



A Narcissist Personality Constructs a Dystopian Realm: The Qualitative Study of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*

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Abstract

This study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of William Golding's novel Lord of the Flies to explore how a self-centred individual can create and sustain an oppressive regime. It closely examines Jack's violent behaviour, which represents the characteristics associated with authoritarian leadership. By adopting a qualitative approach, this research utilises the theory of narcissism to elucidate the profound and damaging effects this psychological trait has on the social dynamics of the island. Furthermore, the study delves into the defining features of authoritarian regimes, which are often marked by extreme violence, systemic oppression, and pervasive hypocrisy. It highlights how these oppressive traits emerge and solidify once an individual gains power, leading to the erosion of innocence and establishing a climate of fear and control. Golding illustrates how tyrants manipulate their authority to maintain dominance, painting a vivid picture of Jack as a power-seeking figure whose actions reflect the archetype of a tyrannical government. The analysis emphasises the gradual transformation of societal norms under such regimes, showcasing how years of abuse and manipulation can fundamentally alter the fabric of a community. Through this exploration, the study underscores the critical interplay between individual psychology and the broader political context that fosters authoritarianism.

Keywords: Narcissism, Dystopian, Totalitarianism, Innocence, Savagery, Domination.

INTRODUCTION

In *Lord of the Flies*, William Golding vividly portrays the darker realities of society through the microcosm of a group of stranded boys. He demonstrates how human beings, regardless of age, can succumb to evil and corruption when granted unchecked power. Golding constructs a symbolic hierarchy in the novel: Jack Merridew embodies the archetype of an authoritarian leader, the little boys represent the manipulated masses, while Ralph, Piggy, and Simon stand for various forms of moral and rational opposition. Through the lens of dominance and narcissism, Jack emerges as a self-centered character, driven by his own desire for control and validation. Although he initially hunts to ensure the boys' survival and contributes to the group by providing food, his actions soon reveal deeper motives rooted in his lust for power and recognition. Meanwhile, the boys maintain a fire to signal passing ships — a fragile symbol of hope and connection to civilization. At the outset, Ralph is elected as the group's leader, representing democratic ideals and collective responsibility. Yet, as Jack's authoritarian tendencies grow, the fragile social order on the island collapses, revealing Golding's critique of the thin veneer of civilization and the

human propensity toward domination, violence, and chaos. Besides, all the boys were cooperative with each other. Then Ralph set some basic rules so that they could go back to their homeland. Firstly, all of them tried to maintain these rules except Jack. He repeatedly broke down the rules. But when Jack claimed to be himself as group leader, they gradually shifted from innocence to savagery. This degeneration of innocent bonding broke down for only Jack's self-centered tendency. Eventually, he declared himself king of the island and made a savage tribe. Then, by this tribe, he controlled the island as well as killed Simon and Piggy brutally. For this narcissistic personality, he made a dystopian island bit by bit. What is narcissism? How do human beings conduct narcissistic behavior? Narcissism literally delves into self-centered behavior. For example, Jack expressed himself in such a way only for his own good. "The term Narcissistic Personality Disorder itself originates from Greek mythology, 'Narcissus.' According to the myth, Narcissus was a handsome and proud young man. Upon seeing his reflection on the water for the first time, he became so enamored that he could not stop gazing at his own image. He remained at the water's edge until he eventually wasted to death"

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(Tyminski, 2016). "Early clinical descriptions of narcissistic personalities focused on self-centeredness, vanity, and a lack of empathy" (Jones, 1913; Waelder, 1925). According to several studies, a narcissistic personality simply expresses one's aggressiveness, selfishness, and cruel ambition to get leadership. Freud et al. (1955, 1923, 1961) additionally, in accordance with another finding of Krizan & Herlache, illustrate that narcissism is a psychological problem. Krizan, Z., & Herlache, A. D. (2018). These are all features covered in Jack's behavior. He was expressing his selfishness and aggressiveness through his personality. For this reason, he gradually made a dystopian island. He dominated the rest of the characters and killed those who were his opponents. He even attempted to kill Ralph as well. When we explain a world through the lens of dystopia, it portrays a bad realm that is full of political exploitation, war, corruption, and a game of abusing power, and so on.

According to Rahmouni's investigation, a dystopian society is morally, socially, and politically imperfect, and its people are suffering from oppression, dehumanization, poverty, and all sorts of problems, as it is described in *A dictionary of new English, 1963-1972*: "the opposite of utopia" and the "place where all is bad or a condition in which all is evil". *The Random House dictionary of the English language* from 1987 defines dystopia as "a society characterized by human misery, as squalor, oppression, disease, and overcrowding." Rahmouni, M. (2019). Golding's *Lord of the Flies* depicts such an island that is morally, socially, and politically imperfect. Rahmouni also investigates human nature.

This study significantly investigates how narcissistic personality makes a dystopian society. Besides, this paper unfolds how a society turns innocence into savagery.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Said & Rizano's finding (2020) argues that narcissism is expressed in the nature of the psychology of serial killers. This violent behavior gradually established an evil realm. In the context of the novel, Jack's violent nature creates a dystopian island for his own sake. He controls the island violently and kills Simon and Piggy brutally. Said & Rizano further examine in their paper the link between Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) and the violent behavior of the novel's Jack Merridew. Additionally, they argue that stressful experiences such as war, plane crash, and survival challenges make him mentally disordered. Besides, they argued that the lack of parental control made Jack behave like an oppressive tyrant.

Demir states in his study (2019) that Golding creates a realm where human beings behave like animals. He also examines that each and every creation has the potential for violence if society does not control it; a person or an animal can destroy societal law and order. As a reader, if we scan Jack's tendency, we can easily find him as a monster. Golding portrays Jack as a representation of an authoritarian figure

who takes control of the island. This drastic tendency of Jack makes the island an animalistic world where we cannot find any sign of morality and humanity at the end of this novel. He gradually makes an evil state. His self-centered thinking makes him an oppressive, greedy, and cruel boy. These are all features symbolizing an authoritarian leader. Additionally, he destroys all children's innocent state of mind, similar to how the tyrants destroy civilians' innovation and positive thinking through their maladministration.

Early clinical descriptions of narcissistic personalities focus on self-centeredness, vanity, and a lack of empathy (Waelder, R. 1925). By contrast, in the context of *Lord of the Flies*, Jack tries to discover himself as a tribe leader on the island. He kills Piggy and attempts to murder Ralph when they do not obey him as a leader. So it is very clear that innocence has been covered up by the thirst for power. Similarly, this game of power makes an imperfect world as well. Subsequent descriptions of narcissism incorporated many additional attributes, ranging from ambition, aggressiveness, leadership, and attention-seeking to withdrawal and feelings of inferiority, shame, and resentment (Alexander et al., 1938).

Ralph is depicted as a rational person who works for safety, unity, harmony, and brotherhood. He does not want to rule on the island, but he manages to go back in society. Not only has he taught them how to accommodate themselves on the island but he has also shown that *Lord of the Flies* is a fight between good and evil, or civilization and savagery. Ralph represents order, civilization, and law, whereas Jack represents savagery and evil, although longing for power. (Wani, F. A. 2018). For this reason, I would say Jack's ambition and aggressiveness turn the island's innocence into savagery. Another paper manifesto of *Lord of the Flies* teaches us that human cruelty emerges when social controls weaken. Golding chose sequestered, plane-wrecked children for the novel to propose the shocking notion that violence is not the result of politics, complex social forces, imitation, education, or even necessity. "Human beings are cruel simply because they are human, at least *ostensibly*." This is an indictment of both warfare in general and of the rationalized excuses modern men offer when justifying their brutality toward others. (Piven, 2011).

RESEARCH GAP

Previous literature highlights the characteristics of authoritarian regimes, but this research explores how narcissism gradually makes a world of dystopia. Golding portrayed Jack as a hunter, and his followers hunt pigs by chanting, "Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Spill her blood." Here, Pig symbolizes innocence; that is, he destroys perfection. On the other hand, he tames "Littluns," who symbolize the common people. For this reason, this study firmly blames him as the inventor of totalitarianism for his own sake. Similarly, this finding examines Jack literally representing a

kind of oppressive leader who suppresses a whole nation for his own good. Finally, Golding portrayed Jack as such a tyrant who also controls civilians and all sectors in a state that we notice in the novel. Indeed, Jack manipulates all children on this island, and those who do not confess him as the tribe leader, he suppresses cruelly. Jack's ambition of seeking power and his outlook prove his abnormal state of mind, which also changes his outfit.

METHODOLOGY

This research explores the connection between narcissistic personality and the creation of a dystopian realm based on Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. Besides, this finding follows a qualitative approach because of a deep analysis of some characters, especially Ralph, Jack, and Piggy, and unfolds narcissistic behaviors that shatter the social, moral, and political orders and establish a dystopian society on the island. Finally, it analyses content by collecting data from primary sources, e.g., main text, theory, and secondary sources, e.g., journals, literary critiques, articles, etc. This qualitative approach aims to explore a profound understanding of how narcissistic personality shapes the societal malpractice in *Lord of the Flies*.

DISCUSSION

This study interprets elaborately the research result and aims step by step and tries to make an elaborate note of Jack's ambition that makes a dystopian island from descent.

Jack's Narcissistic Personality and its Relations to His Violent Behavior

One character in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* who is closest to a narcissist is Jack Merridew, and it adds to his innate aggressive nature and desire for power. And a defining clinical feature of narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) is escalating fixation on power and control, and we can see that in his behavior from cover to cover. Now, it might be interesting to examine Jack's affirmations and self-destructive ways through the lens of his narcissism. Jack, whose perception of himself is of a natural king, is also on a mission — to undermine an elected leader (Ralph) — and his hunger for power is displayed starkly almost from the outset. His refusal to follow Ralph makes him superior to everyone else, viewer and no viewer alike, regardless of what he does. It seems that all Jack really wanted was to turn the island into his kingdom and make Ralph his servant and he does all he can to continuously work against Ralph, undermining him at every opportunity. For one, he scoffs at Ralph's approach to policy, and he claims that his gung-ho, hunting-and-physical-strength-oriented style is the one to take.

Jack's narcissistic personality normally has little regard for the feelings or needs of others, and Jack's behavior toward others shows a lack of empathy and sympathy. After seizing power, he commits violent behavior and prioritizes behavior for his own sake. Especially Jack's violent behavior towards

the "littluns", his exploitation of the group, and creation of emotional detachment toward Ralph, also expresses his desire for power. Jack's hunger for admiration and validation from the boys on the island, especially after he takes control of the group. His selfish behavior makes him constantly seek praise, and he becomes furious when others do not acknowledge his authority. Using intimidation, threats, and the promise of pleasure (like hunting flesh) to win adherents, he forms a party of personality around himself. This demonstrates his desire to be loved and respected, which drives him to take advantage of the lads. A narcissistic personality tends to manipulate others to achieve their own goals. Jack uses the boys' fear of the beast to his advantage, turning it into a tool to control and manipulate them, allowing him to gain more followers and power. The manipulative conduct of Jack grows the children's fear of the beast and of protection or food.

Furthermore, his hostility and violent tendencies are heightened by his desire for power and control. He becomes increasingly violent as his power increases. For example, he kills Simon and Piggy brutally and tortures them both mentally and physically. Because they believe they are superior to others, narcissistic people frequently disregard social conventions and laws. Jack's disapproval of the current social order contributes to his decline into violence. Jack prioritizes his own needs over the group's welfare, which causes a breakdown in decorum and the rise of violent conduct. Jack kills a pig as his first violent deed in the book. But as time passes, his need for violence increases, and the violent customs, like the song and dance during Simon's death, reflect the complete loss of moral command.

Studies demonstrate a strong correlation between NPD and aggressive conduct (Twenge, 2003). According to Twenge's article, the aggression or violent behavior exhibited by narcissistic people is closely linked to humiliation and social rejection, as demonstrated in the book, a narcissistic person accuses and disparages others for the unfavorable comments they receive. For example, "you can't sing, you talk like Piggy." Twenge went on to hypothesize that "people with inflated self-views frequently used violence as a response to ego threats." According to Twenge, narcissistic people attack people who pose a threat to their sense of self or ego. "Narcissists were more inclined than non-narcissists to intentionally hurt the person who was insulting them." Twenge (2003).

Finally, his selfish personality is a key issue in his violent behavior in *Lord of the Flies*. His desire for power, need for admiration, lack of empathy, and desire for control contribute to his descent into savagery. The novelist elevates how unchecked narcissism can drive an individual to violent and destructive behaviors, ultimately leading to a breakdown of social order and the complete loss of morality. Besides, his action serves as a reminder of the dangers of power when joined with narcissism and an inability to empathize with others.

Innocence to Savagery

One of the major themes of Golding's *Lord of the Flies* is a tragic transition from descent into savagery. The novel explores how a group of boys, surviving on an uninhabited island, loses their societal identity and transforms from human to inhuman. At the very beginning of the novel, the boys are normally defined by their innocence. They have chosen Ralph as their group leader, attempting to create order through the conch, which personifies civilization and democracy. Then the boys build shelters and maintain a signal fire that represents their connection to the civilized world. Firstly, they work together to build shelters, organize meetings, and keep the fire going, all signs of their initial attempts at maintaining a structure of order, mirroring the rules and practices they would have followed at home. At this time, they hope for returning home and civilized life.

By contrast, when Jack expresses his violent behavior for hunting, he has an ambition for establishing authoritarian leadership, and the tensions grow between his group and Ralph's plan for coming back home. The fear of the beast on the island is an essential moment in the shift from innocence to savagery. Later, the boys begin to project their darker instincts onto the imagined creature. The beast symbolizes the inherent evil and savagery that is represented within the boys themselves. They transform descent into savagery when they begin hunting for sport rather than survival. Jack gradually makes a tribe and hunts around the island by chanting and painting their faces with primitive human signs to become savages. When Jack gains power completely, he makes a savage realm. He suppresses Ralph and kills Piggy and Simon brutally; by this suppression and killing, Jack shatters democracy and establishes an oppressive regime. The change of the boys' outer shell is an important symbol of their internal transformation. They change their former identities and embrace a more animalistic and violent self. The novelist highlights the dehumanization by the bloodsucking nature of Jack and his followers. They chant, "Kill the beast! Cut the throat! Spill his blood!" This line proves him to be a bloodsucker that also represents tyrants, for instance, Hitler and Mussolini.

Finally, Jack turns the island into a dystopia by killing Simon and Piggy, which is extremely violent and shows a decline in innocence and morality. The significant moment of transition from descent to savagery occurs when the boys, in crazy behavior and ecstatic dance, mistake Simon for the pig and beats him to death. Here, Simon is the symbol of innocence, truth, and divinity, but he is murdered by those boys who once showed him kindness. This incident indicates the loss of innocence, humanity, morality, kindness, and so on. Piggy's death represents the most hurtful moment in the collapse of order. His death also symbolizes the destruction of wisdom and ideal civilization. Besides, it symbolizes the victory of savagery over innocent people. Twenge (2003) manifests that the primary theme of the book appears to be

the struggle between civilization and barbarism. The main characters of the book, Jack and Ralph, present this conflict. The main cause of this battle is evil. Golding asserts that humans have a greater propensity for savagery than for civilization. According to Golding, people are more capable of evil than good. Even though Ralph, for instance, is a kind man, he ultimately gives in to evil by participating in Simon's murder. Therefore, Golding's ultimate objective is to demonstrate how each individual affects society.

Jack's Nature Makes a Dystopian Realm

William Golding manifests how Jack's nature plays a pivotal role in creating a dystopian realm on the island and exposing the dark forces within human nature. Through his character, the novelist unfolds how an individual's thirst for power, control, and survival can lead to societal collapse. By contrast, the boys try to establish a democratic society, with Ralph elected as leader and a system of rules enforced by the conch. While Jack introduces himself as the leader, the hunters are dissatisfied with Ralph's leadership. "I'm not going to play any longer. Not with you," this line makes clear that Jack distances himself from Ralph's leadership, and he begins a rebellion that symbolizes the breakdown of the civilized society. He also opposes Ralph's rules that help them come back to their home. However, the nature of Jack expresses the nature of an evil realm. Jack's thirst for power is not only personal but also manipulative. By exploiting them, he controls the island effortlessly. At a stage, he says, "We'll hunt. I'm going to be a chief." This announcement expresses his desire to dominate, and his rule starts to take on a more authoritarian and oppressive nature. Finally, he transfers the island into a dystopian state where fear and force shatter social, moral, and human order.

Additionally, Jack and his followers change their appearance to make fear and force, "The face of red and white and black." The face paint signifies Jack's shedding of the final vestiges of civilization, allowing him to fully drown himself in his instincts and wreck societal conventions. As Jack and his followers get more engrossed in violence, the island becomes a dystopia where anarchy and savagery triumph. Jack's rule promotes an environment in which the boy's drive to murder and control over others takes precedence over civility. Finally, he destroys the moral and social order violently. The moral and ethical standards are totally destroyed under Jack's control. The lads' murder of Simon, the novel's Christ-like figure, in a fit of fear serves as the clearest example of this. Jack's influence can be seen in the guys' disregard for right and wrong when they confuse Simon for the "beast" during their crazed dance. Simon's death symbolizes a turning point in the story, marking the boy's full thrust into immorality. Jack's violent, repressive, and fear-based autonomy further devolves the island into a dystopian future. Jack's exploitation and the breakdown of Ralph's democratic and orderly principles are the immediate causes of the lack of a moral dimension.

Totalitarianism and its Reflection on *Lord of the Flies*

According to *Britannica*, totalitarianism is a form of government that theoretically permits no individual freedom and that seeks to subordinate all aspects of individual life to the authority of the state. Italian dictator Benito Mussolini coined the term *totalitario* in the early 1920s to characterize the new fascist state of Italy, which he further described as "all within the state, none outside the state, and none against the state." By the beginning of World War II, *totalitarianism* had become synonymous with absolute and oppressive single-party government. Other modern examples of totalitarian states include the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin, Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler, the People's Republic of China under Mao Zedong, and North Korea under the Kim dynasty.

Golding depicts the rise of totalitarian authority through Jack, the way he takes control of the boys on the island. The novelist manifests that the island shifts from a democratic society to an authoritarian regime manipulated by Jack. His tendency provides a stark exploration of how power can corrupt and how quickly a society can devolve into totalitarianism when power is concentrated in the hands of a single leader or group. Ralph gradually realizes that the island is getting an oppressive regime;

"That's dirty!"

"I said that's dirty!" "That's really dirty."

"This place is getting dirty."

If we scan Ralph's character, we can easily understand his fear of saving little boys' lives and protecting ideologies that Jack shatters for his own sake. Besides, the use of fear in Jack's tyranny extends to his control over boys' fundamental needs, for instance, food and shelter. The hunter boys become loyal to Jack for his controlling nature, gain power by controlling access to meat, symbolizing the way of totalitarianism, because they also use scarcity or resource control to dominate the masses. For example, Jack successfully kills a pig; he offers the meat to others to ensure their loyalty and suppress any opposition. It is sad to say, Jack forces Ralph and others to confess to him as their leader. If they promise him, he gives access to meat and other opportunities.

A totalitarian regime usually works as a hub around a powerful leader who becomes a figure of worship and an absolute tyrant. Jack's tyrannical style is firmly reliant on his ability to control the boys' emotions and create a cult of personality around him. Jack makes himself a symbol of violence, power, and control, and the boys become helpless slaves. Golding depicted Jack as a prominent feature of a totalitarian regime. Besides, Jack's oppressive rule elevates the dangers of absolute power and the fragility of civilization. The book nicely shows how society easily shifts into tyranny when power is corrupted by a single leader, and the way of control, fear, and violence are used to crush the people.

Golding's Irony to Shape a Tyranny

Golding creates a narrative depiction of reality by utilizing the element of irony. Ironically, he highlights the difference between civilization and savagery. Thus, the characters and themes throughout the entire book become ironic. This component makes the difference between appearance and reality. Therefore, Golding's success in *Lord of the Flies* is a result of his ability to see the evil in people's nature and to delve into their dark side.

Despite their innocence and appearances, the children prove in reality to be wicked and have a propensity for evil. "When left to his own devices," Golding suggests, "man can forget all his prior teachings and regress" (Blair & Pamela Takayoshi 215). Golding, however, uses children as the characters of his story to achieve some ironic purposes. The children's appearance, therefore, contrasts with their own reality.

At the book's conclusion, Ralph breaks down in tears upon seeing the naval commander, which is another instance of irony. His sobs are a mixture of happiness and sadness. "And in the midst of them, with a dirty body, matted hair, and an unwiped nose, Ralph cried for the fall of the true, wise friend named Piggy through the air, the end of innocence, and the darkness of man's heart". In light of his newfound understanding of the terrible potential of humans, Ralph sheds tears upon realizing the truth about himself. It is ironic, on the other hand, that both Jack and Ralph survive at the end of the novel. This means that the conflict between good and evil is eternal and endless. The fire that brings rescue to the boys, then, is not a fire of civilization or rescue, but a fire of savagery that the boys set on the island to smoke Ralph out of his hiding place. The officer grinned cheerfully at Ralph. "We saw your smoke. What have you been doing? Having a war or something?"

CONCLUSION

Golding is giving us a sophisticated interpretation of the human body. The seemingly straightforward novel *Lord of the Flies* can be interpreted as a critique of both civilization and human nature. But Golding is not criticizing human inclinations. Instead, he is pointing to the human propensity to carry out senseless crimes that are hidden behind the sophisticated fabrications and deceptions of justice, morality, and ideology. The nightmare from which we must awaken is history itself. Golding is not merely demonstrating that when societal norms erode, violence breaks out. By drawing a comparison between the violent civilization outside and the seemingly lovely picture of innocent kids on a remote island, he is arguing that when kids create their society, innocence will turn into slaughter. The foundation of civilization is murder. Although societies range from being largely peaceful to being repressive and genocidal, even the most benign communities can exhibit genuinely pernicious brutality. The novel *Lord of the Flies* is relevant to the awareness of the atrocities committed by governments

against their external adversaries, as well as the violence that exists within our culture. However, in societies viewed as more "savage" and isolated, it might also suggest the origins of violence. This story has relevance to recent acts of murder and violence. It may help us envision the emergence of murder and sacrifice, the very beginning of atrocity, and is a literary portrayal of the gestation of cruelty and infectious violence. The culture that commits such atrocities, which creates, imagines, and need not be identified here, because it kills its opponents in savage frenzy.

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