

PSYCHOLOGICAL SELF-JUSTIFICATION OF CRUEL ACTS IN AGATHA CHRISTIE'S NOVEL *AND THEN THERE WERE NONE*

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Abstract

The study analyzes Judge Wargrave's psychological mechanisms of self-justification in Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None*. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the analysis identifies Wargrave's self-justification, defense mechanisms, and manipulative behaviors as strategies to rationalize his cruelty. His sadistic obsession and obsessive ambition reveal the complexity of moral reasoning behind his actions. The study contributes to understanding human rationalization of unethical behavior through a literary-psychological lens. The analysis was carried out by categorizing some information into two themes of discussion. The first theme is the protagonist's three actions to justify his cruel act: self-justification, self-defense mechanisms, and manipulation. Then, the second theme is the protagonist's two reasons to do cruel act: sadistic obsession and insane ambition. The results of this study indicate that Judge Wargrave uses various psychological mechanisms to justify his cruel actions. By looking at the psychological and literary context, this research provides an understanding of human nature and behavior, which shows the psychological complexity of the protagonist to uphold justice in an unethical way.

Keywords: *Behavior; cruel acts; psychology; self-defense; self-justification*

1. Introduction

Literary works are products of human creativity that are intimately linked to language. Humans and literature are related because human and environmental issues are essentially the origin of literature. Literary works that depict human existence are the product of the author's imagination. The author combines his idealized of life with the realities of it (Rahayu, 2022).

Novel is narrative work of literature or prose fiction that typically tell the story of the characters the author would like to portray, including their actions and daily lives. As a work of prose fiction, the novel presents a number of issues related to humans. People can enjoy and get a great deal of insight into human characters by reading a novel (Hanisa, 2016).

A literary work and the real world are closely related. Social connections, culture, religion, education, and the psychological aspects of people's personalities are all part of daily life. Literature and Psychology have a significant relationship because

both deal with humans, their behaviors, reactions, wishes, miseries, fears, desires, culture, individual differences, and social issues (Ayesha, 2022). Psychology teaches us about human actions and their reasons, whereas literature depicts human behavior through fiction.

The novel *And Then There Were None* by Agatha Christie is the most famous novel that retains the suspenseful and mysterious core of the story. The story begins with an invitation for ten strangers to spend time on a deserted island. When they arrive at the island, they realize that the owner is not there. The fear increases when they see a nursery rhyme called *Ten Little Soldiers*, which tells of how each of them will die. The rhyme visualizes how each character is killed, and they believe that the killer is one of them. Distrust and paranoia arise in an attempt to survive, and eventually each character reveals their dark secret.

Judge Lawrence Wargrave is the novel's primary character and the mastermind behind the murders. He is a former judge with intelligence, power, and a strong belief in justice. Wargrave believes that his cruel acts are the best way to ensure justice. He sees himself as a law enforcer, charged with punishing those who have avoided justice. This self-justification is what allows him to kill and perform terrible actions, since he believes he has the right to decide who should live or die.

By looking at the psychological and literary context, this research provides an understanding of human nature and behavior, where humans can lose their minds and morals when they feel they have the right to determine someone's life and death. Judge Wargrave abuses his position as a judge to punish others, even though he feels his actions are the right thing to judge the wrong, it is still unethical to kill in his own way. This study aims to identify and analyze the forms and motivations of self-justification in Judge Wargrave's character. Thus, this study is expected to provide an understanding of justice and morality in literature, and encourage researchers and readers to think critically about the motivations behind the actions of the characters in the story.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Self-Justification

According to Said (2024), self-justification is defined as rationalizing one's thoughts, feelings, or behaviors to align with personal beliefs, usually to protect self-image or avoid guilt. It is a defense mechanism that helps us maintain our self-esteem and honesty even when we act contrary to our principles. While it can provide some relief, it often causes long-term problems, such as creating conflict. Self-justification can cloud our judgment, making it difficult to know what we are doing. It hinders our spiritual and personal growth by preventing us from admitting our mistakes.

Said (2024) states that there are several factors that contribute to self-justification:

1. Fear of Judgment: We justify our wrong actions in order to avoid criticism from people.
2. Cognitive Dissonance: We justify our actions with our beliefs to reduce our mental discomfort.
3. Pride and Ego: Pride keeps us from admitting mistakes, which leads to self-justification.

Manifestations of self-justification can be done in various ways. These can include shifting blame, reducing the impact of our actions, or rationalizing unethical

behavior. While protective in the short term, these actions can lead to long-term effects, such as the destruction of relationships and the cessation of personal growth.

The concept of self-justification is closely related to the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance, which was introduced by Leon Festinger in 1957. However, Aronson has expanded and transformed this theory into self-justification theory. Aronson's experiments show that although dissonance is disruptive in any situation, it is most painful for people when an important element of their self-concept is threatened - usually when they do something that is incompatible with their view of themselves (Aronson, 1968). Since most people have a fairly positive self-concept by believing they are competent, moral, intelligent and good, their efforts to reduce dissonance will be designed to maintain a positive self-image - even when it perpetuates incompetent, unethical, stupid or cruel behavior.

2.2 Behavior

Behavior is how people act towards what they do, make things happen and maintain what they want. From a biological perspective, behavior consists of all human activities or activities, both directly and indirectly observed. In other words, human behavior includes all human activities or activities, both directly and indirectly observed (Notoatmodjo, 2003).

According to Rogers quoted by Notoatmodjo (2012), the behavioral process is all human activities that can be observed or cannot be observed directly. There is a process of adopting new behavior in the person, namely:

1. Awareness, that is, the person realizes or knows the stimulus (object) first.
2. Interest, that is, people begin to be interested in the stimulus (object).
3. Evaluation (consideration), namely weighing whether or not the stimulus is good for him.
4. Trial, people have started trying new behaviors. In this stage, the subject previously sought support from others regarding decisions made on the new idea or object in question.
5. Adoption, the subject has behaved to accept his attitude towards the stimulus.

2.3 Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance theory provides an understanding of the mechanisms that may underlie the drive to self-justify. Cognitive dissonance refers to the mental discomfort a person feels when they have two or more conflicting beliefs, ideas or values, or when they are confronted with new information that does not align with their existing beliefs. There are often exceptions where these things are inconsistent. When such inconsistencies are found, they attract our attention mainly because they contrast strongly with the background of consistency (Festinger, 1957). In other words, we notice more easily when something does not fit in the way we think or act.

Interacting beliefs, attitudes, and values form a cognitive system, which is influenced and affected by behavior (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). Cognitive dissonance occurs when a person is faced with opposing thoughts or arguments and cannot choose which one is correct. Most people are aware of their belief system. However, when people realize that other people's perspectives and ideas may have a bit of truth, it conflicts with their cognitive beliefs. As a result, some of the emotions we can experience as a result of cognitive dissonance are fear, guilt, anger, frustration, anxiety, stress, and other psychosomatic conditions (Fontanari et al., 2012). It is possible that

cognitive dissonance causes many people to experience problematic behaviors. Vaughan and Hogg (2005) explain that people always want to act in a way that matches their beliefs to ensure that their beliefs and values are always correct. In other words, dissonance occurs when a person's beliefs conflict with their beliefs or when their behavior does not match their beliefs.

2.4 Defense Mechanism

Everyone has experienced something unpleasant in their lives. The problems that arise usually cause trauma and psychological impact, which takes time to recover from, and appears as an unconscious way to protect oneself. Everyone has a way of coping psychologically to make the pain subside, according to psychological processes (Cramer, 1987). Here, defensive actions refer to psychological defenses, also known as Defense Mechanisms. The response used to protect a person or object from attack is called a Defense Mechanism (Rezeki et al., 2023).

Zulfaisya and Hasra (2020) state that defense mechanisms are techniques that are unconsciously used to protect a person from anxiety that comes from unacceptable feelings or thoughts. Humans usually reduce tension to reduce anxiety and use defense mechanisms to protect themselves from anxiety. Likewise, we fear when the ego's defense mechanisms fail. According to Tyson in Sarijaloo and Kiaei (2016), anxiety represents our basic problems such as fear of intimacy, fear of abandonment, fear of betrayal, and low self-esteem.

2.5 Cruel Act

Cruelty is defined as behaviors performed by one individual against another that result in physically and mental illnesses (Mangangawuhi et al., 2022). Cruelty involves intentionally causing physical or psychological pain to other living beings, typically with pleasure (Nell, 2006).

According to Victor Nell in Mayes (2009, p.14), cruelty is any deliberate action that is particularly motivated by the desire to cause physical or psychological suffering, or that causes one or more beings to enjoy or be indifferent to the suffering caused by that action. Cruelty is defined as conduct that endangers life, limb, or health (physical or mental) or creates a reasonable fear of such risk.

Cruelty is the intentional infliction of suffering. Kemp, Brodsky and Caputo (1997, p.22) explains that for an act to constitute cruelty, there are two elements that must be demonstrated: 1) There is unintentional suffering and the act is not considered cruel. 2) There is intentional suffering and the pleasure felt by the perpetrator is highly correlated, so it is generally considered that when the perpetrator intends to be cruel, he also derives pleasure from the act.

Cruelty is defined as unethical action or mistreatment. Cruelty can be defined as an act that injures or kills others while also causing physical harm to them. The cruelty that caused the collapse was against the law and cruelty can be described as a crime (Wadong, 2000).

2.6 Psychology of Literature

According to Carl Jung (1912), enlightens that the human mind is the root of all sciences and arts. It should be evident that psychology, which is the study of psychic processes, may be used to study literature. Literature on its own provides a general insight into human life, as long as humanity has issues, social life, and intellectual life in

its own distinct way. An author develops a living piece of literature from the character they create, and the character has a distinct personality that was purposefully designed to make the author's work more alive.

Wellek & Warren (1977, p.81) describe in *Theory of Literature* that there are several definitions of literary psychology based on the subject of research, which are:

1. The psychology of literature is the study of the author's psychology as an individual. It signifies that a writer is a human being who is intimately connected to nature, which includes desire and passion. Based on his enthusiasm and emotional basis, he can develop an outstanding work of literature.
2. The psychology of literature is the study of the creative process. It signifies that this research examines how the process of a work might be transformed into an entire literary work.
3. The psychology of literature is the study of the various forms and concepts of psychology as they apply to literary works. This means that the study examines how psychological subjects and instances are used in the context of literary works.
4. The psychology of literature is the study of how literary works affect the reader. It indicates that this study examines the impact of literary work on the reader, whether it influences the reader's way of thinking and life or not.

According to Meiliana cited by Putri and Wulan (2024), psychology can help understand the message, characterization, and other elements of the novel as well as the basis of the characters' behavior, motivations, and conduct. Literary psychology is a field that investigates and studies how the human brain and behavior work. This perspective focuses on common elements found in literary works that are used to describe the psychology of authors, characters, and readers (Sulistiyana & Widiarti, 2019).

2.7 Protagonist

Every story must have a main character. Protagonists usually solve problems or are involved in conflicts, and they also determine the course of the story. According to Nurgiyantoro (1998, p.176–194), protagonists make readers feel sympathetic and empathetic, while antagonists do the opposite. The protagonist, also referred to as the main character, hero, or heroine, is the character who is the center of the story and does something that moves the plot along. Most stories have an audience or reader who really connects with the main character and supports them.

Nurgiyantoro (2009, p.178–179) mentions that protagonists show some traits that match our beliefs. These characters are similar to us, have problems similar to us, and overcome these problems in ways similar to us. Characters in a literary work are usually creations of the author's imagination, yet they play an important role in the plot.

3. Research Method

A research design is a researcher's idea presented in the form of an organized plan that depicts all of the major components of a study (Asenahabi, 2019). This study employed a descriptive qualitative research methodology. According to Pradoko and cited by Sahir (2021), qualitative research design is a design process used to understand social phenomena or human society by creating a broad and complex perspective that can be communicated in words and reporting perspectives obtained in detail from various informant sources, conducted in a natural environment. Descriptive qualitative research method was applied in this study to analyze the psychological aspects of the

protagonist's self-justification of his own cruel acts in the novel *And Then There Were None*. This technique systematically and accurately describes the facts and phenomena being studied.

According to Lambert and Lambert (2013, p. 256), the purpose of data collection in qualitative descriptive studies is to discover the character of the specific events under consideration. Therefore, to conduct an accurate analysis, the data collection are shown in the following steps: (1) searching for data from text related to the actions and reasons to justify the self-justification of Judge Wargrave's in cruel acts in the novel *And Then There Were None*; and (2) making important text related to the identified points. Then, to analyze the data, several types were: (1) classifying each data based on the Judge Wargrave's character activity of his actions to justify his self-justification of his cruel acts and his reasons in committing cruel acts as self-justification; and (2) analyzing the data based on the collected of text in the novel *And Then There Were None* by Agatha Christie (2015).

4. Discussion

This study focuses on the protagonist's actions to justify his own cruel actions and the reasons for committing cruel actions as self-justification of Judge Wargrave, the protagonist in the novel.

4.1 The Protagonist's Action to Justify His Cruel Acts

In Agatha Christie's novel *And Then There Were None*, Judge Wargrave commits a cruel act by killing other characters on a Soldier Island. As a former judge, he considers himself to have an understanding of the law and believes that his cruel acts are to uphold justice, as those he kills are those who have done wrong but are not properly punished. Therefore, he abused his power for the wrong purpose. He planned his every move carefully and acted as one who would be unlikely to be suspected due to his profession as a fair judge. Therefore, he carried out his actions by justifying his actions, using self-defense and manipulation to avoid anyone's suspicion.

4.1.1 Self-Justification

Self-justification is when a person considers their feelings, thoughts, or behaviors to conform them to their personal beliefs, usually to protect self-image or avoid guilt. It is a defense mechanism that helps us maintain self-esteem and integrity even when we act contrary to our values. This analysis investigates the protagonist's self-justification of his cruel actions. This can be seen as below:

“He was very ably defended and made a good impression on the jury in the witness-box. Nevertheless, on the evidence, he was certainly guilty. I summed up accordingly, and the jury brought in a verdict of Guilty. In passing sentence of death I concurred with the verdict. An appeal was lodged on the grounds of misdirection. The appeal was rejected and the man was duly executed. I wish to say before you all that my conscience is perfectly clear on the matter. I did my duty and nothing more I passed sentence on a rightly convicted murderer (Christie, 2015, p.52-53)”

Judge Wargrave attempted to justify his actions in sentencing Edward Seton, who was charged with the murder of an elderly woman, to death. Seton was initially

defended by the juries for his good behavior. However, Judge Wargrave tried to emphasize that he was only doing his job as a judge and his decision was based on the evidence. This was a form of self-justification, where he tried to remove his guilt and emphasized that the decision he had made was the right one.

“Oh, yes, I believe it. Wargrave murdered Edward Seton all right, murdered him as surely as if he'd stuck a stiletto through him! But he was clever enough to do it from the judge's seat in wig and gown. So in the ordinary way you can't bring his little crime home to him (Christie, 2015, p.94).”

This quote is expressed by Lombard when talking to Dr. Armstrong about Judge Wargrave who could allegedly commit murder under the protection of the law because of his profession as a judge. In this case, it can be interpreted that Wargrave feels that he has the right to punish people according to his wishes who he considers guilty. This is an act of self-justification that can be seen in the way he views his actions as legitimate and right, even though they are morally and ethically wrong.

“In the sense you mean, no. I came to that conclusion early this morning. I could have told you that your search would be fruitless. Nevertheless, I am strongly of the opinion that "Mr. Owen" (to give him the name he himself has adopted) is on the island. Very much so. Given the scheme in question which is neither more nor less than the execution of justice upon certain individuals for offences which the law cannot touch, *there is only one way in which that scheme could be accomplished*. Mr. Owen could only come to the island in one way. “It is perfectly clear. *Mr. Owen is one of us...*”(Christie, 2015, p.123)”

While Lombard, Blore and Dr. Armstrong have not yet discovered who killed the other three characters on the island, Judge Wargrave suggests that their investigation is useless as he suspects that the killer is among them, indicating that he feels he has a better understanding. He stated that the killer was trying to execute criminals that the law could not touch, which he was trying to justify his acts as self-justification.

“I will say here that such was the case with the man Edward Seton. His appearance and manner were misleading and he created a good impression on the jury. But not only the evidence, which was clear, though unspectacular, but my own knowledge of criminals told me without any doubt that the man had actually committed the crime with which he was charged, the brutal murder of an elderly woman who trusted him (Christie, 2015, p.238).”

This quote reflects how Judge Wargrave justified his decision in sentencing Seton to death that his judgment was based on facts and experience, where he believed that his understanding of crime was better than others. This is a form of self-justification and shows how individuals can use their arguments to justify their actions.

4.1.2 Self-Defense Mechanism

Self-defense mechanisms are a development of an individual's personality structure. Self-defense mechanisms help protect a person's mind, self, or ego from anxiety and social sanctions.

In other words, self-defense mechanisms are carried out by a person to maintain their self-image and deal with reality (Piliang, 2018). In this research, there are several quotes that confirm Judge Wargrave's self-defense in the island murder case and relate to his self-justification. This can be seen as below:

"I too, am a well-known person! But, my dear sir, that proves less than nothing! Doctors have gone mad before now. Judges have gone mad. So," he added, looking at Blore, "have policemen! (Christie, 2015, p.125)"

As suspicion arose about who the murderer was, Dr. Armstrong made the statement that he could not be suspected because he was a well-known professional. This is denied by Judge Wargrave who immediately mentions that he is also a famous person and that some people in honorable positions can also do unexpected things. He tried to maintain his self-image by distracting attention to avoid responsibility for his own actions which was also related to his self-justification.

"My point is that there can be no exceptions allowed on the score of *character, position, or probability*. What we must now examine is the possibility of eliminating one or more persons on the *facts* (Christie, 2015, p.128)"

Judge Wargrave implies that a social status or profession would potentially commit a crime to reduce suspicion on him which can be said as self-defense. It is also expressed as a distraction from his actions to focus more on the investigation of who might be guilty among them, rather than on himself being the mastermind behind it all. This can be related as a strategy of self-justification in order to distract from his guilt in the interest of his own self-justification.

"I sat on that chair on the terrace for the whole morning until the gong went, but there were, I should imagine, several periods during the morning when I was quite unobserved and during which it would have been possible for me to walk down to the sea, kill the General, and return to my chair. There is only my word for the fact that I never left the terrace. In the circumstances that is not enough. There must be *proof* (Christie, 2015, p.133)."

This quote expresses Judge Wargrave's defense when they were discussing the murder of General Macarthur. He emphasizes that there is not enough evidence to confirm his presence at that place and accuses him of killing the General and shows that he is also caught in a complicated situation. This can also create doubt among the other characters by distracting from the possibility that he is the real culprit. His statement can be related to self-justification as he tries to prove his innocence.

4.1.3 Manipulation

In psychology, manipulation means influencing someone by controlling their subconscious desires and thoughts (Trisnayanti & Saputra, 2022). Thus, manipulation can be defined as the way a person changes, influences, or controls another person or opinion to suit their own desires. These are some of the quotes that state the form of manipulation that Judge Wargrave uses to influence the other characters which also relates to self-justification for his cruel actions:

“Either you or Rogers *could* have administered a fatal dose with the greatest ease. Let us now consider the position of the other people present. What chance had I, had Inspector Blore, had Miss Brent, had Miss Claythorne, had Mr. Lombard of administering poison? Can any one of us be completely and entirely eliminated?” He paused. “I think not (Christie, 2015, p.129)”

Dr. Armstrong and Mr. Rogers are suspected of poisoning Miss Rogers. Dr. Armstrong denies the accusations, and Judge Wargrave argues that everyone on the island has the potential to commit the murder. This manipulation aims to clear the suspicion and maintain Judge Wargrave's image as a form of self-justification, as he equates himself and other characters with similar potential to commit the crime.

“On Blore’s side, assisting him to the best of our ability will be myself, Dr. Armstrong and Miss Claythorne. You will appreciate therefore, that the odds against you if you choose to resist will be somewhat heavy (Christie, 2015, p.169).”

Judge Wargrave suggested keeping personal items like medicine and a gun in safe storage to prevent further murders. Lombard rejected this suggestion, arguing the gun was used for self-defense. Wargrave manipulated Lombard by claiming both Lombard and Blore are physically strong, but everyone supports Blore due to his lack of a gun. This forced Lombard to follow Wargrave's will, potentially as a self-justification for his actions in controlling the situation like he wanted.

“And now to the actual mechanics of the crime of Soldier Island. To acquire the island, using the man Morris to cover my tracks, was easy enough. He was an expert in that sort of thing (Christie, 2015, p.243)”

This quote is stated by Judge Wargrave who knows that the operation he is about to take will be useless and will die slowly. His last wish was to avenge all the cruel deeds committed by all the characters who were not brought to justice and he would kill them in his own way. He planned murders and gathered information on characters on Soldier Island. He used experienced criminal, Morris, to obtain the island, manipulating him to participate in his cruel actions. This form of manipulation relates to self-justification, as Judge Wargrave tries to justify his actions to prosecute other characters in his own way.

“According to my plan I should shortly need an ally. I selected Dr. Armstrong for that part. He was a gullible sort of man, he knew me by sight and reputation and it was inconceivable to him that a man of my standing should actually be a murderer! (Christie, 2015, p.244)”

When the third murder happened, Judge Wargrave chose Dr. Armstrong as his ally to avoid suspicion and used his reputation and social status to gain Dr. Armstrong's trust so that it would be easy to hide his cruel actions. He thought Dr. Armstrong was a gullible person and would not accuse him of being a murderer, making it easy to manipulate him.

4.2 The Protagonist's Reasons to Commit Cruel Acts as Self-Justification

This study will explain Judge Wargrave's reasons for committing his cruel acts as self-justification. It is believed that he committed the cruel act because he wanted to uphold justice against the criminals who went scot-free even though they were guilty of serious crimes. He justified his actions by stating that they deserved the punishment that he would execute in his own way.

However, Judge Wargrave has had an insane ambition and sadistic obsession since childhood. With these two factors, behind his profession as a judge, he is able to commit cruel acts under the name of justice, as well as to maintain his image as a fair judge. Thus, he believes that his actions to punish other characters in his own way are to uphold justice.

4.2.1 Sadistic Obsession

Judge Wargrave has a sadistic obsession that leads him to commit cruel acts, under the name of justice. Here are some quotes from Judge Wargrave's sadistic obsession that relate to self-justification:

"I have a definite sadistic delight in seeing or causing death. I remember experiments with wasps-with various garden pests... From an early age I knew very strongly the lust to kill. But side by side with this went a contradictory trait-a strong sense of justice. It is abhorrent to me that an innocent person or creature should suffer or die by any act of mine. I have always felt strongly that right should prevail (Christie, 2015, p.237)."

This statement by Judge Wargrave shows the contradiction within him since childhood, which is that he feels pleasure in killing, but on the other hand has a strong sense of justice. This obsession is not only due to his desire to kill, but also to rule over justice in determining the life and death of others.

By acknowledging the sadistic obsession in his actions, he also creates a narrative where his actions are a form of self-justification to uphold justice. His obsession to punish the guilty is a form of contradiction within himself as well as to maintain his image as a judge, despite his cruel acts.

"Crime and its punishment has always fascinated me. I enjoy reading every kind of detective story and thriller. I have devised for my own private amusement the most ingenious ways of carrying out a murder (Christie, 2015, p.238)."

Judge Wargrave expressed his interest in detective stories to create a smooth way of killing. This shows a sadistic obsession, which drives him to commit cruel acts in a carefully thought-out manner. He uses this obsession as a self-justification for his mission, which is to punish the guilty in his own way.

"A childish rhyme of my infancy came back into my mind-the rhyme of the ten little soldier boys. It had fascinated me as a child of two-the inexorable diminishment-the sense of inevitability (Christie, 2015, p.240)"

This quotation shows how Judge Wargrave has been interested in the nursery rhyme *Ten Little Soldier* about merciless reduction (related to murder) since he was 2

years old. He then became obsessed with planning his murder just like in that nursery rhyme. Assuming that death was inevitable, he rationalized his actions. He justified his actions that his murder was part of the moral law to uphold justice.

4.2.2 Insane Ambition

In addition to sadistic obsession as his reason for committing these cruel acts, it is also mentioned what his insane ambition was in his cruel actions. Here are some quotes from Judge Wargrave's insane ambition that relate to self-justification:

“I have wanted-let me admit it frankly-*to commit a murder myself*. I recognised this as the desire of the artist to express himself! I was, or could be, an artist in crime! My imagination, sternly checked by the exigencies of my profession, waxed secretly to colossal force (Christie, 2015, p.239).”

Judge Wargrave began to feel a real desire to kill, not from the bench and his judge's robe. He no longer saw the killings as criminal, but as a form of creative expression and art, reflecting his insane ambition to create something brutal. This is also seen as self-justification, as he wants to show his plan as an expression of his inner self, like an artist.

“It was my ambition to invent a murder mystery that no one could solve. But no artist, I now realise, can be satisfied with art alone. There is a natural craving for recognition which cannot be gainsaid (Christie, 2015, p.248).”

This quote shows Judge Wargrave's insane ambition to create a murder mystery that no one can solve. He also states that as an “artist”, in addition to being satisfied with his work, which is his crime, he also has a desire to be recognized for his intelligence in planning the murder. This reflects his attempt to justify his actions as reasonable for the sake of recognition and personal satisfaction.

5. Conclusion

These findings demonstrate that self-justification serves as a critical bridge between moral reasoning and deviant behavior, offering insights into the psychological underpinnings of justice and guilt in modern literature. This study examines Judge Lawrence Wargrave in Agatha Christie's novel *And Then There Were None*, focusing on his self-justification of his cruel actions. Wargrave, a former judge, appears caring and fair in his punishment but hides a terrible secret. He believes his actions are his way of delivering justice to criminals who go scot-free. He plans his murders, inspired by a nursery rhyme he read at age 2, to do to the characters on Soldier Island, including himself. Wargrave uses psychological mechanisms such as self-justification, self-defense mechanisms, and manipulation to uphold justice. His sadistic obsession and ambition also play a significant role in justifying his actions. Wargrave believes his judgment in sentencing the guilty is based on his court experience and considers himself an artist, enjoying his cruel acts for personal satisfaction. He seeks recognition for his intelligence and creates a murder mystery that no one can solve. Through his character, it can be highlighted how a person can get caught up in self-justification and manipulate morals to justify his cruel actions.

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