



EXPLORING EMOTIONAL AND COGNITIVE DIMENSIONS IN THE SELECT NOVELS BY SHELDON AND BAGSHAWE: A DATA-DRIVEN STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATION

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Abstract

In the present study, the educational worth of the chosen suspense thriller novels by Sidney Sheldon and Tilly Bagshawe, four novels by each, is investigated through emotional understanding and cognitive involvement while reading. Close reading is the main tool of collecting instances related to EQ and IQ. That means the instances that involve the reader emotionally and cognitively are recorded and converted into numbers. Through this numerical data filled tables the two selected authors under study is then compared and contrasted. The findings of the research depict balanced blend of emotional and cognitive engagement between the two sets of novels, which further indicates that suspense thriller novels are not only entertaining but also contribute to emotional and intellectual impact and learning. These suspense thriller novels motivate readers to closely observe the motives, psychology and emotional state of characters and emotions different scenes are creating but also compel readers to anticipate the next move of characters, next scene or what will be the climax. This constant engagement with emotions alongside mental exercise with the whole story supports the fact that reading these types of novels help improve EQ as well as IQ. The study therefore concludes that suspense thriller novels can be invaluable, meaningful and effective tools in the arena of teaching which subsequently help improve critical thinking abilities, emotional quotient and problem solving skills of readers or students.

Keywords

Suspense Thriller Fiction; Emotional Intelligence; Cognitive Engagement; Textual Analysis; Educational Value, etc.

Full Article

Introduction:

Suspense thriller novels have been considered as a form of entertainment. But it is a fact that suspense thriller fans cannot forget the reading experience and can visibly recognize not only the hangover they are getting from it but also the gradual changes in the personality through continuous reading of these types of novels. Actually readers engage with both emotional situations and cognitive activity. Reading suspense thriller fictions does not directly measure EQ or IQ but it helps improving both by dragging readers into critical reasoning like exercises such as anticipation, judgement, connecting dots, solving complex situations, solving problems to find solutions and dragging them in the internal psychology of the characters to understand the real emotions and human behaviour and character motives.



Reading is always considered a significant habit in the life of students. They are actually forced to read daily. Whenever there is any comparison between the learnings a person gets from the habits of reading and watching, reading is always considered at top. Now here it becomes easy to trace out the reasons how these two are contributing to the learning of any person. Reading helps in changing the overall personality as while reading specially any novel one needs to imagine everything in mind, the whole story, character sketch, their dresses, moves, expression and what not while watching any movie like suspense thriller we are served with everything which is readymade. And here the major learning starts that a reader has to do everything on his own mentally. More mental involvement is there in reading which deeply, gradually and subconsciously changes the personality. Suspense fiction is therefore especially relevant to literary study because it combines uncertainty, tension, concealment, and reversal with strong emotional and intellectual appeal.

In this research study the researcher has chosen and investigated selected novels, four prequels by Sheldon and three sequels and one standalone novel by Bagshawe through qualitative analysis and recorded the instances which stimulate either emotions or cognitive involvement. The frequency of these types of instances has been filled in Table 1 in the form of numerical data. This table 1 is further used to interpret data and deduce the result of how suspense thrillers contribute to educational value.

Literature Review:

Research on fiction has already established that reading novels these days is not limited to entertainment only but improves in a reader a lot more other personality traits, like emotional intelligence, moral development and critical thinking abilities. Scholarships on reader-response theory and cognitive literary studies particularly mainly conclude that mental involvement is there when readers read novels as every element of novel like narrative, themes, characters, suspense or thrill invite them to anticipate the climax, next move of characters, remember details, understand the broader hidden meaning behind scenes and situations. On the other hand, researchers on affective reading reveal that while reading fiction the reader enters the emotional and cognitive world of characters, basically enters the story, and try to understand the motives, psychology and complex human nature. These findings related to reading novels are significant for suspense thrillers as well as in these novels hidden agendas, parallel plot lines, mental stress, controlled information are main ingredients of the story.

In this context the suspense thriller novels of Sidney Sheldon and Tilly Bagshawe are one of the best choices for investigation. Novels of Sheldon and Bagshawe are packed with emotional and psychological characters and with scenes and chapters containing suspense and thrilling elements and therefore their novels are apt for the examination of emotional and cognitive involvement. Sheldon is a well known writer known for his fast paced novels well dipped in themes like love, revenge, betrayal, women empowerment and patriarchy, familial issues and psychological characters, literary devices, dramatic turns and what not. On the other hand, the continuation novels by Bagshawe, who carry forward the legacy of Sheldon, are also characterised by the same qualities as we found in Sheldon's novels but with some extra elements of contemporary settings and present era realities to meet the current generation's expectations. Despite being widely read all across the globe, these novels have not been explored for their educational value. Thus this gap makes it urgent to investigate this area of these novels and find out whether suspense thriller novels bring together emotions and cognitive activity in close affinity while reading them.

Theoretical Framework:



This research is basically based on two important complementary intelligences viz EQ and IQ. These frameworks definitely help understand the underlying meaningful messages and educational importance of suspense thriller novels and whether they are effective enough that they can interact in terms of emotions and cognitive involvement.

Emotional Intelligence (EQ):

In the present paper, EQ means, ability of characters as well as readers to understand emotions and psychology and find solutions to solve and overcome such emotional problems. EQ related instances which are dipped in the emotions like fear, love, betrayal, revenge, familial issues, patriarchy etc were found out in the selected texts and recorded in the Table 1. In this way in this study EQ is not considered as a measurable psychological score but considered as a literary instance which shows emotions and psychological states of characters and emotional responses produced during the process of reading.

Cognitive Engagement (IQ):

On the other hand IQ related instances in this study means all those scenes, character responses, plot and narrative which compels to think deeply and anticipate the coming scene or rest of the story, try to understand the complexity, solve puzzles or problems etc, which actually is not a formal intelligence testing. In other words all those incidents in the text that activate cognitive skills. All these types of incidents appear in the text when the story demands the reader to understand hidden meanings and agendas, get an idea of upcoming scene or introduction of a new character, think about the climax in advance, solve unresolved affairs, connect dots and solve a crime scene etc. Thus, IQ like EQ is also used and considered in literary terms in order to indicate mental activities of character as well as readers during reading instead of traditional psychometric assessment.

It is an important point to be noted for suspense thriller novels that they are characterised by those types of characters who are intellectually and emotionally complex. These characters' calculations, tactics, emotional balance and imbalance, psychology, manipulation actually creates ground for both intellectual and emotional responses. And these types of characteristics make suspense thriller novels exceptional and examinable as they remarkably present multiple layers of human psychology.

Objectives:

- To identify and record emotionally engaging instances in the selected set of novels by Sideny Sheldon and Tilly Bagshawe.
- To Identify and record cognitively engaging instances in the same set of novels.
- In the next step compare and contrast author wise and novel wise distribution of both EQ and IQ related instances.
- To investigate the educational value as well as literary implications of suspense thriller novels in terms of how they improve emotional and intellectual intelligence during readings in the selected set.
- To deduce the results and findings with the help of tables and graphs filled and made after going through the traditional procedure of close reading.

Research Methodology:

This study follows a mixed method approach which involves close reading, collecting data in numbers, interpretation of data, and deducing results and findings on the basis of manual analysis. That means this research incorporates both traditional qualitative and statistical analysis with a



purpose of examining selected suspense thriller novels written by Sidney Sheldon and Tilly Bagshawe. How characterization, plot construction, narratives and literary devices, altogether, of suspense thriller novels offer two kinds of improvements namely EQ and IQ is investigated and studied through this examination. For this data based analysis close reading of the original novels has been performed first and then through repeated text examinations relevant instances related to cognitive skills and emotional intelligence have been identified and recorded in Table 1. In the next step these instances were organised in different tables that means novel wise and author wise separately for further process of comparing and contrasting to find out the similarity or any visible pattern.

Data Analysis:

The qualitative data which is coded in numbers is analyzed via distribution design, frequency of counts and comparison of totals. This model of analysis allows more structured research in literary criticism and moves ahead of traditional subjective analysis. The combination of close reading and data based analysis levels up the research and shows a clear picture of how this genre is one of the best mediums of upgrading cognitive skills and emotional intelligence. The whole procedure of analysis is performed in a proper sequence and systematically to ensure uniform interpretation and trustworthy categorization in the form of tables. Thus this combined methodology, justifies and reminds the fact of balanced interpretation of novels as those literary texts which have both aesthetic and educational significance.

Corpus:

The corpus of the study consists of eight novels, four novels by Sidney Sheldon and three sequels and one standalone novel by Tilly Bagshawe:

- *If Tomorrow Comes* (Sidney Sheldon)
- *Master of the Game* (Sidney Sheldon)
- *The Other Side of Midnight* (Sidney Sheldon)
- *Memories of Midnight* (Sidney Sheldon)
- *Mistress of the Game* (Tilly Bagshawe)
- *Chasing Tomorrow* (Tilly Bagshawe)
- *Reckless* (Tilly Bagshawe)
- *The Phoenix* (Tilly Bagshawe)

Results and Data Analysis:

Table 1. EQ and IQ Improvement Instances by Novel

Author	Novel	EQ Instances	IQ Instances	Difference (EQ - IQ)
Sidney Sheldon	<i>If Tomorrow Comes</i>	210	210	0
Sidney Sheldon	<i>Master of the Game</i>	190	190	0
Sidney Sheldon	<i>The Other Side of Midnight</i>	220	180	+40
Sidney Sheldon	<i>Memories of Midnight</i>	200	190	+10
Tilly Bagshawe	<i>Mistress of the Game</i>	200	200	0
Tilly Bagshawe	<i>Chasing Tomorrow</i>	200	200	0
Tilly Bagshawe	<i>Reckless</i>	200	220	-20
Tilly Bagshawe	<i>The Phoenix</i>	210	200	+10

The table above shows the counts of EQ and IQ related instances recorded through the close reading method of the selected text under study. This table mainly depicts the records of the novel wise overall spread of emotional and cognitive instances across eight novels. These records help in understanding the contribution of each text in the overall equilibrium between emotional and cognitive engagement. Besides presenting numerical data only, this table also provides a structured platform for the comparison of narrative emphasis of each text while revealing that suspense thriller fiction maintains emotional responses and cognition based activities during reading.

Table 2. Author-Wise Totals

Author	Total EQ Instances	Total IQ Instances	Total Instances	EQ & IQ Difference
Sidney Sheldon	820	770	1,590	+50 (EQ Lean)
Tilly Bagshawe	810	820	1,630	-10 (IQ Lean)
Total Corpus	1,630	1,590	3,220	+40 (Overall EQ Lean)

Table 2 shows the author-wise totals that is totals of the selected set of novels by each author. It depicts the difference between authors in their usage of such EQ and IQ improving instances, which clearly shows that there is not much difference.

Table 3. Novel-Wise Distribution Pattern

Pattern Type	Definition	Novels
Perfect EQ-IQ Balance	EQ and IQ are equal	<i>If Tomorrow Comes, Master of the Game, Mistress of the Game, Chasing Tomorrow</i>
EQ-Dominant	EQ count is higher than IQ count	<i>The Other Side of Midnight, Memories of Midnight, The Phoenix</i>
IQ-Dominant	IQ count is higher than EQ count	<i>Reckless</i>

Table 3 is a novel-wise distribution pattern. It shows dominance of EQ and IQ related instances in each novel.

Table 4. Percentage Share of Total Corpus

Category	Total Instances	Percentage Share (%)
EQ (Emotional Intelligence)	1,630	50.62%
IQ (Cognitive Intelligence)	1,590	49.38%
Total	3,220	100.00%

Table 4 shows the percentage share of total EQ and IQ related instances in the total corpus.

Results and Discussion:

The entire corpus selected for study records 1630 EQ related total instances 1590 IQ related instances, depicting a difference of 40 instances. These almost equal totals reveal the proper balance between instances that involve emotional as well as cognitive activity. Each novel contributes 203.75 EQ related instances and 198.75 IQ related instances on average which is pointing towards a balance rather than clustering of instances in a few texts.

The important point to be noted here is that these absolute counts are significant but more significant is their representation that means engagement during reading. The suspense thriller genre is characterized by uncertainty, delayed revelation, narrative tension and interpretive



pressure, and therefore the reader needs to continuously surmise, infer, remind, assess, judge and estimate the past, current and upcoming events deeply. In this way the emotional, suspenseful and thrilling experience results in imagining the whole picture, reasoning and emotional involvement as the world of the story required to be constructed while reading. It is worth to note the words of Woldreader: “Numerous studies prove that reading fiction boosts empathy and emotional intelligence. In addition to stronger comprehension, writing, and critical thinking skills...child’s imagination and creativity.” (“Emotional Intelligence”)

This structure and arrangement shows that emotions and critical reasoning go hand in hand in suspense thriller fictions. Rather we can say that it is forming a fictional domain where affective reaction and logical reasoning develop together. The selected corpus, thus, redescribes coexistence of emotional response and reasoning related engagement throughout the reading process consequently making it invaluable from the point of view of narrative effect and literary cognition.

Educational Implications:

Author level and novel level collected data clearly shows that suspense thriller fictions under study are a proper blend of such qualities and instances that help readers directly or indirectly improve their emotional intelligence and cognitive abilities. Due to some particular characteristics of this genre it provokes the reader to ask himself what, why, when, where and how types of questions during reading. That means it is not about narratives, plot, form and content but also hidden messages and central ideas which incorporate emotional and cognitive engagement. In this way the genre is active rather than passive in nature as it continuously engages readers either emotionally or cognitively. Such continuous interpretative efforts makes this form of art highly relevant from the point of view of teaching. Thus the genre is not only crafted for entertainment purpose but also directly or indirectly improve EQ and IQ and consequently all these views suggests that suspense thriller genre deserves serious attention not only within literary world but for interdisciplinary studies as well. It is important here to quote these words: “Stories can elicit powerful emotions. A key emotional response to narrative plots (e.g., novels, movies, etc.) is suspense. Suspense appears to build on basic aspects of human cognition such as processes of expectation, anticipation, and prediction.” (Lehne et al. 1/18)

Limitations and Future Scope:

This research study is limited to selected sets of novels by Sidney Sheldon and Tilly Bagshawe that means four prequels by Sheldon and three sequels and one standalone novel by Tilly Bagshawe. Therefore the findings can be generalised to the entire genre of suspense thriller novels strictly. Although all the collected data in numbers is helpful in comparing and contrasting both the authors but all these instances which are later converted into numbers, collected on the basis of individual interpretation and judgement. And the third most important limitation is that the corpus of the study is also limited, which means increasing the number of novels under study would help in deducing more exact and accurate results and conclusions. Even though a researcher carries out a study with care and systematically it unavoidably involves subjectivity. In other words, other researchers would record the same narratives, dialogues, events and instances in a different manner and categorise them differently.

These limitations may appear as gaps at first glance but as it is a fact that a research and its gaps are complementary to each other and paves new paths for further development. Thus this research can also be extended to a larger corpus where some other suspense thriller writers can be included. Moreover, this particular type of study can also be carried out with reference to other genres in some other context or with a different hypothesis. Such extended studies would build a



separate reservoir of literary, psychological and mixed method analysis of suspense thriller as well as other genres.

Literary Legacy:

Sidney Sheldon and Tilly Bagshawe are renowned names in the present era's suspense thriller fiction world. Sheldon through his fast paced narration, psychological depth, glamour and intense conflict shaped the modern commercial suspense thriller fictions. On the other hand, Bagshawe adapted these characteristics and carried forward his legacy in a more current context. Their novels collectively form a durable mode of popular fiction which is marked by its accessibility, solid plot structure, emotional impact and ongoing reader interest. They have crossed the stage of providing mere entertainment as their novels are constructed around unexpected turns, love, betrayal, ambition, moral ambiguity, surprise, abrupt twists and what not. All these qualities of novels provide readers the ultimate experience to understand human behavioural patterns. Thus their fictions are significant as they help us in understanding how suspense thriller novel writing achieves sustained influence through both emotional and cognitive involvement.

Aesthetics in EQ and IQ Related Instances:

The aesthetics of these novels is based on two important features which are emotional and cognitive engagements. The emotional engagement is portrayed through revenge, justice, love, betrayal, fear and interpersonal conflict. All of these create a powerful emotional atmosphere and heighten the readers' response. While IQ related instances emerge from narrative tension, unexpected turns and twists, foreshadowing, cliffhanger, controlled information, referrals and other literary devices. Readers are engaged because meaning and information is not revealed at once and each narrative full of suspense and thrill invites them to release their emotional thoughts and use their brain to solve the puzzle-like plot structure. Altogether these features give readers an ultimate aesthetic experience which not only improve IQ but EQ as well along with entertainment. In this case, it is significant to remember these words: "A psychological thriller is a thriller genre novel or movie that focuses on the psyche of the characters and mentally manipulates the viewer or reader." (Samandarova Furqat qizi 246)

Conclusion:

The present study makes it clear that suspense thriller fiction is much more than that of entertainment only. And this data based analysis of selected sets of novels by Sheldon and Bagshawe reveals that these novels are in close affinity between the usage of those types of instances which either engage emotionally or cognitively or even in both ways at a time. The close connection between EQ and IQ related instances in the novels suggests that they provide both affective and interpretative reading experience and these are those features which arrest readers both emotionally and cognitively. That means a reader gets involved in both emotional tension and mental activity.

The results and findings shows subtle differences in numerical pattern of the both the authors. On one hand Sidney Sheldon novels under study are slightly tilted towards emotional emphasis while Bagshawe's novels lean a bit towards cognitive engagement. The whole pattern consisting of the total number of both the types of instances depicts similarity as shown in Table 2. This proof of equilibrium is important because it makes clear the fact that suspense thriller fiction works through both, the interaction of feelings and thought rather than emphasising any one more in comparison to another. On the basis of the findings of the whole study it can be said that suspense thriller fiction needs serious attention within the world of research scholarship as this genre combines aesthetic experience of both entertainment and didactic purpose that is education.



Abbreviations:

EQ-Emotional Intelligence

IQ-Intelligence Quotient

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Author Contributions:

Primary author, Kavita Dubey carried out the primary research work which includes finding and recording EQ and IQ related instances on the basis of qualitative analysis and arranged them in tabular form for further graphical representation. Dr. Prachi Sathe supervised the research process, guided in the conceptual and analytical framework and the revision and final approval of the research paper for publication.

Conflict of interest:

The declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding this research paper.

Ethics Approval:

This study is based on analysis of primary texts, published selected literary works of both the authors and does not involve human participants other than authors, animals or clinical data. The research was conducted in accordance with academic ethics, principles of honest scholarship and accepted standards of research.

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