

Emotional intelligence in Belva Plain's *Blessings*

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Abstract

Everyone faces emotional challenges. It can influence their behavior since emotion is an incredibly strong drive on human behavior. This powerful emotion can lead someone to take actions that he might not regularly do, or keep away from the conditions that someone enjoys. Emotionality is related to a range of psychological phenomena, including mood, temperament, personality, and motivation. The ability to control emotions in the self and others is called Emotional Intelligence (EI). EI can be found not only in real life but in literary works such as a novel. In line with that interesting topic, this article, therefore, explores the EI and the implications of EI of the main character in Belva Plain's Blessings. In analyzing the novel, the study applied a psychological approach. The technique of analyzing the data was a qualitative descriptive method. The findings of the study showed Jennie's EI, that is composed of emotional self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, and social skills. Furthermore, the results revealed the implications of Jennie's EI; she becomes successful because she is good at self-regulation and motivation. She is also good at self-awareness, empathy and social skills, so she has better interpersonal relations.

Keywords: *emotional intelligence; implications; psychological approach; blessings*

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INTRODUCTION

Exploring emotion could not be separated from discussing Emotional Intelligence (IE). To address the concept of EI, it is essential to understand its two component terms, intelligence and emotional. Intelligence is typically used by psychologists to define how well the cognitive sphere functions. It implies intelligence related to capacities just as the "capacity to connect and disconnect" theory, to appraise and to argue, and to persuade in indefinite concept (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). The intelligence is divided into two or three subgroups. The first of these is a verbal-propositional intelligence, which includes measures of vocabulary, verbal fluency, and the ability to perceive similarities and to think logically. The second of these is a spatial-performance

intelligence, which includes abilities to assemble objects and recognize and construct designs and patterns. The third, more controversial intelligence, social intelligence, is concerned with people's skills in relating to one another (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

"EI would combine a group of skills that were more distinct from both verbal-propositional and spatial-performance intelligence than social intelligence had been and at the same time would still be close enough to the concept of intelligence to belong to the triad", according to Mayer & Salovey's (1997, p.8) study.

The term "emotions" itself means the affectional domain of mental functioning that involves the sentiments, state of mind, evaluation, and their heart feelings, together with weaknesses or strengths (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Emotion, the most important and powerful element of personality, has a greatly essential part in someone's well being and effective feelings regulation is a crucial feature of the one's adaptation and life complacency. Effective feelings regulation is relied on the one's EI which has been suggested as an important addition in the landscape on human fields of life (Goleman, 1995).

The capability to apprehend feelings, to examine and create feelings that use to support thinking, to grasp feelings and sentimental analysis, and to use the information thoughtfully to guide feelings as well as to boost in more excellent actions and thinking, this is known as EI (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). The most common definition of EI is the capacity to acknowledge and manage a person's feelings and other's (Goleman, 2001).

According to Mayer and Salovey (1997, p.5), EI involves "the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth". This definition combines the ideas that emotion makes thinking more intelligent and that one thinks intelligently about emotions.

Mayer et al., (2000) proposed the four-branch EI model that composes from the following interrelated functions: (a) precisely knowing emotion in oneself and others; (b) utilizing emotion to help thinking and make decision; (c) understanding emotion in oneself and others; and (d) effectively regulating emotion in oneself and others. These emotional information processing elements are connected so that the more integrated processes (such as emotional understanding) construct on the more basic processes (such as emotional perception). Several researchers have argued that, in addition to constituting separate factors, the functions described in the above model also combine to form an overall adaptive ability, with factors at both levels showing some evidence of validity (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004).

Before the four-branch system of Mayer and Salovey was conceptualized, EI was popularized by Goleman in the 1990s. He (1995) proposed five important components of EI, they are:

1. Emotional self-awareness – recognizing what one's emotion in any situation and knowing the implication of those feelings on other people.
2. Self-regulation – managing or diverting one's sentiments; predicting implications before doing after getting the drive.

3. Motivation – using sensitive causes to reach results, take delight in the process of learning and work hard in dealing with the barriers.
4. Empathy – detecting others’ feelings.
5. Social skills – regulating relationships, encouraging others and persuading desirable reactions from them.

In a broad review of the literature on the subject of EI, Dulewicz and Higgs (1997) recognized the seven elements which have a contribution to EI. They are (1) self-awareness; the ability to be aware of their feelings and to manage emotions as well as to control its implications, (2) emotional resilience; the capacity to perform reliably in a range of situations both when underpressure or not and to adapt behavior appropriately, (3) motivation; drive and energy to attain clear goals and face the challenges and rejection in pursuing the goals, (4) interpersonal sensitivity; the ability to be mindful of others’ needs and feelings and to use this mindfulness effectively in interacting with them, (5) influence; the capacity to persuade others to change their perspective on a problem, issue or decision, (6) decisiveness; the ability to use both rational and “emotional” or insightful viewpoints to reach clear choices, (7) conscientiousness and integrity; the capacity to show clear commitment to a course of activity in facing the challenges, to act consistently and in line with understanding ethical requirements.

Dulewicz and Higgs (1999; 2000) in extensive research studies have illustrated that EI is powerfully related to a person advancement and success. In addition, it may be strongly correlated to one’s managerial performance or leadership.

According to Salovey et al (2013), people who have sturdy EI may be successful in life, have a higher social relationship, work more effectively and stay healthy than those who have low EI. EI can be considered to be a cause that might contribute to more positive attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes (Carmeli, 2003). In addition, Hamachek (2000) argues that the growth of EI has a major role in finding oneself in numerous condition of life. Sparrow (2005) additionally states the connection between EI, self-respect, and self-assurance. He proposed that when EI develops, self-respect and self-assurance improve, and someone will be totally healthy (not only emotionally but physically also), pleased and victorious.

EI can be found in literary works such as a novel, not only in real life. In this research, the researcher found some EI of the characters, but the researcher only focuses on the main character in the novel. EI in the novel has an influence on the character and also makes a direction to the story of the novel itself. It showed by the word and sentence in the novel itself.

In this paper, the researcher is interested to analyze a novel entitled *Blessings* written by Belva Plain. The novel *Blessings* uses historical settings. It is about the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War was, at the time, the longest and most unpopular war in American history. Direct American involvement began with the assignment of advisors to South Vietnam in 1955. Combat troops arrived in 1965 to face a growing threat from both Vietcong guerrillas and North Vietnamese troops. The war continued until a cease-fire in 1973 and South Vietnam fell to North Vietnamese forces in 1975.

The researcher chooses that novel because there are some reasons as follows: first, the novel *Blessings* is a very famous novel. The novel becomes

one of the New York Times best-selling and has 2.173 ratings and 34 reviews. Second, *Blessings* is the debut novel of American author Belva Plain. Belva Plain was an American best-selling author of the fiction of mainstream women. At her death, her twenty-plus novel was printed in more than 30 million copies in 22 languages.

METHOD

This research is categorized into a library research method since most of the sources are taken from the library and the other from the internet or electronic source. The primary source in this is the text of the novel *Blessings*. The secondary sources of this research are taken from some books come from the library and from the internet or electronic sources. The subject of the research is the novel *Blessings*. The object of this research is the EI of the main character as reflected in the novel *Blessing*.

The researcher chooses the psychological approach to analyze the novel *Blessings* by Belva Plain. Wellek and Warren (1987) say:

By 'psychology of literature we may mean the psychological study of writer, as type and as individual, or the study of creative process, or the study of the psychological types and laws present within works of literature, or, finally, the effects of literature upon its reader (audience psychology).

Psychological critics deal with a work of literature primarily as an expression, in fiction form, of the state of mind and the structure of the personality of the individual author (Abrams, 1993). According to Subhan (2012), the psychological approach or psychology of literature has a view that psychology (the science or study of mind and its processes) might be applied to assist a literary critic or researcher in defining, interpreting, and evaluating literary works. Psychology can be used to explain the psychology of the author and its implication on the making of the novel. In addition, psychology can be used to explain the character and characterization.

The result of this research will be explored by using a descriptive qualitative method. The researcher presents the data on the statement, dialogues, and quotation to give an explanation about the research findings. In analyzing the novel, the researcher focuses on the study of the main character's characterization, the EI and the implication of EI.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the researcher's analysis, the main character of the novel *Blessings* is Jennie Rakowsky. She is the most discussed in the story and appears in many scenes from the beginning until the end of the story. Jennie's EI and its implications are as follows:

1. The Emotional Intelligence of the Main Character

EI is the ability to accurately perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotion into thought, understand emotion, and regulate emotions in the self and others. The researcher tries to analyze the EI of the main character based on Goleman's theory. The EI of Jennie, as follows:

a. Emotional self-awareness

Emotional self-awareness means the ability to knowing what one is feeling at any given time and understanding the implication those moods have on others (Goleman, 1995). Jennie is self-aware, she knows how she feels and others, and she knows how her emotion and her actions, can affect people around.

Jennie realizes that Jill is hurt at the moment. She is certainly in disillusionment. So, Jennie speaks very softly. She knows how to manage the situation because if she goes on with temper it will make her hurt more. She begins to explain that it is just hard and impossible to have any relationship after nineteen years. That is all she meant. It can be seen in the following quotation.

At that moment Jill said, "I wanted so much to fit into your life, to be a part of it."

Jennie gasped. "How can that be? It's so late. Too late for us. You don't—I mean, we don't fit into each other's lives."

"No, you were right the first time. You could fit into mine. You just don't want me in yours. You said so to the people who called you."

"I didn't say it like that."

How cruel, how stupid of them to have told her that way! And yet I didn't say it, didn't I? I said they should leave me alone. Look at her. . . . Her skin is like milk, and the blue veins at the temples, where the hair falls away, are so thin, her lifeblood flows in them. . . . Now she's grieving, she's hurt. . . . I was right from the beginning. It was better for neither of us to know the other, ever.

And Jennie spoke very softly. "I only meant, it's hard— yes, I said impossible— to have any relationship after nineteen years. That's all I meant."(Plain, 1990: pp.218-219)

Another scene also shows Jennie has self-awareness when she has dinner with Peter and Jill. This is the first time for her to meet Peter after nineteen years. He is just the same as nineteen years ago as like Jennie. Peter calls for champagne because this is a historic moment for them. Peter says about New Mexico, Jill has told him that she and Jennie talk about it. He says that Jill knows a lot about the Anasazi, the Ancient Ones, more than he does. He asks Jennie probably she also knows about them. Jennie has refused him and she has realized he becomes pleading and hurt at the moment. As for Jennie, she has done with pleading.

"No, not a thing," Jennie said, refusing to help him. For a moment he looked pleading and hurt, then, once more mustering cheer, he returned to the land of mesquite and staghorn cactus. As for me, I'm done with pleading, Jennie thought. I can't even as much as catch Jill's glance, although I know that when she thinks I can't see her, she is examining me slyly. Perhaps she's trying to imagine the primal scene— don't we all at some time or other? At least they say we do. Yes, it was a warm, silent evening, the gravel on the driveway smelled of dust, and we had to hurry before they

all came home. That's how it was. That's how you come to be sitting at the Waldorf Astoria, Jill, in your fine dress and your dignity, with your poor heart pounding, as it must be. (Plain, 1990: p.289)

b. Self-regulation

Self-regulation means controlling or redirecting one's emotions; anticipating consequences before acting on impulse (Goleman, 1995). Self-regulation is all about staying in control. Jennie has a late period, but she tries to be calm because it is often irregular. Beside Peter has said that he has been very careful, she does not mention to Peter that she waits more than a week. Jennie tries to put out her mind. Jennie has always been her way of coping with problems to remind herself: 'Pull yourself together; use your head, not your emotion. Calm, calm. Things have a way of straightening out if you just keep calm.' As much as she can, she tries to keep her under control. It can be seen in the following quotation.

I'll wait a week, she thought. It's nothing.

She did not mention it to Peter, and she waited more than a week, trying to put out her mind. It had always been her way of coping with problems, to admonish herself: Pull yourself together; use your head, not your emotion. Calm, calm. Things have a way of straightening out if you just keep calm. (Plain, 1990: pp.79-80)

Another scene also shows that Jennie has self-regulation when the doctor gives a positive pregnancy result. They have become to be panicked, both Jennie and Peter. Peter asks her to have an abortion, but she does not want to do it. Jennie asks him to marry her, it will solve the problem. Peter asks his father, but he does not permit them. He will give whatever Jennie need to take care of it. Take a trip to Europe, Rome, Paris, or buy anything she wants. Jennie has been angry, what she need just help, love, and being accepted. They get into a quarrel with each other. Peter says there is no sense if she just screaming at him, and Jennie sat for a moment. She realizes that they have a problem and screaming will not help them. She tries to bring herself under control.

"There's no sense going on like this if you're only going to scream at me, Jennie. We have a problem, and screaming won't help." She sat for a moment, bringing herself under control. Then she remembered something. (Plain, 1990: p.95)

c. Motivation

Motivation means utilizing emotional factors to achieve goals, enjoy the learning process and persevere in the face of obstacles (Goleman, 1995). Jennie tries to motivate herself in order to get out of her problem. It is when Jennie gets a call from Mr. Riley. He is one of the people from The Birth Search. They tell her that her nineteen years daughter wants to see her. It is bad news for Jennie. It is like opening an old wound. She begs to him to tell the girl to be happy and to leave her alone. Jennie does want to meet her, there is no sense. With her hands over her face, she rocked and sobbed. After a long while then,

she begins to take control of her. Jennie has motivated herself, she tries to re-examine. 'There is an intelligent way of handling everything, like the way you always tell the client.' She tells herself and being thinking to get out of the problem. It can be seen in the following quotation.

"Oh, my God . . ." she sobbed. With her hands over her face, she rocked and sobbed.

After a long while then, her mind began to click. She summoned it now, the little machine in her head, to take control lest she flies apart and scatters in broken pieces.

"Think, Jennie. You can't afford to panic. There's an intelligent way of handling everything, isn't there? You always tell other people so. Now tell yourself. Think. (Plain, 1990: pp.33-34)

Another description shows how Jennie enjoys her learning process. She has to look back upon the visit with mixed memories. It is when she has visited Peter's house. It is all good, except for the way mother's Peter treats her. Jennie remembers about Mrs. Mendes who has a farewell to her. The word she said sounds nice, but her lips have close on the words with faint dismissal. Jennie states whatever it has, it has a learning experience. She is seventeen, and life is good. Jennie enjoys it.

"So nice to have had you with us," she had said, but her lips had closed on the words with faint dismissal. Or was that just more of Jennie's nervous nonsense? Well, whatever it was, it was a learning experience, she told herself, amused at the school-teacherish phrase. Now they were both back to their own world on the campus, to work and friends and weekend love. She was seventeen, and life was good. (Plain, 1990: p.78)

d. Empathy

Empathy means sensing the emotions of others (Goleman, 1995). Jennie has the ability to put herself in others situation. Jennie has a conversation with her mother. Her mother tells her that she got a beautiful geranium this year, double pink ones, something new. Her mother expects conversation. Unlike Pop, she needs to fill every silence. Besides, there is something Jennie wants to know. Jennie starts to talk about Gloria Dieter who gets in trouble last year. She is back home with an unwanted baby. Then her mother took the newspaper. It is about the Vietnam war and the way the kid behaves. They are experimenting with free sex. The other news is an article about a well-known activist who is pregnant without marriage, having a baby and proud of it. Jennie has silent, she senses her mother emotion, such a sick to know it.

Jennie asks her mother about what she has to do if Jennie as like the girl in the newspaper. In fact, Jennie has in the same condition as the girl. Her mother can't answer. As long as she knows Jennie wants not to do it. She is a good girl in her mother eyes. Jennie put herself as her mother, maybe she will throw her out the door. However,

her mother has her own opinion. She rather dies herself than throw a daughter out of the door. It can be seen in the following quotation.

“...What has Vietnam, the war got to do with the way this kid behave, I ask you? It’s a bad war, but what has free sex got to do with it, I ask you? A disagree. Look, look at this!” It was an article about a well-known activist who was pregnant. “Look at her! not married, having a baby, and proud of it” proud of it, mind you come down to it, behind all the fancy talk, what is she?”
Jennie was silent.

...
“You’d throw me out, I guess. Out the door.” And she force a laugh, a convincing one this time, meaning, Of course, all this ridiculous.

“Throw you out the door? Who throws a daughter out the door? But I’d rather die myself, I’ll tell you that.” Mom took off the glasses, revealing the soft, remote expression that comes upon her plain face whenever she spoke of her murdered parents, of her wedding day, or of the day when Jennie was born. “It would mean that everything we ever taught you went past your ears. Deaf ears, it would mean; wasted words. All the years, the way we live, throw out like garbage...” (Plain, 1990: pp. 89-90)

Another description also shows how Jennie senses her parents’ emotion. She is the only daughter that her parents’ have. Her parents work hard for her. They are saving, they only take a little for themselves. They ever tell her, but she knows all if it is for her. She knows that they are giving her “Good value” and keeping her save. They love her very much.

Jennie is the only child. Her parents’ labour is for her alone. Their savings, the things they do not buy for themselves, and the vacations they do not take are all for her. They ever say so, but she knows it. She is aware that they are giving her “good value”: work, family, respectability, and education. Their daughter must have the education they missed. The world’s evil must not touch her. They keep her save. (Plain, 1990: p. 39)

e. Social skills

Social skills mean managing relationships, inspiring others and inducing desired responses from them (Goleman, 1995). Jennie has social skills, she is also good at managing change and resolving conflicts. Jennie has a misunderstanding with Jill when the first time they meet. Jennie wants a second chance, she will meet her and explain things better. Jennie asks Jill to have lunch with her. She says sorry to Jill and also says that she intends to clarify things. It can be seen in the following quotation.

“Jill”, she said, “this is Jennie.”

“Yes?” The tone was cool.

“I’m sorry that my being upset was so hard on you, I thought maybe you and I could have a talk and clarify things a little. Would you do that?”

“Well. . .” Now the tone was cautious. “When”

“Today, Lunch, I thought. Around one o’clock.”

She decided quickly; best to make it downtown on the West Side, someplace where none of Jay’s friends, most of whom lived on the Upper East Side, would be apt to go strolling on a Sunday. “The Hilton on Sixth Avenue at Fifty-third Street. It’s nice there, they don’t rush you. Shall I meet you at the registration desk?”

“I’ll be there.”

“And, Jill . . . it’ll be easier for us both this time.”

“I hope so.” A hesitation. “I’m glad you called, Jennie.” (Plain, 1990: pp.225-226)

2. The Implication of Emotional Intelligence of the Main Character of the Novel

The researcher tries to analyze the implication of EI of the main character based on Salovey et al.’s theory. The implication of Jennie’s EI is, as follows.

a. Successful

Jennie is good at self-regulation. Jennie tries to always stay in control when she wants to solve her troubles. Jennie is also good for motivation. She tries to keep the spirit and motivate herself in order to reach her success. Jennie has succeeded, she becomes a lawyer and establishes an office. Jennie begins and gradually builds a reputation as dedicated, caring, tough defender of women’s right, especially those of the poor. It can be seen in the following quotation.

In a modest neighbourhood downtown near Second Avenue, she established an office, two rooms sublet in space belonging to a striving partnership of three young men who were just barely out of law school themselves and eager to get a footing in criminal law. Having no interest in family cases or the particular problems of women, they were glad to refer all such to Jennie. So she began and gradually was able to build a reputation as a dedicated, caring, tough defender of women’s right, especially those of the poor. (Plain, 1990: pp.28-29)

Another scene also shows how successful Jennie is when she has an invitation from Peter. Peter asks her to have dinner with him and Jill. At first, she refuses it, for Jennie, it is too much pain to meet Peter after nineteen years. However, she feels curious how in nineteen years Peter has changed. Jennie admits that she has successes and she wants to show to Peter about it.

Now, although it was not easy to admit, she felt a touch of curiosity to know whether or how in nineteen years Peter had changed. And there was something more: Really, she wanted him to see how well she had survived, how successful she was, and how desirable still. It embarrassed her to have such a foolish wish, but there it was. (Plain, 1990: p.283)

b. Better interpersonal relation

Jennie is good in self-awareness and empathy. Jennie knows how she feels and others. She knows how her emotion can affect people around. She always keeps in her measure carefully. Besides, Jennie also has social skill. She is good at managing the relationship. At the end of the novel, Belva shows how Jennie has better interpersonal relationships with Jill, Peter, and Jay. Jennie and Jill have on their way to go home after Jennie has fought for the Green Marsh. They go to the lake, which is the prettiest place to see before they go back home.

Jennie stops the car, they have arrived at Jennie's apartment. Jennie becomes hesitant to go inside because the windows in her apartment have all lit. However, they decide to go in. Jennie has surprised with what she sees, there Peter and Jay in her apartment. Jay apologizes to her, he says that Peter has told everything to him.

Jennie has been blessed, at first, she supposes the existence of Jill and Peter just make her suffer. Jennie just has not moved on from her dark past. Although, now she has realized that life is not always bad. Jennie gets Jay back to her and they will marry as soon. Her interpersonal relations with Jill and Peter have been better too. This can be clearly seen in the following quotation.

"Oh, Jennie," cried Jay again. He put his arms around her. "You ought to hit me! Beat me! Throw me down the stairs! What I've done to you! What I've done!"

"Peter come to my office this afternoon and told me everything. Why . . . oh, for God's sake, why didn't you tell me yourself?"

She hid against his shoulder.

"You could have told me," he protested when she didn't answer.

"No, she couldn't have," Peter said.

"Darling Jennie, you should have told me at the very beginning when you first found out."

Somehow now, Peter was taking charge. "I'll answer for her. She was afraid of losing you. And," he said in a roughened voice, "as I also told you, it goes back to me. Me and my family. I've done a lot of thinking these last few days. . . . We marked her. After that, she never thought she was good enough. This was just a repeat situation." (Plain, 1990: pp.387-388)

CONCLUSION

The researcher gives some conclusions which are based on the research findings, as follows. Jennie's EI are self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation,

empathy, and social skills. Jennie knows how she feels and others, and she knows how her emotion and her actions, can affect people around. As much as she can, she tries to keep her under control. She is always able to motivate herself in order to get out of her problem and enjoys her learning process. Moreover, she has the ability to put herself in others situation. She is also good at managing change and resolving conflicts. The implications of Jennie's EI are: she becomes successful because she is good at self-regulation and motivation. She also good at self-awareness, empathy and social skills, so she has better interpersonal relations.

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