

## Psychopathic behavior in *Gone Girl* movie

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### ABSTRACT

This research deals with analyzing psychopathic behavior in *Gone Girl* movie. It is reflected through the main female character, Amy Elliott Dunne. The research problems are to find the characteristics of Amy's psychopathic behavior and to find the causes of her psychopathic behavior. In this research, the researchers use qualitative research method. The main data is *Gone Girl* movie. It is supported by secondary data such as books, articles appropriate with this research. In collecting the data, the researchers use documentation technique. Content analysis is chosen by the researchers to analyze the data. The results of this research are described as follows: 1) Amy has great obsession about herself that leads her to commit crimes. She senselessly slits the throat of the victim only by using a cutter. She does manipulative act and exposes sexual appeal to the victim. Amy also makes public opinion that her husband kills her. In the end, she creates herself as innocence for the murder of Desi, her ex-boyfriend. She twists the story that she has been raped and kidnapped by him. 2) Amy's psychopathic behavior is believed to be affected by her surrounding, especially her parents. Amy's family is full of manipulative acts. Amy's parents utilize Amy to be an amazing person who inspires many people by creating a storybook entitled "Amazing Amy" with excessive improvisation

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Gone Girl* is a movie released in 2014, directed by David Fincher and distributed by 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox. It is adapted from a novel by Gillian Flynn. This movie's title is the same as the title of the novel by Gillian released in 2012. This Movie is starring Ben Affleck, Rosamund Pike, Neil Patrick Harris, Tyler Perry, and Carrie Coon. The film premiered on the opening night of the 52<sup>nd</sup> New York Film Festival on September 26, 2014, before being released nationally on October 3, and was well received by critics and achieved commercial success earning more than \$ 368 million, making it a film The best-selling David Fincher. Rosamund Pike's appearance was especially praised, and she received Academy Award nomination, BAFTA Award, Golden Globe Award and Screen Actors Guild Award for Best Actress. Other nominations include Best Golden Globe Award Director for Fincher and Golden Globe Award nominations, BAFTA Award and Critics 'Choice Award for Best Adaptation Scenario for Gillian Flynn, and the Best Critics' Choice Movie Award (Golden Globe: 'Birdman,' 'Boyhood' and 'Imitation Game' Top Nominations" in [Variety](https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gone_Girl_(film)#cite_note-4) in [https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gone\\_Girl\\_\(film\)#cite\\_note-4](https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gone_Girl_(film)#cite_note-4)). It is seen this is such a successful brilliant movie from the various award it achieved.

The story begins when Nick and Amy will celebrate their fifth wedding anniversary. When Nick returns home, he cannot find Amy, who is missing. After an investigation, Nick was suspected. Amy plans her own murder and it is made as if her husband has killed her. She is very ambitious, always intends perfectly, and has good impression from people around her. She wants to create public opinion that she is persecuted and murdered by her husband. Amy aims to jail her husband and get sympathy from the public. She is very clever plotting her murder. Every murder act scenario carried out by Amy is very real and plausible. It is suspected that Amy as the main female character has the characteristics of a psychopath.

Psychopath issue is not a new phenomenon and there are many cases of psychopath in reality. Psychopath is a disease, which is dangerous and may threat social life. Stedman's Medical Dictionary (in Cleckley, 1988: 11) explains "Psychopath is the subject of a psychoneurosis. One who is of apparently sound mind in the ordinary affairs of life but who is dominated by some abnormal sexual, criminal or passion instinct". Blair (2005: 17) states that psychopathy is an emotional disorder in which the sufferer shows extreme antisocial behavior to the environment. This disorder is associated with increased levels of instrumental aggression and need in-depth understanding to treat it.

From two definitions, it can be concluded that psychopath is someone with emotional disorder marked by some abnormal sexual, criminal instinct, and extreme antisocial behavior. He looks fine from the outside but in fact they like to manipulate and violate norms. He may a selfish person and will do anything to realize his desire. He may also a senseless person after doing mistakes or harm. There are differences in psychopathic characteristics of male and female. Female psychopath is more often show manipulative acts in tempting their victims. In addition, female psychopath is good in verbal or speech to convince their victims. Meanwhile, male psychopath is on the contrary. He is more likely to commit violence against the victim and is more aggressive.

Some other characteristics are also suggested by some experts. Cleckley (1988: 338 – 339) mentions 16 criteria to the diagnosis of psychopathy:

1. Superficial charm and good "intelligence"
2. Absence of delusions and other signs of irrational thinking
3. Absence of "nervousness" or psychoneurotic manifestations
4. Unreliability
5. Untruthfulness and insincerity
6. Lack of remorse or shame
7. Inadequately motivated antisocial behavior
8. Poor judgment and failure to learn by experience
9. Pathologic egocentricity and incapacity for love
10. General poverty in major affective reactions
11. Specific loss of insight
12. Unresponsiveness in general interpersonal relations
13. Fantastic and uninviting behavior with drink and sometimes without
14. Suicide rarely carried out
15. Sex life impersonal, trivial, and poorly integrated
16. Failure to follow any life plan

Robert D. Hare develops the original Psychopathy Checklist (PCL) to assess of psychopathy behaviour in adults and this has been revised to the Psychopathy Checklist – Revised (PCL-R). Based on Hare (in Vitale & Newman, 2001: 118) these 20 PCL – R are:

1. Glibness / superficial charm
2. Grandiose sense of self – worth

3. Need for stimulation / proneness to boredom
4. Pathological lying
5. Conning / manipulative
6. Lack of remorse or guilt
7. Shallow affect
8. Callous / lack of empathy
9. Parasitic lifestyle
10. Poor behavioral problems
11. Promiscuous sexual behavior
12. Early behavior problems
13. Lack of realistic long – term goals
14. Impulsivity
15. Irresponsibility
16. Failure to accept responsibility for own actions
17. Many short – term marital relationships
18. Juvenile delinquency
19. Revocation of conditional release
20. Criminal versatility

Based on the explanation above, the questions are formulated to find the characteristics of Amy's psychopathic behavior and to find the reasons of her psychopathic behavior. Therefore, this research is aimed at analyzing Amy's psychopathic behavior. It is also aimed at finding the causes of her psychopathic behavior.

## 2. METHOD

The researchers use qualitative research method. Kothari (2004: 3) proves that qualitative research is concerned with qualitative phenomenon for example investigating the human behavior. In this study, the researchers describe Amy's psychopathic behavior. In collecting the data, the researcher uses documentation technique. According to Payne (2004 in Mogalakwe, 2006: 221) the documentary method is the technique used to categorize, investigate, interpret, and identify the limitation of the physical source, most commonly written documents whether in the private or public domain. In this research, the researchers use *Gone Girl* movie. It is an image supported by transcription text.

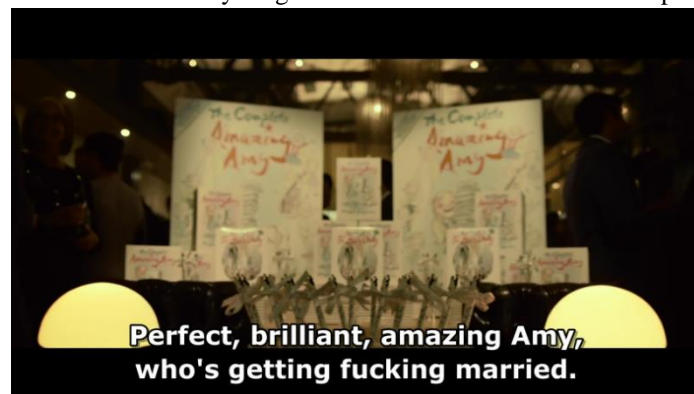
The primary data is *Gone Girl* movie released by 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox in 2014 and directed by David Fincher. The secondary data are from some books about psychopath, articles, websites and other resources relevant with the primary data. In analyzing the data, the researcher uses Content analysis. Kothari (2004: 110) states "Content-analysis Consists of analyzing the contents of documentary materials reviews such as books, magazines, newspapers and the contents of all other verbal materials can be either spoken or printed". By using this technique, the researcher can explain both verbal and non-verbal in movie that describes psychopath characteristics.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. The Description of Amy's Psychopathic Behaviors

*Gone Girl* tells about Amy as an ambitious and perfect woman. She wants perfection in her life and everything that she wants must be achieved. She cares about people's opinion to her. She wants to look good, great, and admirable in people's perspective. Since childhood she has been created as a wonderful woman by

her parents by calling her as "Amazing Amy". She wants fame and praise from people. She always makes a positive outlook to people around her and gain their sympathy. Excessive obsession make her become selfish and manipulative person. She does everything to achieve her obsession even she plans her death scenario.



**Figure 1.** 00:12:11 – 00:12:15

This illustrated that Amy is an awesome woman. Everyone call her "Amazing Amy" because she is smart, talented, perfect and amazing woman. Amy always makes people amazed to her. She makes all people impressed and fell in love to her.



**Figure 2.** 00:54:20 – 00:54:40

This figure illustrates that Amy is an important person. She is loved by everyone. When she disappeared many people are sad and lost her. Everyone seem so in love with her. Surprisingly, Amy is actually a senseless girl. Amy kills her ex-boyfriend, Desi, by slitting his throat with cutter until he died.



**Figure 3.** (02:04:48 – 02:04:60)

This shown that Amy killed her ex-boyfriend by using a cutter. She killed him while they were having sex. Amy was slitting his throat until he died. In psychopathic case, in carrying out their crime, the perpetrators or committers will do anything to kill their victim. The perpetrators do manipulative acts to their

victims by creating a good impression. Some of them also use sexual appeal to attract their victim by having sexual activity in doing their action.

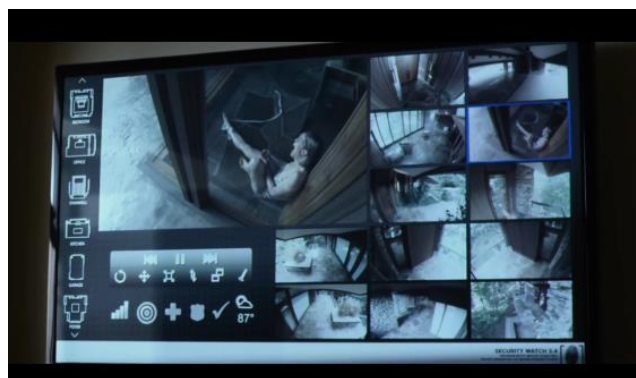
Amy does not show many violence scenes such as slaughter, torture or murder. She does more manipulative acts than violence. She likes to hang out and closes to her neighbors to make good impression. It is a good way to make people know that Amy is a kind person. She packages herself as a perfect woman so that people will truly mourn her loss.

Amy carry out the death scenario perfectly. She makes all clues carefully so that police and public trust her scenario. She directs all accusation to her husband. Police and public believe it and accuse Nick as murderer of his wife. Amy succeeds create public sympathy and feel lost "Amazing Amy". Amy also manipulate the murder of her ex-boyfriend, Desi. She plans the murder perfectly. She utilizes camera in the house of her ex-boyfriend as evidence of harassment by her ex-boyfriend. She returns home and pretends that she escapes from abduction. She gives statement to police that she had been kidnapped and abused by her ex-boyfriend. She killed him to escape herself from abduction.



**Figure 4.** (01:08:49 – 01:09:05)

Amy says: "A crime scene kind of bleed. You need to clean poorly. Like he would. Clean and bleed, bleed and clean. And leave a little something behind". This shows Amy execution in her murder scenario. She makes the evidences that shows Nick as a murderer of his wife. Amy manipulates location of murder to make it look that the murder had taken place in there. Amy uses her blood and shed it in the kitchen as evidence of murder by Nick. She clean her blood poorly so that when polices do investigation there is trace of blood. It shows murder that had been hidden by Nick.



**Figure 5.** (02:01:05 – 02:01:16)

This figure shows that Amy utilize surveillance cameras to record incident when she was raped. It is used to manipulate murder that she will commit to her ex-boyfriend. Besides doing manipulative actions, the perpetrators also commit terror to their victims. Various terror aims to make them feel anxious and frightened. Terror is given physically and psychologically. The terror can be in the form of killing pets of the victim, kidnaping, torturing victims physically and stalking the victims.

Terror in this movie is clues of murder by using the clues in treasure hunt. Amy made clues in a treasure hunt in some location. Each location give evidence for Nick's crime. Those clues show that Nick betrayed Amy, rudeness of Nick and collection of luxurious items hidden by Nick. It is made by Amy to make Nick as her murderer. Every instruction made by Amy was found by the police and led to Nick. It made Nick feared and confused so he depressed. Public opinion also increase Nick's frustration. Before Amy disappear, she created a good impression to her neighbors and public by manipulating them. When Amy disappeared all people blame Nick and judge him. Amy's plan succeeded became terror to her husband.



**Figure 6.** (01:09:45 – 01:09:51)

Amy says: "Finally, honor tradition with very special treasure hunt"

This shows that Amy made clues indicated that Nick is guilty. Nick had spent Amy's money to buy luxurious items which he had hidden in warehouse. Those are Amy's plan. It makes Nick increasingly depressed because the police blame Nick for the luxurious items.



**Figure 7.** (01:06:50 – 01:06:55)

This shows that Amy made good relationship and good impression to her neighbors. She intended that when she disappeared they will feel lost her and blame Nick.



**Figure 8.** (00:39:32 – 00:39:39)

This illustrates that Amy has manipulated her death. Public blamed Nick and accused Nick as the killer of his wife. Public's opinion causes him being under pressured. Amy's plan is successful to terrorize Nick. The end of psychopath movie usually describes the end of crimes committed by the perpetrators. Most of the psychopathic characters end tragically by death. The perpetrators are often depicted died by falling from the upper floor or shot by a gun. Some other perpetrators finally died when they fight with their victim.

The end of *Gone Girl* is also quite surprising. At the end of the story, Amy went back to her husband and utilize her ex-boyfriend. She killed her ex-boyfriend and said that he had kidnapped her. He caged Amy in his lake house. Amy killed him and escaped from the abduction. All of her scenario successfully convinced the public. Public became more sympathetic to Amy and Amy was getting famous and her life became better than ever.



**Figure 9.** (02:06:00 – 02:06:30)

This shows that Amy returned home covered in blood after killed her ex-boyfriend. She pretended had escaped from abduction and rape from her ex-boyfriend. Meanwhile, everybody seems believe in her.



**Figure 10.** (02:15:30 – 02:15:50)

This shows that Amy gets the sympathy and popularity from public. All people are amazed at Amy and loved her. Even Amy's life is better than before. She has successfully created a good impression on the



public. People are unaware for the crime she has committed. She feels satisfied since her obsession achieved. Amy always wants people to look at her as perfect person. She is very obsessed with people's impression to her. She does not want people to regard her as evil and cruel person. She creates a good impression to everyone. She does a lot of things so that people regard her as a mistreated wife. She made a scenario of her death perfectly.

It can be concluded that Amy fits the characteristics of a psychopath. She has great obsession about herself that leads her to commit crimes. She senselessly slits the throat of the victim only by using a cutter. She does manipulative act begin from approaching the victim as a friend and finally killing him. She also exposes sexual appeal to attract the victim. Amy also terrorize her own husband, Nick. She makes public opinion that Nick kills her. In the end, she creates herself as innocence for the murder of Desi, her ex-boyfriend. She twists the story that she has been raped and kidnapped by him.

## B. The Causes of Her Psychopathic Behavior

Psychopathic disorder may be caused by heredity and surrounding. *Gone Girl* movie illustrates how the surrounding affects the psychopathic disorders suffered by Amy. Amy's family is full of manipulative acts. Amy's parents utilize Amy to be an amazing personal who inspires many people. They make a fictional story about Amy's life look as a real story. They make Amy like what they want as a perfect, brilliant and admirable girl. Then they make a storybook about their daughter entitled "Amazing Amy" with excessive improvisation. They do this manipulation to their business because many people are interested with this book. Amy does not agree with her parents and she feels restricted. Amy's parents always demand Amy to do all of things to look admirable even she does not like it. They always ask Amy to look perfect in front of the public.

Her parents formed Amy as an ambitious and selfish person. She grew into an individual who always care to herself and obsessed to popularity. She did everything to achieve what she wants. She was also versed in manipulation. She manipulated her death, made her husband as the killer and story about her abduction by her ex-boyfriend. She was very good do all her scenario. It made public believe and feel lost of "Amazing Amy". She succeeded to create positive impression to the public.

Family that give negative effect is not always a family that gives physical violence. Family that give psychology pressure also give negative effect. Parents who give models such as lie, ambitious, manipulative and selfish can be example of negative environment for children. Children will grow into individual that are similar with their or more than their parent trait. Amy grows became a cold-blooded killer. It is a form of environmental education and her rebellion.



Figure 11. (00:12:51- 00:12:57)



Amy's father : It would mean so much if you would talk to a few reporters, bloggers, give them a little Amy color. People wanna hear from you  
 Amy : We can't stay long  
 Amy's father : Fantastic

This describes that Amy's father commanded Amy to meet reporters and bloggers. He wanted Amy to give them "A little Amy color". It means that Amy should give amazing story about her to make them amazed. She should make a hoax story about amazing life of Amy. It was aimed at giving a good impression to the media about Amy. Everyone will listen and believe all the things said by Amy. Amy was always required perfect even though she was unable to do, so she forced herself for her parents.



**Figure 12.** (00:12:31-00:12:35)

Nick : When did you have a dog?  
 Amy : She got the dog. Puddles made her more relatable.

This shows that Amy's parent manipulate story about Amy in "Amazing Amy" book. In this book, they told that Amy has a dog, but in fact she has not. It aims to make public love her because puddles make her look more significant.



**Figure 13.** (00:13:06- 00:12:12)

Nick : Your parent literally plagiarized your childhood.  
 Amy : No, they improved upon it, and then peddled it to the mass.

This tells about manipulation made by Amy's parents. They improved all of story about Amy in "Amazing Amy" book. They wanted to make their books succeed in bookstores and got a lot of advantages in finance and popularity.

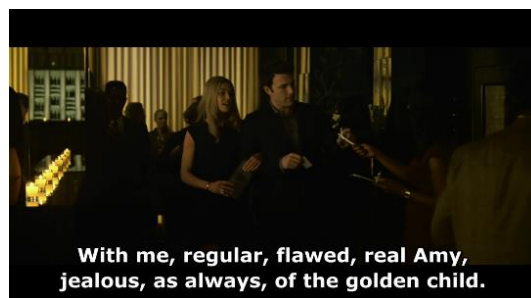


Figure 14. (00:12:06 – 00:12:10)

Amy : With me, regular, lawed, real Amy, Jealous, as always, of the golden child

This illustrates that Amy realizes that she is an ordinary woman, not as perfect as on "Amazing Amy" book. She feels jealous of herself in the book of "Amazing Amy". She feels that her parents are more concerned about "The Golden child, Amy" in the story rather than herself.



Figure 15. (00:13:03- 00:13:10)

Amy : This is why I have my brownstone. My trust fund. I know I can't complain.

It portrays that Amy get her brownstone and trust fund form the book "Amazing Amy" made by her parents. She wants to complain to her parents because they manipulate her life story but she cannot. She always has to do what is said by her parents. Although gets depressed and disagree, Amy obeys her parents. It seems that it is not only Amy who had psychopathic disorder but also her parents. However, there are differences in psychopathic trait showed by Amy and her parents. Amy's parents are manipulative to get money and fame without doing violence while Amy is able to kill people to achieve her obsession.

Amy's parents would be categorized as individuals who have psychopathic traits. They manipulated story about "Amazing Amy" for their business. They made life story of perfect and she was demanded perfect as in their story. They made Amy's life was so complicated and stressful. Although depressed Amy cannot complain, she obey what her parents want. They were good in lie. In order to achieve what they want they use Amy as a way of achieving their obsession about wealth, popularity, and recognition from society. Because of her family, Amy was formed into a psychopathic person. Amy was an egocentric person who manipulate other people around her. She had ability to successfully lie and to make people believe in her. In carrying out her crime, she use other people around her without morality. She was innocent when hurt or manipulate someone. She did what she wanted and never care about how it affected other people. She only cares about herself.

Therefore, the loss of Amy makes the public become curious and mass media report all of news about her loss. Amy's parents also make the excessive advertisement that attract the public attention. All mass media reported the loss of Amy and show their concern. Many people are also involved in the search of Amy.



Figure 16. (00:25:33-00:26:41)

Nick : If anyone out there has any information. Please come forward. Thank you

These figures tell that Nick and Amy's parent report the loss of Amy to mass media. Amy's parent show excessive reaction by opening a volunteer headquarter for all people who care and want to find Amy. They also put advertisement on billboard. Many mass media put this as headline news. So that, the loss of Amy greatly spread out.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Amy Elliott Dunne, as the main female character in *Gone Girl* movie has great obsession about herself. Unfortunately, it leads her to commit crimes. She does manipulative act and exposes sexual appeal to the victim. She senselessly slits the throat of the victim only by using a cutter. Amy also makes public opinion that her husband kills her. She packages herself as a good admirable woman. In the end, she creates herself as innocence for the murder of Desi, her ex-boyfriend. She twists the story that she has been raped and kidnapped by him. These symptoms suggest that she meets the characteristics of psychopathic behavior.

Amy's psychopathic behavior is believed to be affected by her surrounding, especially her parents. Amy's family is full of manipulative acts. Amy's parents utilize Amy to be an amazing person who inspires many people by creating a storybook entitled "Amazing Amy" with excessive improvisation. Therefore, the loss of Amy attracts the public's sympathy and is excessively spread out by mass media. The other researchers may examine this movie from different aspect. They may see the roles of surrounding and society in shaping someone's personality. It is based on thought that this movie may a satire that becoming a famous person, specifically nowadays, is very easy by the aid of mass or social media.

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