

Research Article

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**Killing Guiltlessly as Reaction Of
Sadistic Personality Disorder in Euripides' *Medea*
(A Psychological Approach in Literature)**

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Abstract

This research paper is aimed at analysing one of Euripides' well-renowned classical literary works entitled *Medea* by focussing on Medea as the main character of the story, Medea's psychological state, psychological reason, and sadistic personality disorder reaction. This research paper uses psychological approach in analyzing the related psychological phenomena in Euripides' *Medea*. The result of the research indicates that Medea, who gets accustomed to being raised in a barbarous family and living in a barbaric environment, has a natural impulsive behaviour to kill other persons guiltlessly.

Key words: killing, guiltless feeling, sadistic personality disorder

1. Introduction

Methodological relationship between literature and psychology has given a major contribution to the development of both disciplines of knowledge. Such relationship enables any methods within psychology to be applied to help analyzing literary works, and conversely, human's psychological phenomenon found in literary works can give feedback to the development of psychology. Psychology could be applied to analyze literary works because literary works, either poetry, prose, or drama oftentimes reveal the deepest, hidden human's psyche and the real, unexpected human's psychological power. The humans' psyche explorations with the objective of comprehending the unique human phenomenon better is something interesting to study. A great many literary work authors or literary work researchers have revealed the complexed human's psyche in literary works with the aid of psychology. Thereby, the literature-psychology relationship is actually inseparable in studying human's psyche.

Humans, basically, show up varied behaviours in facing problems in their lives. To

deeply comprehend and get familiar with human's psyche and behaviour, the existence of psychology and its related elements are definitely needed. Psychology could explain human's behaviours, psychological deviations, and hidden conflicts. Human's psychological conflict that derives from a certain psychological condition, such as overweening pride, beyond-measure anger, and excessive love, in its turning point, will result in psychological problems.

Psychological problems cover many things, one of which is loving somebody too much. Depth psychologists discover that excessive love will, at a certain point of time, change into resentment and vengeance beyond measure which eventually beguile someone to act cruelly to another. Such a psychological phenomenon is also found in a literary work of Euripides' Greek tragedy drama *Medea*. Medea, the main female character who is reared by parents in a barbarous family and in a barbaric environment, has consciously committed horrible mischief, cruelty, and sadism by killing others and her children with no sense of guilt, pity, and remorse. This indicates that such a woman horribly suffers from a certain psychological disorder or abnormality which leads her to kill other's lives so easily. A normal person will not commit a sadistic deed by killing others unfeelingly. Those who are psychologically normal will not indulge their ego and have the heart to kill others even their own children. The psychological disorder phenomenon--killing others guiltlessly--is greatly interesting to be a factual matter that plausibly emerges in our everyday life this present time.

Killing guiltlessly can be categorized as a sadistic personality disorder reaction. A man or a woman who suffers from sadistic personality disorder will pitilessly torture and kill others with no feeling of remorse and sinful feeling [1]. The sufferer of sadistic personality disorder has a bit sense of responsibility, morality, and care towards others. His or her behaviour is completely determined by his or her own need. The sufferer acts impulsively, seeks for immediate satisfaction, and has no ability to be stricken by times of frustration. Although the sufferer understands amoral deeds, he or she does not exhibit concern about it at all. The sufferer commits a cruel crime in adulthood such as fighting, kidnapping, robbing, torturing, raping and even killing. Killing is some kind of a nice habit and something commonplace to the sufferer as what Medea does in Euripides' *Medea*.

This research paper differs from any other research papers in connection with the research of this Euripides' literary work, *Medea*. The reason is that this research is aimed at analysing Medea as the main character of the story by detailing Medea's psychological state, psychological reason, and sadistic personality disorder covering Medea's maladaptive behaviour, Medea's personal distress, Medea's killing reaction, and Medea's biological and parental factor in killing guiltlessly.

2. Methods

2.1. Research Approach

Based on the psychological phenomena dominantly found in this literary text, *Medea*,

the writer analyzes that literary work through applying psychological approach. Psychological approach considers that literary works all the time talk about human's life problem psychologically [2]. With such a way of thinking, psychological approach emerges in a literary work research. Based on psychological approach, the writer will analyze this literary work, *Medea*, which describes human's psychological disorder.

2.2. Method of Data Collection

In writing this paper, the writer makes good use of library research to acquire accurate supporting data and information that have much connection with the subject matter of this paper. In addition to the primary book of compilation of adrama in which drama *Medea* is written, a number of related books that are considered well suited and necessary for this paper are searched and studied earnestly. According to [2], library research is implemented by the researchers in their working room or in a library where they could gain data and information concerning the object of research through reference books and other sources.

3. Discussions

3.1. Killing Guiltlessly as Reaction of Sadistic Personality Disorder

3.1.1. Medea's Maladaptive Behavior

One can be labeled psychologically disordered if one's behavior is extremely maladaptive, that is, causing worse effects toward individual, himself or herself, others, and society [3]. In connection with this statement, *Medea*, the main character of the story, is categorized a psychologically-disordered person. This is because *Medea* exhibits maladaptive behavior by easily waving her brutal, sadistic hands upon others. *Medea* has the characteristics of sadistic personality disorder since she does not merely plunge her children into sorrowful death, but also kill others guiltlessly, those are, her brother, *Pelias*, *Kreon*, and *Kreon's* daughter. Undeniably, *Medea's* behavior for violating human's right will not be accepted by society around for everybody has the same right to live a life.

Medea with her maladaptive abnormal behavior does not think over and over again to end children's lives. Her sadistic behavior is, of course, harming others. *Medea's* children, anyway, have no fault at all regarding the things their parents face. Based on this matter, *Medea's* behavior is evidently maladaptive since what she has already committed brings grief and misery for others. *Medea's* impulsive willingness to harm her children can be seen below:

Medea : "Oh my heart,... Come my hand and seize the sword, take it... Don't be a coward... Do not think of the children, and how dear they are to you who are their mother. For one brief day, *Medea* forget your children..."

[4]

3.1.2. Medea's Personal Distress

Another characteristic, which is used to categorize psychological disorder, is one's personal distress symptoms in which the sufferer feels anxious, depressed, agitated, and awfully ill (Atkinson, 1953:405). In accordance with this statement, at this point, Medea is so anxious and depressed to see her husband intention in marrying Kreon's daughter and face bitter days for the days of banishment into exile upon Kreon's decree to drive Medea out from the land of Corinth. What there is in Medea's mind is that all of her enemies, the ones she hates, will certainly insult and mock her as a despised exile. She also feels anxious since she will live a long life without anybody else beside her who can give shelter and refuge in banishment. Never before has she imagined that someday bitterness will come her way and lead her to great anxiety. Medea's anxiety can be seen in Chorag statement about her below:

Chorag : "Pitiful woman! Oh we pity the sorrow and anxiety you suffer!
Where will you turn now? Who can help you? What home remains,
what land is left to save you from destruction? O Medea, you have
been hurled by heaven into ocean of despair."

(Euripides, 1965:47)

Medea's anxiety is also viewed when she is in the face of Jason, complaining about anything miserable and unpleasant. More severely, a depressed Medea will be inclined to commit suicide if the person cannot stand being in such a condition. Similarly, due to being depressed and agitated, over and over again Medea utters some depressing words that imply to death as quoted below:

Medea : "Lost, oh lost! I'm lost in my sufferings. I wish, oh I wish that I
could die..."

(Euripides, 1965:43)

Repeatedly Medea utters frustrating words by hoping immediate death upon her. She thinks that there is no point in living much longer in the world by having to discern the bitter fact of failure in marriage. With death door, she would ease misery and disappointment. To her, life is indeed in ruins as a result of failure in marriage she never wishes to occur. Owing to this matter, she is no longer willing prolonging her life in the world but death as quoted:

Medea : "Oh how I wish that a stroke of lightning would fall from heaven and
shatter my head! Why I should I live any longer? Death would
bring release; in death I could leave behind me the horror of
living". "...But this new things has fallen upon me so
unexpectedly, my strength is broken. O my friends, my life is
shattered; my heart no longer longs for the blessing of life, but
only for death!..."

(Euripides, 1965:45)

3.1.3 Characteristics and Evidences of Sadistic Personality Disorder in Medea

3.1.3.1 Medea Kills Her Own Children Guiltlessly

The sufferer of sadistic personality disorder seems to have a bit sense of responsibility, morality, and care for others [1]. At this point, Medea has clearly exhibited her psychological disorder by neglecting her responsibility to give shelter and continuous affection to her children. She has despised the children not to take care of them any more, instead she looks down on the children's right to longer live in the world. They are kids who have no guilt and sin toward what their parents do, yet with what reasons they have to be sadistically killed. Hatred and anger in Medea toward her two children as the effect of Jason's decision to marry another is remarkably boundless. No longer does she love them, conversely Medea hopes misery and destruction upon her sons. Death is the best thing to the children. This can be viewed when Medea curses them over her suffering as quoted below:

Medea : "Oh, I have suffered enough for all these tears! I call destruction upon you, all, all of you, sons of a doomed mother, and the father too! May ruin fall on the entire house!"

(Euripides, 1965:43)

Based on the quotation above, it implies that Medea has no good morality and sense of mother to her children any more. Medea in this regard acts impulsively just to fulfill her own need and seek destructive immediate compensation over her husband intention to get married again. She cannot think normally that killing children is losing her own happiness as a mother someday.

The sufferer of sadistic personality disorder is also not aware of behavior limit which potentially will do someone else harm and neglect how terrible suffering other people bear because of his or her damaging behavior [1]. It is very clear that in this case Medea does not heed her own behaviour limit that causes the children to die. No consciousness of moral conscience in Medea, in spite of the fact that she understands the consequence of amoral acts, Medea remains neglecting it a lot. She persistently sets her mind to kill her children. Medea loses ability to control her destructive impulse. She does anything what her impulse wants to without considering that her behavior will lead others to be hurt and harmed. Normal people are actually aware of behavior limit they should not do for the sake of others safety, but Medea does not. What there is in her mind is that she has to be the winner of all others interest and reach her ambition to take revenge and make the ones she loathes such as Jason and Kreon suffer horribly. Whatever comes her way she remains killing her innocent children, although Chorag has strictly warned her in order to heed the children crying for mercy. The quotation below shows how Medea seemingly has no sense of guilt to kill her children as follows:

Medea : "...O my heart, my heart, arm yourself in steel! Don't shrink

- back from this hideous thing which has to be done! Come, my hand, and seize has to be done! Come, my hand and seize the sword, take it and step forward..." "Don't be a coward...don't think of the children..."
- Chorag : "Listen! Do you hear? Do you hear the children crying? Hate-hardened heart! O, Woman born for evil!"
- First son : "What can I do? How can I run from mother's hands?"
- Second son : "I don't know! We are lost, we are lost, brother, brother!"
- Chorag : "Shall I enter the house? Oh surely" I must help! "I must save these children from kill!"
- First son : "Help, in the name of heaven! We need your help!"
- Second son : "Now, it's coming closer! "The sword is falling!"
- (Euripides, 1965:61)

3.1.3.2 Medea Kills Kreon and Kreon's Daughter Brutally

Another impulsive behavior, which reinforces the evidence of sadistic personality disorder Medea suffers, is her brutal intention to bring Kreon's daughter down with deadly poison. That is the best manner of death Medea chooses to reach her evil will to take revenge with Jason's bride-to-be. With or without any help of others, she will go on committing a crime to kill the bride. After all, the bride must die since Medea cannot put up with seeing Kreon's daughter happiness. Related to sadistic personality disorder, she shows her impulsive behavior to satisfy her own need. This can be seen in the following quotation below:

- Medea : "...And I can set about this kill in stealth and stillness. And if no help should come from fate, and if death is certain, still I can take at last the sword in my own hand and go forth boldly to the crime, and kill the bride...."
- (Euripides, 1965:48)

Subsequently, as a sadistic woman who is preoccupied with will to lying to fool down Jason, Medea succeeds with her ruinous plan to send a wedding present in the form of a finely woven dress and golden diadem which have been rubbed with deadly poison. Anybody touches and wears them will absolutely be dying horribly. Pursuant to the abnormality, Medea, as the sufferer of this sadistic personality disorder, is smart, enchanting, and warm-hearted in manipulating others. In short, Medea is a good artist. Medea is indeed a great artist for she is good at acting. She is able to pretend and persuade Jason to forgive and accept her evil will to begin a brand new life. Her ability to act nicely, kindly and warmly beguiles Jason in profound remorse. The bride's-to-be has to horribly die in anguish along with her father, Kreon as the following quotation:

- Messenger : "...And after that it was a thing of horror we saw. For suddenly her face changed into color, and she staggered back, and began to tremble as she ran, and reached a chair just as she was about to fall to the ground. And old woman servant, thinking no

doubt that this was some kind of seizure, or some other god cried out a prayer: and then, as she prayed, she saw the flakes of foam flow from the mouth, and her balls rolling, and the blood fade from her face. And then it was a different prayer she uttered, a terrible scream..." "...With a dreadful scream, and open her eyes again. A twofold torment was creeping over her. The golden diadem on her head was sending forth a violent stream of flame, and the finely woven dress which your children gave her was beginning to eat into the poor girl's snowy soft flesh. And it was like the drops falling from the bark of a pine tree when the flesh dropped away from her bones, torn loose by the secret fangs of poison." "...But then her poor father, who knew nothing of her death, came suddenly into the house and stumbled over her body, and cried out as he folded his arms about her, and kissed her, and said: "...Who has robbed me of you, who am old and close to the grave? O my child, let me die with you! And he grew silent and tried to rise to his feet again, but found himself fastened to the finely spun dress, like vine clinging to a laurel bough, and there was a fearful struggle. And still he tried to lift his knees, and she writhed and clung to him; and as he tugged, he tore the withered flesh from his bones. And at last he could no longer master the pain, and surrendered, and gave up the ghost. So there they are lying together..."

(Euripides, 1965:60)

A normal person will feel so sad and in grief to hear two persons die horribly over deadly poison by which Kreon and his daughter's bone and flesh are withered and peeled horribly. Nevertheless, Medea has no feeling of guilt and horror hearing such a fearful death. Vice versa, she is very happy. Her happiness and excitement, no sense of remorse and guilt, in this regard, indicate that she is psychologically disordered. It can be analyzed based on the quotations above that Medea shows no sense of emphatic or concern with other's misery and sorrow. Medea clearly does not think of hard burden of suffering that Kreon and his daughter will feel due to her terrible conduct. Her great satisfaction, cheerfulness and happiness over Kreon and his daughter death can be viewed as follows:

Messenger : "She lies dead! The royal princess, and her father Kreon too!
They have died: They have been slain by your poison!

Medea : "You bring me blessed news! Now and from now on I count you
among my friends, my benefactors!

Messenger : "What! Are you insane? Are you mad, Medea? You have done an
outrage to the royal house: does it make you happy to hear it?
Can you hear of this dreadful thing without horror?"

Medea : "I too have words to say in reply to yours. Do not be impatient, my

friend. Tell me: how did they die? You will make me doubly happy if you say they died in anguish!"

(Euripides, 1965:59)

Related to the quotation above, it can be inferred that Medea has no sense of empathic and concern with Kreon and his daughter's death, conversely she expresses no feeling of regret and guilt toward what happens to them both.

3.1.3.3 Medea Kills Her Own Brother Sadistically

Another evidence, which can reinforce Medea as a psychologically disordered person, is her sadism and brutality to dismember her own brother into pieces and throw them away at sea. It is told that after betraying her father, king Aeetes of Colchis, with a view to aiding Jason to flee to Thessaly, Medea victimizes her elder brother to retard the pursuit of the dragon toward Jason and her. Such a deed is absolutely brutal and violent. A normal person will not have the heart to kill her own brother, but Medea does. It implies that she is suffering from sadistic personality disorder. Medea herself acknowledges to have killed her brother as quoted below:

Medea : "...My own country, it was of me to leave you, and to have killed my brother before I left you!"

(Euripides, 1965:44)

Jason also justifies the fact that Medea has dismembered her own brother already when he is in times of fury beyond measure for she pitilessly kills the children of whom Jason can take pride. While Jason curses, he reminds Medea of her brother's death which is killed guiltlessly and cruelly by her.

Jason : "...On me too the gods have hurled the curse which has haunted you. For you killed your own brother at his fireside, and then came aboard our beautiful Argo."

(Euripides, 1965:62)

All of the evidences indicate and reinforce that Medea has suffered from a sadistic personality disorder. She always commits cruelty and brutality that a normal person does not do. Medea is never able to change her harmful, damaging behaviour. She has no ability to change her maladaptive behaviour. Vice versa, she feels very excited to have killed others and even her own children guiltlessly. She has no concern and emphatic towards others' right to live a convenient life including her children's right to live in the world.

3.1.4 Biological Factor of Sadistic Personality Disorder in Medea

A sadistic personality sufferer with non-reactive autonomic nerve is unable to reject a dangerous threat and restriction of others which usually hamper most people to commit a sadistic behavior [1]. In connection with this statement, Medea exhibits her hard-headedness and harmful, destructive impulse to resist what Chorag warns strictly in order

that she does not kill her innocent children. However, everything goes badly. How intense Chorag warns and advises Medea, she persistently makes up her mind to kill the children. No point in giving her warning. This explanation can be viewed in the following quotation:

Chorag : “Since you have told us all your plans, let me say this to you: do not do this thing!

Medea : “There is nothing else I can do. It is forgivable that you should say this...”

Chorag : “Woman, can you really bring yourself as well! You will be the most miserable of woman.”

Medea : “Then I will; no matter. No word of warning now can stop me!”
(Euripides, 1965:54)

In spite of the fact that there is no statement in the dialogue that Medea is born with non-reactive autonomic nerve, but based on the reaction Medea shows against warning indicates that she is most likely born with such a nerve. At this point, Chorag request to stop thinking of killing children does not come to Medea’s heart. No need to be in tears for the unfortunate fate of her children as quoted:

Chorag : “...O think of the sons you plan to slay, of the blood you plan to shed! We beg, we implore you, Medea. Do not kill your sons! ...Oh how can you look on them and yet not weep, Medea? How can you still resolve to slay them?”

(Euripides, 1965:55)

The quotation also indicates that Medea has low degree of consciousness towards stimulus that obstructs her to do what she is willing to. This is because she is unable to repress impulsive behavior in order not to kill others and her children. She is never able to curb her impulsive drive to commit sadistic deed that leads others to be harmed such as killing and taking revenge with the ones she loathes. As a result of this feeble consciousness, Medea is inclined to find stimulus and sensation by bringing death to her brother, Pelias, Kreon and his daughter as well as the children sadistically. All of these are sadistic behavior reflecting violation against social norms and upheld morality existing within society. After all, Medea is greatly proud of to be the so-called a monster of extreme sadism for by doing so she manages to compensate her vengeance and resentment towards the ones she is hard-willed to harm.

It comes to analysis that in accordance with evidence elaborated above, Medea might have a non-reactive autonomic nerve system that differs from what normal people usually react against something upsets and depresses them. This kind of reaction is a clue to label Medea a woman with such a nerve system.

3.1.5. Parental Factor of Sadistic Personality Disorder in Medea

Growing children naturally internalize their parents’ behaviour and value which are the reflection of society norms, and children under the care of killer family and

environment will most likely turn to be the sufferer of sadistic personality disorder [1]. This statement profoundly implies that Medea's parents have a significant role in affecting her basic natural personality. The environment and the way of how Medea's parents rear is well-rooted in Medea's soul and mind in adulthood. Medea is raised with cruelty, brutality and sadism in cold-blooded killer family, therefore, she surely becomes a sadistic, brutal killer to end the life of others guiltlessly.

In relation to this, even though there is no specific, detailed explanation about the way of how Medea is raised and brought up by her parents, an implicit statement emerges as a hint to conclude that Medea is raised with such a senseless and brutal manner in a barbaric environment. This can be viewed as explained in the following quotation:

Jason : "...Instead of living in a barbaric land, you've come to Greece and enjoyed contact with a country where justice and law prevail, and not brute force, and what is more, the Greek thought rather highly of you."

(Euripides, 1965:50)

Subsequently, in another statement, Jason also utters words, which portray how Medea family looks like before she leaves for Corinth to live a life with Jason. This can be viewed as follows:

Jason : "...Now at least I see you clearly what I didn't see on the day I brought you, loaded with doom, from your barbarous home to live in Hellas – a traitess to your father and your native land..."

(Euripides, 1965:62)

Of the two quotations mentioned, it can be inferred that environment Medea lives in and manner of child bringing parents applies to her are undoubtedly at worst and rooted from killer minded environment. The word "*barbaric land*" and "*barbarous home*" mean killer environment and killer family Medea every day gets along with. Consequently, this thing potentially shapes Medea personality to be a cold-blooded killer who has no feeling of guilt, pity for the victims. Although others are not at fault and sinful to Medea, they could be the victims of sadism if her impulsive drive emerges.

In relation to the quotation, implicitly, Medea's words show that she lives a life near what is the so-called barbarous family. These points indicate that Medea suffers from sadistic personality disorder.

4. Conclusion

Medea, one of the greatest Euripides' tragedy drama, is the portrayal of a sadistic woman in facing life disappointment and unachieved expectations. The central character of the story, Medea, is characterized as a woman who is sadistic, cruel, cunning, stubborn, and avenger. The whole personality of Medea is much affected by family and environment where she is reared and brought up from childhood to adulthood, so that her personality is shaped to be a guiltless killer.

Owing to the disappointment to her husband decision, Jason, to marry the princess, Medea compensates for her resentment and annoyance by killing her innocent children guiltlessly. Medea, as the sufferer of sadistic personality disorder, is also shown by bringing death to Kreon and Kreon's daughter with deadly poison. In addition, by arguing to eternalize beauty, she succeeds to kill Pelias, king of Iolchus guiltlessly. More cruelly, Medea has the heart to dismember her own brother's body into pieces and throw them at sea for the dragon meal. These points prove clearly that Medea is psychologically disordered.

Biological factor of sadistic personality disorder in Medea is discovered through her persistent, destructive impulse to harm and kill the ones she loathes. Medea, biologically, has non-reactive autonomic nerve system which causes her unable to curb her impulsive behaviour, whereas parental factor of sadistic personality disorder in Medea derives from senseless, sadistic child care in a barbarous family from childhood to adulthood. This brutal, sadistic environment gradually shapes Medea's personality to be a guiltless killer.

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