and poetry. The prose itself can be categorized into short story and novel.

In the *Glossary of Literary Terms* conducted by Abrams (1957), the term 'novel' is used to describe a wide range of texts that solely share the trait of being lengthy works of fiction written in prose. The plot of a novel can take any form, be it tragic, humorous, satirical, or romantic. (Abrams, 1957). Generally, novels

always come with conflicts experienced by the main character. In the novel, the main character must undergo a character change in order to reach a solution to the climax that occurs in the novel. As same as humans in the real life, the character changes that underlie problem solving occur due to the presence of emotional intelligence experienced by the main character. Aside of that, their motivation to change also refers to the factors that underlie a character's temperament, desires, and moral character (Forster, 1999).

The process of people overcoming the problems in their life using the control of their emotion is what called as emotional intelligence. The term 'emotional intelligence' was first proposed by a psychologist named Goleman (1998), in which he introduced emotional intelligence as how human's brain works as a problem-solver that stimulates actions and triggers the mind to be able to work the problem out in order to find solutions.

In the field of literature, some writers use emotional intelligence to untangle the conflicts existed in their writings. The emotional intelligence is used in order to identify and describe the climax of the story as well as showing how the main character makes improvement of character. In literature, emotional intelligence contributes in sharpening the characterization of the characters so that they can be more realistic in showing human behavior. Since emotional intelligence is the part of psychology, this further explains that there is a reciprocal relationship between psychology and literature. Literature and psychology—or known as the psychology of literature is the study of a creative process, or the study of the psychological types and laws present within the works of literature which will finally create an effect of literature within its readers as the audience of psychology (Wellek and Warren, 1956).

Endaswara (in Ibrahim, 2021) also added that emotions serve as a bridge connecting the writer and the reader. This demonstrates the need of researching emotional intelligence in novel contexts in this study. Furthermore, the research conducted by Ghabanci & Doost (2012) explained that by understanding and paying attention to the emotional intelligence, readers will be so much easier to understand the details of a literary works that is being read.

The example of the presence of emotional intelligence in a novel can be seen in *You've Reached Sam*—a teen fiction novel that is written by a Vietnamese author named Dustin Thao. In *You've Reached Sam*, Thao tells a story about a girl named Julie Clarke who just moved out to a small city with her boyfriend to pursue their dreams and make their dreamed future come to life. They got all of their future planned out before the harsh truth speaks different. Sam died in a car accident, and leaves Julie in an enormous depression. Being so helpless and heartbroken, Julie tried to call Sam's cellphone one more time just to realize that it could be the last chance of hers to say proper goodbye. Various aspects of emotional intelligence appear in this novel, which is very intriguing to see how the main character has to deal with her psychological conditions where she is required to overcome a misunderstanding that arises as a result of an accident experienced by her lover.

This article is inspired by some studies, which have been reviewed to be the references for the writing of this article. The first study is the article conducted by

Ibrahim and Junaid (2021) entitled *The Emotional Intelligence in Inside Out Movie*. This article was published on August 2021 in the *Journal of Advanced English Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2. The article aimed to identify the emotional intelligence aspects that existed in the movie. Using the Goleman theory of Emotional Intelligence, the article showed that there are several aspects of emotional intelligence, namely self-regulation, motivation, and empathy found in the movie.

The second study that is used as reference is the thesis written by Mulyadi (2014) titled *An Analysis of Emotional Intelligence of the Main Character in the Movie Script Entitled Perfume: The Story of a Murderer*. This study used the qualitative method, aimed to identify the use of emotional intelligence in order to solve the conflict happened to the main character. This study showed that emotional intelligence gave out a huge contribution to untangle the problems faced by the main character throughout the movie.

This study also used the article written by Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2009) as the reference, entitled *Emotional Intelligence: Theory, Findings, and Implications in the Psychological Inquiry: An International Journal for the Advancement of Psychological Theory* Vol. 15, No. 3, 197–215. This article describes the nature of emotional intelligence as well as the theory of emotional intelligence.

Based on those references above, this study aimed to explain the emotional intelligence aspects that are found in the novel. Emotional intelligence has a reciprocal relation with literature, especially novel for it is helpful in making a relevant fiction characters so that it can represent human behavior. In the future, this study might be useful for writers or readers to see how emotional intelligence makes impact in a story so that they can be attentive in making vivid characters by paying attention to the aspects of the emotional intelligence.

METHODS

This study used descriptive qualitative method. According to Nazir (1985) the descriptive approach is one that provides a structured, accurate, and precise description, image, or depiction of the facts, qualities, as well as connections between the subject matter being studied. The data source is a teen fiction novel titled *You've Reached Sam* written by Dustin Thao. The novel is published on November 2021 as the debut novel of its writer. *You've Reached Sam* tells about a story of a teenage couple named Julie and Sam who shared the same dreams and desires. They got everything planned for them in the future, but then one thing happened that screwed it all. Sam died in a car accident, and everyone blamed Julie for his death. While everyone is busy throwing hates towards her, she has to accept the fact that she lost her dear boyfriend and got her life messed up and ruined. This novel is used as the research object because the novel contains a lot of emotional intelligence aspects.

The data in this study is collected by documentation method and note-taking technique. Note-taking is the process of writing down information from different sources in order to record it. Note-taking also defined as the systematic recording of information. Last name, page, and other information are included (Creswell,

2014). Taking notes is an essential aspect of producing a research paper because it records and collects information from sources utilized to write the article. Note-taking was utilized as an instrument in this study. As a result, after reading the novel, the researcher took notes on the data that included emotional intelligence in the novel. The data are the sentences in the novel that fulfilled the study's targets. Furthermore, some actions are taken in order to collect data. The first step is to properly read the novel in order to fully comprehend the meaning and narrative of the story. Then, highlight passages from the narrative that demonstrate emotional intelligence of the main character. Following that, write down the sentences that demonstrate emotional intelligence.

The qualitative method was utilized for analyzing the acquired data in this study since it is the most suitable method for a study focusing on literature and psychology. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994) the objective of qualitative approach is multimethod, with a naturalistic, interpretive approach to its subject matter. This implies that qualitative researchers investigate phenomena in their natural environments, aiming to make sense of them in terms of the meanings individuals assign to them. The study and compilation of a wide range of empirical data such as case studies, individual experience, self-reflective and visual narratives which characterize routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives represent qualitative method. Many steps are involved in the data analysis process. The issues faced of the main character were revealed. The emotional intelligence features of the main character is analyzed. Following the data analysis, the data is presented using informal method. The information was presented in the form of words and sentences rather than a chart or figure. It aims to provide better explanations that will make the study's goal easier to understand.

Furthermore, the theory that is used in this study is the Emotional Intelligence theory conducted by Goleman (1998). According to Goleman (1998), emotional intelligence has a huge impact on all other capacities, either helping or hindering them. Emotional intelligence seeks to reveal an individual's sentiments and moral character. Goleman defined emotional intelligence as the ability to control one's emotional impulses, discern another's innermost sentiments, and manage relationships effortlessly. This theory is used to examine the main character's self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills in the novel.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Goleman (1998) divides the aspects of emotional intelligence into five, namely self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These aspects that appeared in the novel and are experienced by the main character are analyzed.

1. Self-Awareness

Goleman (1998) defines self-awareness as the capability to control the emotion which leads to the improvement of decision-making, figuring out strengths and weaknesses, the ability to admit mistakes, and the skill of setting up goals. The self-awareness aspect is shown in the data below.

Data 1:

“Sam is buried somewhere up there. I have to see him at least once, pay my respects, and tell him I’m sorry for not coming sooner and what a terrible person I’ve been. I have to let Sam know that I haven’t forgotten him.” (Thao, 2021:33)

Julie made the decision to go to Sam’s grave after finally recognizing her mistakes. She is conscious that she needs to at least once see him in his final retreat, even though she missed his funeral service. She would make amends for what she had done and worked to become better as Sam’s friend. At least she wanted to apologize to Sam and explain that she did everything out of helplessness and never intended to dishonor Sam’s death.

Data 2:

“I take a seat on the porch beside her. An air of silence hovers between us. She must be angry with me. “I’m really sorry about last night. I completely forgot we were supposed to meet. I feel so terrible, Mika.”” (Thao, 2021:125)

This scene presented Julie and Mika. The self-awareness is found in this part of paragraph. Julie promised Mika that she would come to the vigil ceremony of Sam, but she broke that promised because she felt like she was not ready to meet people that possibly attend the vigil ceremony. Self-awareness is about admitting mistake, and Julie did admit that what she done was wrong. She realized that she should not promise anything to Mika when she herself were not sure about it. Julie then felt terrible because she knew Mika was really waiting for her presence that night when the ceremony was held. Feeling all guilty and understanding that Mika’s anger was caused by her indecisiveness, she then apologized and tried to explain her absence to Mika.

2. Self-Regulation

The control of one’s behavior and feelings through self-management, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement is known as self-regulation. It entails being able to track, manage, and adjust to a situation, as well as acting in one’s permanent best interests and in accordance with one’s fundamental values. (Goleman, 1998).

Data 3:

“I reach out a hand to calm him, and say, “No it’s alright, Oliver. Really.” He takes a deep breath and lets it out. I pick up my spoon and we resume eating ice cream. Although neither of us is in the mood anymore.” (Thao, 2021:133)

Avoiding a negative thinking can help make room for positive thoughts to flourish. This is one of the goals of self-regulation. In this section of the narrative, Julie made the decision to calm Oliver down after he said something hurtful to her. She could have lost her mind and allowed herself to be insulted by that, but the fact that she simply shrugged it off and assured Oliver that it was okay with her speaks volumes about how much self-control she possesses. Accepting something that offensive and making an effort to control her ego are prudent actions that show she has mastered the skill of self-regulation.

Data 4:

“I want to run away, but too many people have stopped to listen, so I have to defuse this before it turns into something worse. I take a deep breath and force myself to say something.” (Thao, 2021:182)

The self-regulation aspect in this data is depicted in Julie's ability to decide which action should she take in order to face Taylor. In this scene is told that Taylor confronted her in front of many people, saying that she was the reason of why Sam died that night in a car accident. Julie was about to leave Taylor but she thought that it would make thing worse between her and everyone. She tried to calm herself first so she would not overwhelmed in madness and ended up saying bad things. She then explained to Taylor carefully that she was not responsible for the accident happened to Sam. Even though Taylor kept confronting and blaming her, Julie was able to handle that situation and did not let herself to involve in a much serious fight.

3. Motivation

Goleman (1998) defines motivation as an individual's initiative that results in differences or improvements in their lives. Motivation is also the process or desire that propels goal-directed conduct.

Data 5:

"After we hang up the phone, I pick the papers up from the floor and sit down at my desk. It's hard to focus after that conversation. I spend more than an hour trying to start a history paper, but barely get two sentences down." (Thao, 2021:122)

In this section of the book, it is easy to understand how motivation plays a role. Julie's motivation was evident in the hours she spent trying to concentrate while working on her assignment. She was on the phone with Sam, and it kept her from working because they were depicted as having a serious talk. With whatever energy she had left, she nevertheless continued to work on her job. Julie demonstrated to the readers that she had the desire to improve her life, in keeping with the explanation that motivation is about the desire to work on things in order to achieve changes and improvements.

Data 6:

"My French test goes better than I expected. I spent all night studying for it, so I'm glad it paid off. I surprise myself on the oral portion of the test." (Thao, 2021:176)

After struggling with her unstable emotion and got lost in track of her academic thing, Julie finally found her way back to show a better performance at school. It is shown in this passage that she spent hours to study for her tests. It was hard for her at first because all she could think about was Sam's death, and overthink that everyone might hate her. Nevertheless, she found her energy and motivation back and started working on her academic assignments which then leads to a better situation of her mental state.

4. Social Skill

The capacity to make friends and socialize with others is referred to as social skill. Goleman (1998) emphasized that social skill additionally includes about how a person may influence others, whether in social situations or in various parts of life.

Data 7:

“We’ve been spending a lot more time together, talking about films and musicals and Sam. I can’t believe it took three years and both of us losing someone we loved to get to this point. We made plans to visit his grave again soon.” (Thao, 2021:173)

In data number 7, the social skill aspect is presented. This passage shows that Julie learnt how to welcome others to be in her social environment and stopped herself to dwell in loneliness. She spent times with Oliver to talk about many things, which shows that she was able to make friends again. A lot of plans and new adventure arise to begin. Julie is depicted to be more open and eager to be involved socially not only with Oliver, but with everyone which she was not very close with.

Data 8:

“I’m glad I came to support him then. There are maybe fifteen people in the audience. The schedule shows another film playing at the same time in the main theater. I’m guessing everyone’s there instead.” (Thao, 2021:242)

Julie was coerced into going to the movie festival by Sam, but she ultimately made it. Julie was hesitant to attend because she struggled with socializing, but Sam persuaded her that attending the festival would be beneficial for her. She found it difficult to stay among the masses, but things eventually got better for her. She got along with everyone and even spoke with a director of a movie. She made new friends and got to speak with Sam’s favorite singer. Julie shown an increase in her social abilities at this point, and she also established new social connections that undoubtedly had a favorable influence on her social surroundings.

5. Empathy

According to Goleman (1998), empathy is the recognition that everything happens differently depending on one’s point of view. Empathy is the ability to perceive things from other people’s perspectives.

Data 9:

“You know, I can’t speak for your parents ... but sometimes, it’s just hard to look at these things,” I try to explain.” (Thao, 2021:50)

Julie and Sam had already reconnected over the phone at this point in the story. Sam questioned her as to why his parents had put his belongings in crates. Julie had to tell him that Sam’s parents must find looking through his belongings quite difficult because he was already dead from a car accident. Julie thought it realistic that it might be upsetting to see items that a person owned before their passing, and she can relate to Sam’s parents’ dilemma. Since those things will always make them think of Sam, they presumably share the same sentiment and find it difficult to have them nearby. She could relate to Sam’s parents’ sorrow and grief because she had experienced a similar circumstance.

Data 10:

“It pains me to see him like this. I need to do something, but I’m not sure what. I think of Sam. He would know what to say if he was here. He’s the only person James will listen to right now. A thought occurs to me. Our connection is weakening, but I need to do something. I can’t let James spend the rest of his life thinking Sam hated him.” (Thao, 2021:275)

Data number 10 shows Julie's empathy towards James—Sam's younger brother. It is told in the story that James ran away from his house because he thought Sam hated him. The last thing happened between him and Sam before Sam's death was both of them argued each other. James could not help thinking that Sam still hated him. Julie understood that there was a misunderstanding between the siblings. She tried to help but she was also clueless at first. However, she could not let James to feel bad about himself. Thus when she got the idea to call Sam, let him talk with his little brother. Even when she knows that her connection with Sam is getting weaker, that she might cannot talk to him anymore, she still called him up and used her last straw for James. Empathy is the ability to understand other people's feeling, and it is shown in Julie's action to help James to end his misunderstanding.

CONCLUSION

This article presents all of the five aspects of emotional intelligence according to the theory of Emotional Intelligence conducted by Goleman (1998). Those five aspects namely self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social skills, and empathy worked together hand in hand to contribute in solving the problems and obstacles faced by Julie as the main characters. Those five aspects presents a reciprocal relationship which then giving a complete closure to Julie's conflict. The problems happened in the story both happened mentally and emotionally which is very sentimental to Julie.

There are 10 data that are being analyzed in this article. Each data presents each aspect of emotional intelligence. The analyzed data are the excerpts in the novel that best represent the five aspects of emotional intelligence.

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