



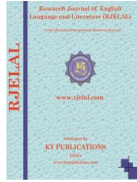
A SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE 12 JURORS IN THE PLAY *TWELVE ANGRY MEN* BY REGINALD ROSE

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Abstract

It is impossible to separate literature from society as both culminate in each other. Furthermore, literature borrows from the field of psychology in different magnitudes. At the same time, psychology deals with human behaviour, writers of literature design characters whose behaviours affirm some psychological propositions. The purpose of this literary analysis is to assess how the play, *Twelve Angry Men* by Reginald Rose, borrows from social psychology tenets of conformity and prejudice. Most importantly, the study critiqued how the 12 jurors' behaviours are construed on the school, as mentioned earlier. The analysis will reveal that the social-psychological components such as conformity and prejudices are the causes for judicial injustices faced by the minority and economically marginalized populations. The jurors' application of Schemas and heuristics And Informational Social Influence were conspicuous factors contributing to poor decision making. This literary analysis concluded that mediocrity in a sensitive profession like law practice should be avoided to safeguard the vulnerable people in society like the boy-suspect.

Keywords: social-psychological, social influence, prejudice, Informational social influence.

Özet

Edebiyatı, toplumdan ayırmak imkansızdır, çünkü ikisi de birbirini besler. Dahası, edebiyat, psikoloji alanından farklı ölçülerde yararlanır. Aynı zamanda, psikoloji insan davranışıyla ilgilenirken, edebiyat yazarları, davranışları bir takım psikolojik önermeleri destekleyen karakterleri tasarlarlar. Bu edebi analizin amacı, Reginald Rose'un On İki Kızgın Adam oyununun nasıl, uyumluluk ve önyargı sosyal psikoloji ilkelerinden faydalandığını değerlendirmektir. En önemlisi, bu çalışma, 12 jürinin davranışlarının nasıl, daha önce bahsedilen ekol üzerine dayalı olduğunun eleştirisini yapmıştır. Bu analiz, uyumluluk ve önyargı gibi sosyo-psikolojik unsurların, azınlıklar ve ekonomik olarak dışlanmış nüfuslar tarafından yüzleşilen yargı adaletsizliğinin sebebi olduğunu ortaya koyacaktır. Jüri üyelerinin, Şema ve buluşsak yöntemler ve ayrıca Bilgisel Sosyal Etki kullanmaları, kötü karar verme sürecindeki etkili unsurlardır. Bu edebi analiz, çocuk şüpheli gibi toplumdaki savunmasız insanları savunurken, hukuk gibi hassas bir alandaki aleladelikten kaçınılması gerektiği sonucuna varmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: sosyal-psikolojik, sosyal etki, önyargı, Bilgisel sosyal etki.

Introduction

Literature is a mirror of the society which artists use to reflect day-to-day human experiences

(Gabriel, 2020). Through realism literature, composers delve into the mysteries of nature and unravel the psychological components of humanity.

The realism writers are informed by psychological concepts to craft tales on human behaviour, whether consciously or unconsciously. They use characters to convey these messages to the audience. The personages are assigned specific traits that enhance content to best communicate to people what is intended.

In most cases, even in designing these characters, the artist must also make them as realistic as possible through applying the socio-psychological theory principles on human behaviour. Psychological theories comment on human relationships, their motivations, and factors in society that make people behave the way they do. Macleod (2007) defines social psychology as the scientific study of humans that encompass people's beliefs, feelings, thoughts, and intentions within a specific social context. Most psychologists have studied self-concept, prejudices, group influences, attitudes, and discrimination as construed upon psychology. These concepts are evident in most literary genres such as poems, plays, novels, etc. The 12 jurors in the play *Twelve Angry Men* by Reginald Rose employ socio-psychological concepts. The play *Twelve Angry Men* provides evidence of social psychological theories in literary texts. Understanding how various characters in the play are used to bring out these concepts is critical in better understanding the text. Analyzing the text from the social psychological perspective is also imperative in helping the audience look at this text as one that paints real-life occurrences. Since the researcher is specifically looking at the characters, who are the 12 jurors, the audience will get insight into what motivates people to make judgments. It will also unravel the current flawed judicial system and how prejudices affect decision-making, leading to wrongful incarcerations. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the use of social-psychological concepts in the play *Twelve Angry Men* by Reginald Rose from the 12 jurors' perspective. The study will seek to answer the following questions. First, how the social psychological concept of conformity evident in the 12 juror's character traits and how it leads to herd mentality? Secondly, the article will analyze how the

writer uses the 12 jurors to explore prejudice in society through schemas and heuristics.

Rose's *Twelve Angry Men* is a story that depicts a flawed judicial system and how this affects the have-nots in society. A boy who dwells in the slums is accused of murdering his father (Rose, 2016). The witness believes that the boy did the action since she saw him running from the scene through her window some minutes before she could go to sleep (Rose, 1966). In one of the hearings in The New York City courthouse, the judge cannot deliberate on the issue and appoints 12 jurors to give the verdict (Rose, 1966). The judge is evidently lazy as he could not delve into the matter but let others do it. He gives the jurors the mandate to decide whichever verdict to render on the boy. The 12 jurors embark on their deliberations by voting openly, whether the boy is guilty or not guilty. All the jurors vote guilty, apart from one identified as a juror 8 (Rose, 1966). According to this jury, he believes that it is always right that a case is correctly analyzed before making a decision and that the 18-year-old boy's story should be heard before the verdict. The not-guilty vote creates a heated debate on the boy's criminalization, as the 12 jurors contest on the issue. Some pertinent concerns such as poverty, prejudice, judicial injustices in the form of false accusations come to the surface (Rose, 1966). Since juror five had grown up in the slums, he believes that not all kids who live in such places are aggressive and violent. He also believes that the witnesses gave false accounts of the events. For instance, the older man who said that he had heard the boy yelling about killing his father could not have heard this due to noises from a passing train.

The debate gets heated, and in the long last, there is no verdict. Juror Two is confident that the boy was too short of stabbing his father from an upward-down position and decides that the boy is innocent. Likewise, Juror Eight maintains that merely saying "I'll kill you" is never used to mean one will kill a person. Juror Seven, who voted hastily so that the case ends for him to go watch a baseball derby, is interrupted by a sudden storm, and he feels relieved. He then relaxes and concentrates on the case. Juror Three has issues with his child, so he rules with prejudices (Rose, 1966). He wanted to punish

the boy, but he could not. Therefore, he finds this slum boy as the best specimen upon which to relish his anger. He says, "Rotten kids, you work your life out!" (Rose, 1966, p22), and the play ends as the twelve jurors leave while having not rendered a verdict.

Social Psychological Concept of Conformity as Evident in the 12 Juror's Character Traits

Conformity is defined as a social influence that encompasses changes in a person's behaviour or beliefs to fit in a particular social group. According to Cialdini & Goldstein (2004), influence can make a person engage in good or bad behaviours depending on certain factors. A person will tend to react differently to societal norms when they are alone and in groups. Conformity comes out in the jury room when the Twelve Angry Men meet to deliberate on the case of the 18-year-old suspect murderer. The story brings into perspective how informational influence and social influence can be powerful in changing a person's beliefs. Informational social influence theory studies how humans draw conclusions depending on the information they receive from another person (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). In such a situation, a person will change the decisions depending on how much they trust the person who has provided data (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Therefore, conformity can be adopted or rejected depending on whether a person accepts or dismisses what is presented to them.

When the 12 jurors discuss the boy who had murdered his father, they believe that he is guilty. When the judge asked them to make the verdict, they vote that the boy is guilty apart from one who thinks otherwise. The normative social influence will make a person confirm so that they do not appear irrelevant or as deviants (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). For this reason, when Juror Eight votes that the boy is not guilty, everyone is at his neck. They look at him as a deviant for not being obligated to their thinking. This juror believes that there must be solid evidence that the person committed whatever the crime they are accused of for one to be judged guilty. He does not want to conform to what the witnesses believe nor the justice system. He presents his logical

reasoning for believing why the boy is innocent, and the conformists get angry. The pertinent issue that arises here concerns what makes a person conform or not conform.

Yu & Sun (2013) note that one factor that makes a person conform, as in the case of the 11 jurors, is the fear of being branded outsiders; this means peer pressure takes a central role in determining a person's conformity, which is basically the herd mentality. It is worth noting that, even before the case, the judge remarks that he must be found guilty. Psychologically, this influences the behaviours of the others as he has allowed them to read his mind. The rest now know the rule they must follow to adhere to their colleagues' thinking. According to Goldstein (2004), informational social influence makes individuals judge other people's opinions, beliefs, or attitudes as a right since they believe their interpretation is the most valid. In this way, the jurors believed the judge's assertions were factual. Also, the jurors were convinced by the witness's accounts which sought to incriminate the boy.

However, non-conformity is also a behaviour that is psychologically conceived (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Some individual traits make them non-conformists, just like the jurors who vote not guilty. People who have a sense of freewill will most time resist social influence as it occurred in the jurors who vote no. they believe that a person has the freedom to do what they think is right without necessarily searching for clues from the rest of the subjects. Such people are known as free thinkers. They resist external stimuli and opt to indulge their mental acumen in applying logic to derive judgments. The playwright indicates:

"NINE: I'd like to change my vote to not guilty. [THREE slams his fist into his hand then walks to window and does it again.

FOREMAN: Are you sure?

NINE: Yes. I'm sure.

FOREMAN: The vote is nine to three in favor of guilty.

FOUR (to NINE): I'd like to know why you've changed your vote.

NINE: I think there's a doubt.

THREE (turning abruptly from window, snarling): Where? What is the doubt?

NINE: There's the knife ..

SEVEN (slamming his hand down on table): Oh, fine!

TEN: He--[Motioning at EIGHT.]-he talked you into believing a fairy tale.

FOUR (to NINE): Go on. Give us the reasons.

NINE: The old man, too. Maybe he didn't lie, but then just maybe he did. Maybe the old man doesn't like the kid" (Rose, 1966, p 37).

The illustration above shows how Juror Five decides to think independently. He studies the stabbing position and realizes that a child cannot stab their father from an aerial position. Through this logic, the jurors get more confused and decide to deliberate more on discovering the truth about the case. Juror Nine also changes his vote to not guilty as he says that it is always good to listen to people with divergent opinions as they may have some substantial convictions.

Prejudice: The Case with Schemas and Heuristics

Prejudice is a psychological phenomenon that affects how people relate to society. Nelson (2006) defines prejudice as an unfair like or a dislike for a person. It happens due to some factors which could be favourable or unfavourable by the biased individual. In society, one can dislike a person because of their race, religion, or any other form of identity, just as Juror Four dislikes the boy for being black. Motivational theories of prejudice give various reasons that make people prejudiced (Nelson, 2006). First, group allegiance can be a factor that can make a person discriminate against another, especially when they want not to be seen as traitors in groups that they identify themselves with (Nelson, 2006).

Secondly, self-concept and self-esteem can motivate an individual to discriminate against the

other. Sometimes, a person may feel that liking a person from another race is a sign of inferiority, so they maltreat them. Self-concept plays a role when an individual has some psychological disposition such as mental instabilities, which make them judge others unfairly to get even with their internal and desirable stimuli. In psychology, displacement is used when an individual develops a defence mechanism whereby they redirect their hatred or other emotion to an innocent individual as they try to cope with challenges they face in life (Kramer, 2010). For example, a couple can fight, but instead of settling the dispute, one may get unreasonably angry and shout at their child to relieve themselves from their pain. Juror Four believes that all teenagers are troublesome and they deserve death because his son of the same age was giving him hard times at work:

"FOUR: We're missing the point here. This boy- let's say he's a product of a filthy neighbourhood and a broken home. We can't help that. We're not here to go into the reasons why slums are breeding grounds for criminals; they are. I know it. So do you. The children who come out of slum backgrounds are potential menaces to society" (Rose, 1966, p22).

Prejudice is evident in the play in many ways, as the twelve judges make decisions in a biased manner. First, Juror Four believes that the boy is inherently evil and guilty of being a slum bred. The quote discloses the character's psychological disposition. Psychologies look at prejudice as an antipathy based on guesses, lies, and assumptions (Kramer, 2010). It is evident here as this juror believes that the boy is guilty of being brought up in a violent environment. According to him, slums are breeding grounds for criminals, and none should refute this. The dangerous aspect of prejudice is that it denies one the opportunity to apply reason in making decisions. No matter how Juror Five convinces them that a slum child can lead a sober life, they cannot believe it. The 18 years old boy has to face prejudice for being black and coming from a filthy neighbourhood (Rose, 1966).

Secondly, Juror Three wants the boy punished because he fell out with his son at home, who is about the same age as the suspect, which leads to prejudice as this juror uses his family problems to develop a hateful attitude to the boy. He laments that all kids of these calibres should be dealt with thoroughly as his kid ran away from home after the kid punched the juror on the face. He says:

THREE. You're right. It's the kids. The way they are-you know? They don't listen. [Bitterly.] I've got a kid. When he was eight years old, he ran away from a fight. I saw him. I was so ashamed. I told him right out, "I'm gonna make a man out of you or I'm gonna bust you up into little pieces trying." When he was fifteen he hit me in the face. ..I haven't seen him in three years. Rotten kid! I hate tough kids! You work your heart out. . . ." (Rose, 1966, p. 22)

Psychologically, Juror three is a man going through hard times. He is bitter towards all teenagers about his son's age as he believes they are the same. He wants the boy punished for the same reason. Psychologists refer to this defence mechanism as displacement (Kramer, 2010). The man believes that the only way to get rid of his anger and resentment is to punish the suspect, as he cannot punish his son for slapping him on the face. This thinking makes this juror biased, leading to the flaws in rendering justice to this boy suspect. The two scenarios are depictions of the possibility of having people executed or incarcerated mistakenly. It is wrong that a person should wish another death due to a wrong done to them by a person who has the same behaviours as the accused.

The discussed prejudices depict how people use schema and heuristics to make judgments. Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier (2011) define a heuristic as a mental shortcut which people use in problem-solving to create judgments. The approach makes the decision-making process shorter as people do not go deeper into facts about the issue when drawing judgments. However, critics argue that this process is flawed as it ignores some crucial information that leads to either conscious or unconscious error making (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier,

2011). Decision made through this process and never rational as it does not meet the assumptions for a reason (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011). Schemas are also evident in the play as various characters make judgments depending on their beliefs. Psychologists put group schemas in various categories such as the social, self, event, and personal schemas (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011). In the play *Twelve Angry Men*, the social schema is evident as in juror's thinking. The whole voting process is also impacted by heuristic psychology.

Juror Four believes that children who come from the slum are inherently violent and are harmful to society. He might have developed these schemas and heuristics from his experience from what he witnesses from the poor black neighbourhoods. This kind of belief makes him develop a negative attitude towards the boy, the reason he wants him punished for being a potential killer. He refuses to use reason in making judgment and votes hastily due to this prior knowledge. As scientists argue, schemas and heuristics can lead to wrong judgment, as is evident in the play. From this juror's point of view, it is evident that Juror Four has misconceptions that make him judge wrongly. However, Juror Five does not believe that growing up as a clown makes a person violent. He makes this judgment from his self-concept since he is a product of the slums himself. Since this person has grown in these neighbourhood types, he believes that not all kids are not innocent. Therefore, he can associate himself with them. However, psychology reveals that this juror may have used his social schema to make such a decision. He did not see the accused boy fighting, and he uses this information to vote not guilty in the second instance and maintains the position throughout their discourse.

Conclusion

The play *12 Angry Men* is a text whose characters conspicuously culminate in social-psychology. This aspect makes the play realistic as it comments on salient issues that affect contemporary society as far as the judiciary and justice for the minorities are concerned. The 18-year old suspect in the case comes out as a minority who is facing potential discrimination from seemingly

insensitive jurors. It is, therefore, confirmed that the text depicts mediocrity in a sensitive profession like law practice. Instead of the jurors relying on facts to disseminate justice, they let prejudices take the better of them. They lack insight in voting as each has personal issues that make them draw unfair conclusions, mostly to get the case done with, rather than ensuring they render a justice verdict. The play has thus proved how schemas and heuristics can lead to a flawed judicial system. Lastly, conformity theories play a part in the play through social influence. The paper has analyzed the concept from the positive and negative perspective that is conformity and non-conformity. The text reveals that conformity breeds the herd mentality and can lead to faulty decision-making. However, non-conformity is depicted as logical, given that the non-conformist in the story (Juror 8) is the voice of reason throughout the play.

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