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**Research Article****Musashi: Takezo the Ronin, Aggression, and Erich Fromm's Psychological Perspective****Anas Ahmadi**

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Email: [anasahmadi@unesa.ac.id](mailto:anasahmadi@unesa.ac.id)*Received: January 26<sup>st</sup>, 2021; Revised: April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021; Accepted: April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021**Available online: April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021; Published regularly: June 2021***Abstract**

This study explores the character of Takezo the ronin in *Musashi* by Eiji Yoshikawa through the psychological perspective of aggression. This research specifically aims to (a) explore Takezo's psychology of aggression as a ronin and (b) the impact of Takezo's aggression on others. The approaches used in this research are the psychology of literacy and the psychology of aggression. The method used is qualitative; it uses data exposure and interpretation. The data source is the novel *Musashi* by Eiji Yoshikawa (translated version in Indonesian). The data used is in the form of text that is relevant to Takezo's psychology of aggression. The data analysis techniques are carried out in five stages, (1) identifying data related to Takezo's psychology of aggression, (2) data classification related to Takezo's psychology of aggression, (3) data presentation related to Takezo's psychology of aggression, and (4) summarizing data related to Takezo's psychology of aggression. The results showed that Takezo's aggressions are represented in the form of thoughts and behaviour. Takezo's aggressive thoughts are wanting to defeat and kill his enemies. Takezo's aggressive behaviour is killing his enemies, who are samurai. Takezo's aggressions cause the impact of physical category, and they are death and disability on the defeated samurai. Besides, in the psychological category, Takezo's aggressions cause fear and hatred in society. It is concluded that Takezo represents ronin, which desires destructive aggression that has a physical and psychological impact on others.

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The study of literary psychology is interesting because it raises literature with a context of the human psyche (Ahmadi, 2019; Larsen, 2020; Latzman & Shishido, 2013), which is related to the world of psychology. Through literary psychology, another side of a human being can be revealed, which is sometimes unrecognizable in the real world. Therefore, Freud (1950) stated that through literature, humans could recognize the neurosis side of a person. Meanwhile, Jung (1964, 1984)

stated that literature as a creative work could be used as a soul therapy. The study of literary psychology attracts literary critics, but psychologists like Freud, Jung, and Fromm use literary documents to explore human psychology. It is proven by discovering the theory of the Oedipus complex, Electra complex, and Cassandra complex, taken from literary works and used as theories in psychology. Jung (1969) raised a psychological theory that used data from the literature.

In the last ten years, several researchers have written about literary psychology. For example, Keen (2007) examined empathy in novels, whether the empathy of readers, works, or authors; Asong (2012) who examined the construction of psychology in African fiction; Ahmadi (2020), who examined criminological psychology in Indonesian literature; and Rieger (2020) who raised literature and madness. The study of literary psychology is currently divided into monodisciplinary and interdisciplinary categories. Those categories review literature from a psychological perspective. However, monodisciplinary relies more on one leading theory, while interdisciplinary relies more on hybrid theories.

Aesthetic literature firmly brings out its psychological elements. One of them is the novel *Musashi* by Eiji Yoshikawa. The novel is well-known classic Japanese literature, and it has been translated into several languages, for example, in English and Indonesian. From a historical perspective, the novel was initially published as a serial story in the Japanese newspaper of *Asahi Shimbun* in 1935-1939 (Kristanto, 2001) and was subsequently published as a book. Furthermore, in 1981, it was translated into English, and in 2001, it was translated into Indonesian. As is well known, Japanese literature that emerged in the 700s B.C. (Aston, 2015) mostly raised themes of history, religiosity, psychology, and "indigenous world-view" (Kato, 1997: 9). In line with Kato's view, Japanese literature is strong in philosophy, religion, and psychology. It cannot be separated from the philosophy, religion, and psychology of Japanese people's intense, serious, and profound life.

On the other hand, there is also an intense and dark side in Japanese people's psychology. That is the balance of life, construction on one hand and destruction on the other hand. Likewise, *Musashi*, the author, is excellent in creating the psychological role of the character.

To the best of the researchers' knowledge, there are researchers about *Musashi*. The first one is Van Overmeire (2016), who examined the zen element in *Musashi*, which is associated with the character of *Musashi* and the monk Takuan. He showed how the relationship between *Musashi* and the monk Takuan in the context of zen religiosity. The second one is Reichert (2020), who showed that the novel *Musashi* which was initially a series, has become a fiction that shows a gender identity in it, even though the patriarchal culture was still intense. Those studies led to religiosity and gender studies.

Unfortunately, this research has not yet been discussed from a psychological aspect. Psychological behaviour, the behaviour of the characters in the novel, can be explored in depth. By exploring the characters' behaviour in the novel, it will appear consciously / unconsciously that the author constructs human behaviour in literature like the real world.

In that regard, *Musashi* is a compelling novel in terms of psychology. By extracting the Takezo character's psychological traces, readers can identify the psychology of a ronin who lived to wander in search of the path of authenticity. It was called the path of the sword. Therefore, this study aims to reveal Takezo's psychological traces as a local ronin using the psychology of aggression perspective. Specifically, the objectives in this study are divided into two, (1) the aggression of Takezo's character as a ronin and (2) the impact of the Takezo character's aggression as a ronin on others. Concerning the study's limitations, the researcher used the data source for the *Musashi* novel (Indonesian translation) because the researcher had a background in Indonesian language and literature, not Japanese language and literature. However, both original literature and translated literature have the same essence in this context, namely fiction and aesthetics. Therefore, the

researcher chose the novel, which was published in Indonesian.

The criticism used in this research is the psychology of literature. Criticism of literature psychology is a study of literary criticism that examines elements of psychology in literary works. Literature can be included in the study of psychology. Conversely, psychology can enter into literary studies. Psychoanalysis has dominated the study of literary psychology criticism (Tyson, 2021; Stevens, 2020; Ahmadi, 2018). As a criticism, psychoanalysis can reveal that literature is a subconscious world written by the author. Therefore, psychology elements can be used as a reference by psychologists or literary critics.

The study of literary psychology is a study of the 'inner world' (Downey, 2014). Therefore, it is related to the human soul that arises through the character's thoughts and behavior; literary psychology criticism studies can be included in the genre of novels, poetry, or drama through events or dictions that appear in literary works (Downey, 2013). Referring to the views of Wellek & Warren (2019), the study of literary psychology is divided into four, (1) creative study, (2) author study, (3) work-study, and (4) reader study.

Fromm's (1973) view of aggression is used to understand and recognize the psychology of Takezo's character. This study is also supported by other aggression literature, and Fromm's (1947, 1963, 1955, 1942) thought related to the context of psychological studies. In Fromm's (1973) view, aggression is an archaic human instinct that is destructive. Aggression is divided into two, evil aggression and soft aggression. Evil aggression occurs in destructive and dangerous behaviour; it can even lead to death.

Meanwhile, soft aggression is more about self-defence. Both evil and soft aggressions are human instincts as they have the desire to survive in life. In Fromm's (2011) view, these aggressions cannot be

separated from humans with necrophilia, the desire to do destructions. Through this destructive desire, humans will damage the earth, the destructions of humans to humans, humans to the environment, and humans to animals.

In Fromm's view (1973: 2), the emergence of aggression in humans cannot be separated from the existence of destructiveness. Humans have a destructive character, wage war, commit crimes and commit murder. It is due to the instincts that exist in humans. This instinct is a channel for the pursuit of freedom. Therefore, when referring to historical facts, the figure of Hitler is considered an aggressor because he committed many murders and destruction of humans. However, Buechler (2017) argues that Fromm's view of aggression is not always destructive because aggression can also appear as a form of 'balancing'.

Anderson (2012, p. 2) equated the term of aggression with violence. Both aggression and violence are behaviours that bring danger to others physically and psychologically. Anderson & Bushman (2002, p. 29) explained that violence is aggression that is very dangerous, for example, to kill or cause death. However, there is also non-violent aggression. Non-violent aggression is aggression that is categorized as soft aggression, but aggression is psychologically painful. Anderson & Bushman's view is supported by Warburton & Anderson (2015: 373) that violence is a subsection of aggression.

Regarding the definition of aggression, violence is considered aggression, but not all aggression is violence. Horvitz (2000) explained that aggression could be categorized in a sexual context. Serpe & Stets (2013: 60) brought identity theory. Ciuba (2007: 4-5) stated that aggression had become a tradition in modern society that becomes a part of violence. Therefore, the rates of violence, abuse, and crime are very high.

## 2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach which refers to the views of Silverman (2021), Lune & Berg (2018) that qualitative relies more on the experimentation of the researcher. Concerning literature, the approach used refers to the views of Wellek & Warren (2019), namely the study of literary psychology that leads to the laws of psychology in literary texts. The literary psychology is focused on the aggression of Takezo as a ronin. According to Ahmadi (2015, 2021), the literary text is a document that is considered psychological data. The research data source is the novel *Musashi* by Eiji Yoshikawa (translation in Indonesian, 1.238 pages) published by Gramedia, 2001. The data used in the study is a literary text that is relevant to Takezo's psychology that appears through segments of behaviour and thoughts.

Data collection techniques refer to the context of written literature, carried out through literature /document studies. The data analysis technique is carried out through stages (1) identifying data related to Takezo's psychology of aggression, (2) data classification related to Takezo's psychology of aggression, (3) data presentation related to Takezo's psychology of aggression, and (4) summarizing data related to Takezo's psychology of aggression. In analyzing data, the researcher acted as a critical instrument. Therefore, the study conducted a profound interpretation of character psychology through two stages, the heuristic, and the hermeneutic stage. The heuristic stage is used to understand and interpret the meaning at the 'surface' stage, while the hermeneutic stage is used to understand and interpret the meaning at the 'deep' stage.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1 Takezo the Ronin's Aggression to Others

Aggression is a primitive soul that exists in humans. Aggression is a primitive

soul that exists in humans. In connection with aggression, Fromm (1973: 93) reveals that a person's aggression appears in him due to the instinctive urge to defend himself. Besides, aggression also appears to show his existence that he is stronger than others. Thus, a person engages in aggressive behaviour because he wants to be a superior human being and beat others. In the view of Eichelman (2003), aggression is a form of escaping from constraints. Aggressive humans want to escape from being constrained to something that has bound their lives. In releasing these shackles, humans must aggress against others.

In *Musashi*, the aggression of Takezo, who was a ronin appears very dominant. He was an aggressive male figure because, as a ronin, he only had one goal: to fight against his enemies and defeat his enemies. In connection with ronin, Perkins (1998: 69) called it "masterless samurai." Some ronins had a master, and some did not have a master known as the daimyo. However, most of the ronins were samurai who had no master because they were travelling. Thus, sometimes on a wandering journey, the samurai met a daimyo whom he made as master. However, if they (samurai) were tired of wandering and looking for other daimyos, they were free to do so. Likewise, Takezo was a ronin because he did not have a master. He was a free ronin on his way to the path of the sword. Takezo's description of aggression towards others can be seen in the following quote.

Takezo had decided not to let Temma escape. That was dangerous. His heart was made up. That was the nature of Takezo. He was an extreme creature (Yoshikawa, 2001:41)

So he jumped onto Temma's back. Blood gushed out at the tip of the sword, and a blood-chilling scream tore through the quiet night (Yoshikawa, 2001:41)

Takezo's character as a ronin had a very strong desire for aggression. Referring to Fromm's (1973:127) view, aggression, if traced historically, shows that human ancestors were indeed predators. Therefore, in his mind, the thought that letting someone go and not killing him was not a good thing for him. It is because he had an instinctive desire to kill. The instinctive desire to kill in the samurai was a powerful force. If a samurai did not kill his opponent, he would be killed by that person. Likewise, Takezo, as a samurai he had the desire to kill. The desire to kill was the destruction of the aggression created by a person. Because of this, Takezo passionately killed his opponent, Temma. He did not give any mercy to his opponent. Finally, the opponent, Temma, was killed.

Takezo's behaviour in defeating and killing opponents was a form of aggression from a samurai. Berkowitz (1993) explained that aggressive impulses within him cause an aggressive personality. The stronger the aggressive impulse, the stronger the aggressive behaviour. In this case, the aggression raised by Takezo is aggression as a samurai path and self-defence aggression. As a samurai, he ought to be able to show others that he was a reliable samurai. Not only did he kill the samurai whom he challenged, but Takezo also defeated and killed samurai who were looking for a challenger. This picture is shown in the following quote.

Once upon a time, a wandering swordsman named Arima Kihei raised a banner decorated with gold and declared he was ready to fight anyone from the village who challenged him. Takezo managed to kill the man without difficulty and earned praise from the villagers for his bravery (Yoshikawa, 2001:35)

Based on this quote, it appears that Takezo as a samurai, was good at fighting. He could easily beat his opponent. Takezo, for that matter, was entirely driven by his passionate aggression. Because of that, he

could kill people easily because he was supported by his passion and ability to use the sword. Besides, he had absolutely no regrets when he defeated and killed his enemies. In a psychological context, a strong desire for aggression can be likened to an animal. In the animal kingdom, those who are strong will prey on and defeat the weak. Predatory animals will defeat and eat animals that are prey, such as lions preying on deer. It has become a "law of nature" that the strong will prey on the weak, *homo homini lupus*. Likewise, in the samurai world, a strong samurai would defeat a weak samurai. Like a pyramid, the taller and the more reliable a samurai was, the stronger and the more numerous his enemies he got.

Takezo, as a ronin, was merciless in defeating his enemies. It was because other samurai were sparring opponents who had to be defeated. If he could not defeat, he would have to lose and die. That was what Takezo considers the path of a samurai, especially a ronin samurai. Takezo's depiction of cruelty and violence, as a representation of his aggression, is shown through the successive segmentation of the killings. It is shown in the following quote.

But, Takezo was not like that! He felt compelled to step in and kill a bodyguard and then killed the others (Yoshikawa, 2001:86-87)

Takezo, with his fierce desire, killed people many times. He killed the samurai, who was his opponent. Takezo's aggression is in a destructive category because he took the lives of others. In this case, Takezo's destructiveness is a crime. However, in Takezo's view, he did not think about it because what was essential for him to was showing his identity. The path of the sword. Those who were strong won. In the view of Bergman, McIntyre, D., & James (2007: 87), aggressive behaviour in a person is caused by the main factor, namely, "we contend that a primary cause of such

behaviour is the personality trait of aggression." This personality indeed seems strong in the character of Takezo, who had an aggressive personality like an animal. He was not afraid of anyone and wanted to kill anyone who was considered his opponent. He was like an animal that had the desire to prey on and kill his opponent.

Takezo's aggressive behaviour did not only happen to defeat enemies who challenge him. He was also looking for other samurai to fight with him. He went to the samurai hermitage, and he challenged the owners of the hermitage. Takezo's ability to use the sword made him even more aggressive. He would easily defeat his enemies (Author's note: Takezo changed his name to Musashi while he learned about zen, but the author still uses Takezo in the data exposure). This shrewdness led him to get further into the path of violence. Takezo's cleverness in fighting is shown in the following quote.

The sound of a shrill whistle broke the silence of the plain. Dampachi was panting heavily after being hit by Musashi. Because his attention was on Musashi's finger, he didn't realize that Musashi had drawn his sword. His body soared, floated forward, and landed face down. Dampachi didn't get up again (Yoshikawa, 2001:230)

Based on this quote, Takezo, as a ronin, had no compassion for his enemies. His extraordinary abilities and enthusiasm made him very skilled at using the sword so that the character of Dampachi could be defeated quickly. The enemy was not aware that Takezo's sword had been stabbed into his body. That way, the enemy died quickly without being able to avoid Takezo's fast-slashing sword. Instinctively, someone who has high aggression will feel satisfaction and enjoyment when he can defeat and kill his enemies.

In the last sequel, Takezo, a man who had high aggression, had a sense of uncertainty. Within him, a fear emerged when fighting against his equal, Sasaki

Kojiro Ganryu. He was a samurai who was reliable and capable. His skill had also been famous everywhere, and he had a long sword called the Drying Gaff. This sword had killed many people and brought Ganryu as a great samurai. However, as a ronin who had high aggression, Takezo was still passionate about fighting Ganryu. Even in that fight, Takezo was able to defeat Ganryu.

Ganryu thought the headband was the opponent's head, and a broad smile briefly flashed across his face. But, the next second, his skull broke like gravel hit by Musashi's sword (Yoshikawa, 2001:1246)

The quote shows explicitly that the Ganryu character, who was skilled at using the sword, had lost the fight with Takezo. In this case, Takezo's aggressive strength led him to fight and win the fight. As a samurai, he had a passionate passion driven by a strong desire for aggression to win battles.

### **3.2 The Impact of Takezo the Ronin's Aggression on Others**

The impact of aggression in Fromm's (1973) view appears in a destructive form. This form of destructiveness appears in physical and psychological categories. The destruction in the physical category is related to injuring, beating, and killing others intentionally. In terms of physical degradation as a result of aggression, Takezo caused many deaths. He killed the samurai he challenged to fight or the samurai who challenged him to fight. The death of a samurai in battle was a knight's path. However, in a psychological context, aggression that causes one's death is evil and destructive aggression because it causes the death of other people. As well as causing death, Takezo's aggression caused other people to be seriously injured in the fight. The following is an illustration related to Takezo's aggression which caused injury and disability to a samurai.

In the first match alone, it was the college champions who came out as the loser. His hand was cut off (Yoshikawa, 2001:166).

This description shows explicitly that Takezo's aggression caused physical disabilities in the samurai he defeated. Takezo, with his skills as a samurai, cut his enemy's hand off with his sword. It caused the enemy to become physically disabled for life because his hand had been cut off and could not be reattached. In the past, sometimes the samurai were defeated or disabled. They sometimes committed suicide because they felt they had been defeated and had no pride.

The impact of aggression in the psychological category is related to psychological problems, such as fear, disappointment, anger, or hatred. Related to the impact of the psychological category of aggression caused by Takezo's aggression, it can be seen in the fear that arose in his parents, Munisai. The father, a samurai, feared his son because he felt unable to control his son. It is shown in the following quote.

Munisai finally became afraid. When he came to the boy with a club, the boy challenged him with a wooden stick (Yoshikawa, 2001:20).

Based on this quote, his father, Munisai - who scolded Takezo when he was still a teenager - turned out to be afraid of his son. As a samurai, Munisai nurtured his son with the samurai lifestyle, discipline, and obedience. He hoped that his son, Takezo, would become a disciplined and obedient son. However, Takezo was not like that. Takezo opposed what his father applied to him. Takezo, in this case, had shown aggressive behaviour towards his parent. It made his parent fear his son because he felt he was unable to raise Takezo properly. Besides, Takezo was considered too brave to fight against his parent. In connection with the aggression in the family, Casselman & Rosenbaum

(2014) showed that there is indeed aggression between boys and male parents. It happens when the boys feel that they are shackled by the rules made by the male parents.

In addition to creating fear in the parents, the aggressive behaviour of Takezo created fear in the villagers. In this case, the villagers did not like Takezo because he was considered a village rioter. It can be seen when Osugi and his gang framed Takezo. However, the trapping process failed, and Takezo found out that he was being framed. Because of that, he ran away. When Takezo fled, the villagers were afraid that Takezo would take revenge and kill them all. This picture is shown in the following quote.

Osugi locked the main gate and blocked all entrances. They were all scared to death that Takezo might come to take revenge (Yoshikawa, 2001:73).

This illustration shows that Takezo was indeed a ronin whom the villagers feared. They were afraid that Takezo would kill them. He had no mercy in fighting. This fear caused villagers to overprotect themselves. They closed and locked the main gate and blocked the entrance so that Takezo would not come and take revenge by killing. Greenberg (1990) clearly showed that a person brings up aggressive behaviour due to the internal resentment factor. Therefore, in this context, Osugi and the people were afraid of Takezo, who was getting stronger because he wanted to take revenge for being mistreated by Osugi and the villagers.

The impact of the aggression brought by Takezo makes a deep hatred in the hearts of the people. They considered Takezo a troublemaker. Village rioters. Because of that, when Monk Takuan caught Takezo. At that time, Takezo was tied up by Monk Takuan. In that event, many people wanted Takezo to be killed because he would be dangerous if he were released.

Farley & McWey (2020) explained that people who have high aggression would indeed get negative treatment from others/society. The aggressive person's behaviour causes this to harm other people/society. The stronger one's aggression towards other people/society, the stronger the hatred will be grown by other people/society. This picture is shown in the following quote.

There was an uproar against the idea of letting Takezo go. One person shouted, "We must kill him! He is useless, he is evil. If we let him live, he will become a curse for this village (Yoshikawa, 2001:98).

This illustration shows that a very deep sense of hatred arisen because of Takezo's aggressive behaviour. When Takezo was still free, people were afraid. However, when Takezo was caught and helpless, the people wanted Takezo to be killed because he had killed many people and caused many troubles. In the view of society, a troublemaker like Takezo deserved to be killed.

#### 4. Conclusion

The novel *Musashi* by Eiji Yoshikawa is Japanese literature that shows the character's aggression from the character of Takezo. As a ronin, Takezo brought out aggression in himself through his thoughts and behaviour. Concerning Takezo's aggression, it can be concluded as follows.

First, Takezo's aggression as a ronin appears in his thinking about defeating and killing the enemy. If he did not defeat and kill the enemy, he would be defeated and killed by the enemy. Takezo, as a ronin, killed many samurai (who challenged him or those who were challenged).

Second, Takezo's aggression has an impact on physical and psychological categories. In the physical category, Takezo took the lives of others and caused physical disabilities in others. The physical disability was caused by the enemy who

lost the battle, like getting the hand cut off. In the psychological category, Takezo's aggression caused fear to emerge in his father and the villagers. They were afraid of Takezo, who had become a killer. Besides, Takezo's aggression causes hatred in the community towards Takezo.

Japanese literature that is related to the samurai narrative represents aggression more. The samurai path is inseparable from samurai aggression, both in defeating enemies or in terms of self-defence. Universally, literature represents aggression through characters created by the author. It is just that aggression in literature in each country has a different degree.

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