

## CHARACTER ANALYSIS OF DEXTER MORGAN FROM DEXTER TV SHOW: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PSYCHOPATH OR SOCIOPATH DISORDERS

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### ABSTRACT

Dexter Morgan is the master of horrendous crimes without everyone acknowledgement, he is the master manipulator reflected through each episodes of *Dexter* TV Show. By using descriptive qualitative method, this study aimed to answer the following questions. The first research question is about the characters of Dexter Morgan, and the second research question is about how he conceals himself from the society. By using theories from Robert Hare's *Psychopathy Checklist – Revised (PCL- R)* and Hervey M. Cleckley's *The Mask of Sanity*, the questions are answered in a direct way. The results of the study showed that Dexter Morgan matches 19 from 20 of *PCL- R* traits from both two factors (Personality and Behavior) such as charming personality, grandiose of self-worth, proneness to boredom, liar, manipulative, lack of remorse, shallow affect, poor and early behavioral problems, promiscuous sexual behavior, lack of realistic goals, impulsive, irresponsible, cannot accept responsibility, short-term relationship, juvenile delinquency, and criminal versatility. The only exception in the trait is from second factor which is revocation of conditional release, because Dexter Morgan never got caught, so he does not need to escape or bail from restraining orders. The result of the second research question showed how psychopath or sociopath lurking around in our peaceful society filled with happiness and joys by faking a smile and superficial charming personality. Psychopath conceals themselves in our everyday lives. Based on the answers of research questions, Dexter Morgan has dominant character as a high functioning psychopath because he can manipulate everyone, undetected serial killer, and act like a wolf in sheep clothes.

**Keywords:** Psychopath, Sociopath, Psychological, Conceals, Dexter Morgan

### ABSTRAK

*Dexter Morgan adalah seorang ahli dalam memanipulasi kehidupan dan juga seorang kriminal tak terdeteksi. Dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjawab pertanyaan sebagai berikut. Pertanyaan pertama adalah tentang karakter dari Dexter Morgan, dan yang kedua adalah tentang bagaimana Dexter Morgan menyembunyikan identitas dirinya yang sebenarnya di kehidupan sosial. Dengan menggunakan teori dari Robert Hare yang bernama Psychopathy Checklist – Revised (PCL –R) dan Harvey M.Cleckley yang berjudul The Mask of Sanity. Hasil dari penelitian ini*

adalah Dexter Morgan mampu membuktikan bahwa ia sangat fit dengan 19 dari 20 kriteria PCL –R dari kedua faktor (Kepribadian dan Kebiasaan) seperti kepribadian yang mempesona, kebanggaan berlebihan terhadap diri sendiri, cepat bosan, pembohong, manipulatif, kurangnya perasaan menyesal, kosong, mempunyai masalah kebiasaan sejak dini, kebiasaan seksual yang acak, kurangnya tujuan realistis, bertindak tanpa berfikir, tidak bertanggung jawab, tidak bisa menanggung tanggung jawab terhadap diri sendiri, hubungan jangka pendek, dan lain sebagainya. Satu-satunya kriteria yang tidak dipenuhi Dexter Morgan adalah pembebasan dengan syarat tertentu, karena Dexter Morgan tidak pernah tertangkap oleh pihak berwajib, ia tidak perlu di bebaskan dengan syarat. Sedangkan jawaban dari pertanyaan kedua adalah bagaimana seorang psikopat atau sosiopat menguntit dalam kehidupan sehari-hari kita menggunakan senyuman palsu dan juga keahlian untuk memanipulasi kerabat atau teman-teman di kehidupan sosial. Berdasarkan jawaban dari kedua pertanyaan, Dexter Morgan sangat dominan dengan sifat psikopat dalam dirinya sehingga ini membuat ia adalah psikopat berkemampuan tinggi, ia hebat memanipulasi dan juga pembunuh tak terdeteksi, ia adalah serigala dalam jubah domba.

**Kata kunci:** Psikopat, Sosiopat, Psikologi, Menyembunyikan, Dexter Morgan.

## A. INTRODUCTION

Psychopath and sociopath are not the new issues in literary works today, even decades ago. Concurrently, the public relationship towards psychopath and sociopath has changed from guarded skepticism to acceptance and even demand. In the middle 20<sup>th</sup> century, psychopaths or sociopaths were constantly portrayed as villains, but today they comprise a growing cast as protagonists. From the novels to movie, people have come across so many psychopath or sociopath characters either as antagonists or protagonists.

In this research, the researcher decided to choose *Dexter* TV Show as the object of the research. The TV Show was adapted from novels by Jeff Lindsay entitled *Darkly Dreaming Dexter* and *Dearly Devoted Dexter*. The highly demand from public about wanting more of the psychopathic or sociopathic protagonist is one of the reasons why the researcher chose Dexter Morgan as the object of the research. While the other psychopaths or sociopaths just want to kill to fill their desires, Dexter Morgan kills not just because of his desire, but also to purify the world from the hand of criminals who slip away from law and justice. *Dexter* is an American Psychological Thriller Mystery Drama TV Show, based on *Darkly Dreaming Dexter* and *Dearly Devoted Dexter* novels by Jeff Lindsay. *Dexter* is named from Dexter Morgan, the main protagonist of *Dexter* TV Show. Dexter Morgan is a blood spatter analyst, who works for Miami Metro Homicide, but there is a secret identity of Dexter, he is a serial killer. Dexter Morgan has a standard for his victim. He kills someone who deserved it like a killer, rapist, etc.

The reason why the researcher chose *Dexter* as the object of this research is also because of Harry Morgan. Harry Morgan is the biggest influence of Dexter Morgan. Harry taught Dexter Morgan how to become a killer undetected from other police officer, and also gives Dexter a code to protect himself from himself. The code itself is designed as a framework for survival, to both prevent Dexter Morgan from getting caught and channel his impulses while ridding the world of people who deserved to die. The code was never to be a reminder written down on a piece of paper, but instead Dexter Morgan always remembered it in the bottom of his heart.

To conclude, this research aimed to reveal the characters of Dexter Morgan either it is a psychopath or sociopath around our society and how he conceals himself around us. The result of this analysis also could be manifested in real world experience.

## **B. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **1. Psychopath and Sociopath**

Psychopath and Sociopath are not the new issues in the world of literature by using the approach in psychiatric. Both are practically the same but different, as the time goes on and on, world of psychiatrics can define the differences. According to Hervey Cleckley, psychopaths initially come across as friendly, outgoing, and educated individuals. Psychopaths can strategically plan out a thorough outline of how they want to live their life. They have an ability to achieve success and happiness. However, psychopath lack of emotional reactions, while they may show anger or happiness, this is only effective mimicry skills (Cleckley 386).

According to Grohol in the article "*Differences between a Psychopath VS Sociopath*" Sociopath still shares the same fair as psychopath, they are lack of emotional reactions but have difficulties in forming attachments to others. Researchers tend to believe that sociopath is the result of environmental factors such as a child or teen upbringing in a very negative household or environment. In general, sociopaths tend to be more impulsive and erratic in their behavior than psychopath. Psychopath and sociopath have become common characters in popular culture and literature (Grohol "*Differences between a Psychopath VS Sociopath*"). They are celebrated for their ingenuity as they are feared for their inhumane actions. The literary psychopath and sociopath have fascinated audiences with their methodical murders and beguiling charm rarely exist outside the books or television.

### **2. Indicators of Psychopath or Sociopath Disorders**

The two indicators of psychopath and sociopath disorders are *Psychopathy Checklist, Revised (PCL –R)* and *The Mask of Sanity*. The Hare *PCL–R* contains two parts, a semi-structured interview and a review of the subject's file records and history. During the evaluation, the clinician scores 20 items that measure central element of the psychopathic character. There are two factors in these 20 items, the first factor is about the personality and the second factor is about behavior. Also, there are some traits that stay in between can belong to both of those two factors, further classification will be explained below. The items cover the nature of the subject's interpersonal relationship; his or her affective or emotional involvement; responses to other people and to situations; evidence of social deviance; and lifestyle. The material thus covers two key aspects that help define the psychopath: selfish and unfeeling victimization of other people, and an unstable and antisocial lifestyle.

*The Mask of Sanity* is a book written by Hervey Cleckley in 1941, describing the critical interview of Cleckley with psychopaths. It is considered as the impressive works by Cleckley and the most influential description of psychopathy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The title itself refers to the masks that reveal the mental disorder of the psychopath or sociopath person. According to Cleckley, the psychopathic personality was initially defined a relatively high-functioning, aggressively narcissistic, extraverted persona concealing an antisocial and latent psychotic core. Cleckley describes that the psychopathic person as outwardly a perfect mimic of a normal

functioning person, able to mask or disguise the fundamental lack of internal personality structure. Cleckley went over every major symptom about psychopath and sociopath, the dangerous personality disorder. The most striking about them are how well they blend into the rest of society, to use, dupe and harm other human beings. Their glibness and charm, as well as their extraordinary ability to lie convincingly make them perfect wolves in sheep's clothing.

### C. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a literary criticism research. Focus on analyzed the aspect of Dexter Morgan as a psychopathic and sociopathic. Literary criticism aims to defining, classifying, analyzing, interpreting and evaluating works of literature (Abrams 308). This research is focused on analyzing psychopath and sociopath aspects of the literary criticism from Dexter Morgan as the object of research. This research used descriptive qualitative method. Descriptive qualitative method implies a direct concern with experience as it is "lived" or "felt" or "undergone", then aim to understanding the experience as nearly as possible as its participants feel it or live it (Ely et al "*Doing Qualitative Research: Circles within Circles*").

The primary source of data in this research is the *Dexter* TV Show. Also, there are secondary data as well, taken from the scripts or screenshots to supports the research. The data is presented in forms of words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, narrations, dialogues and scenes taken throughout the TV Show.

The instrument for data collection and analysis is the researcher. Since the researcher "Does the observation, participation, collection, analysis and classify the data directly" (qtd in Hoepfl). As the instrument, the researcher used the TV Show and several related books, journals, or webs to help the researcher in this research.

There are several steps to obtain the data required for this research. The first is to start watch *Dexter* intensively, and then take notes on important scene, narration, and dialogues that show Dexter Morgan as the psychopathic or sociopathic. After that the researcher sorted and organized the screenshot or dialogues as the sample of the data that related to Dexter Morgan as a psychopath and sociopath.

In order to answer the research problems, data is required from the script of the shows or screenshot of the shows. The analysis technique is divided into three sections in accordance to the flow diagram of Miles and Huberman. The three parts consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles and Huberman 10), also every data is supported by the theories from the experts which have been explained before. The first step to analyze is data reduction, which is to relate any data or indicate the part of Dexter Morgan being a psychopath are sorted and organized. The data is analyzed further using the current theories that explained in the previous chapter. Finally, the researcher makes a conclusion based on the analysis and findings.

### D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

There are 20 traits for psychopath or sociopath in PCL -R, and from that 20 traits there are 19 who fit Dexter Morgan perfectly. Dexter Morgan personality and behavior is reflected by his owns action through every each episode.

In the process of analysis Dexter Morgan psychopath or sociopath characters, the researcher found an event where Dexter Morgan showed the psychopath or sociopath characteristics such as superficial charming, where he showed that he is charming in the front of other people which in fact that was not right, it just his fake expression towards people. From 20 indicators of PCL –R, the researcher divided into two categories which are personality and behavior characteristics.

## 1. Personality Characteristics

Glibness and superficial charm is a specific trait about people who seems very likeable and also tells convincing stories to make them look good but none of them is true enough.

<b>Police Officer</b>	: “Good Morning, Dex”
<b>Dexter Morgan</b>	: “Morning”
<b>Sue</b>	: “Hey, Dex”
<b>Dexter Morgan</b>	: “Hey, Sue... Dan. How are the families?”
<b>Sue and Dan</b>	: “Good, you? See you at the next bloodbath?”
<b>Dexter Morgan</b>	: “Never miss a party.” (Offer them doughnut)
<b>Sue and Dan</b>	: “Thanks

Usually, the individual tries to make a favorable impression on others by shaming emotions, telling stories that portray him/her in a good light, and making unlikely excuses for undesirable behaviors (Hare 22). Dexter Morgan is always able to charm his way around situations with relative ease, just like from the Data 1. In the data shown above, Dexter Morgan occasionally brings doughnut for everybody in the office so that everyone can think better of him. Though he seems superficial, he is able to charm everyone around him with a smile, nice conversation, and doughnut. When Sue and Dan asks back about Dexter Morgan families, he just smiles without saying a single word, Sue and Dan continue the conversation by saying “See you at the next bloodbath?” The bloodbath that Sue and Dan said refers to Dexter Morgan job as the blood spatter analysts. Dexter Morgan then said “Never miss a party” and then laughing and offers them doughnut. It may be so simple but he is successfully to make Sue, Dan, and other officer to favorites him as a nice person. Also it is hard for Dexter Morgan, because there is a pause when Sue and Dan asked back Dexter Morgan about his families and it makes him looks empty, but the doughnut saves the day of Dexter Morgan and everybody loves him.

By using this superficial charming, Dexter Morgan manage to fool everyone in the society, even his sister just to make her believed that he is just a normal little brother.

## 2. Behavior Characteristics

Early behavioral problems are a trait for people who experience serious behavioral problems at the age of 12 or even younger. Most of the behaviors are more severe than those exhibited by most children.

<b>Harry Morgan</b>	: “I found the grave, son.”
<b>Dexter Morgan</b>	: “That dog was a noisy little creep, dad. He was barking all night and mom couldn’t sleep, and she’s

Harry Morgan : very, very sick, and that lousy dog was yapping at every leaf that blew down the sidewalk!"  
: "There were a lot of bones in there, Dexter, and not just Buddy's (The dog)"

A variety of behaviors prior to age 12, including lying, theft, cheating, vandalism, and bullying. The one of many behaviors of Dexter Morgan on such young age is killing animals and buried them after that. One day on the first episode, Harry Morgan asks young Dexter Morgan if he is different, of course Dexter Morgan does not know what it means because he is still too young. Later Harry Morgan found out that the neighbor's dog named Buddy is buried in the ground along with several other small animals.

Dexter Morgan had a reason why he killed Buddy based on the data above, but other than Buddy, there are several animals buried in the ground. That is why Harry Morgan asks young Dexter Morgan if he is different. After that discussion with Harry Morgan, young Dexter Morgan just end up looks down at the boat floor feeling ashamed. This problem is not just happening once but few times when Dexter Morgan is younger.

## E. CONCLUSION

The results in chapter four which analyzed the characters of Dexter Morgan have the conclusion. Dexter Morgan is a high function psychopath, the researcher say that not without reasons. Other than the traits from *PCL – R*, Dexter Morgan is a psychopath because of what he does for a living. Dexter Morgan conceals himself from the world because he is a serial killer, an organized serial killer as he calls himself a neat monster. Dexter Morgan's friends are unable to detect that from Dexter Morgan, because he applies the principal of lying in a great way. While being superficial charming to everybody is an effective method, he also a good liar, Dexter Morgan can lie with every lie that he comes up with without tongue-tied.

The way how psychopath and sociopath exist in people everyday life, so that people can be more aware about how they are tend to behave and act when something is happened. The society also can recognize the psychopath and sociopath just from the look of the eyes and how they treat people, we can understand more in our society and probably avoid the dangerous psychopath or sociopath, which is most of them, are dangerous. Hopefully, another research will continue to analyze Dexter Morgan as the best serial killer in Miami by using various theories that can approach Dexter Morgan in any way that the researcher cannot. By contributing more research in psychopath or sociopath, hope more people will be aware with their surrounding and create more ideas to make another research involving psychopath or sociopath.

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