



THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GENERAL ZOD'S MEGALOMANIA IN DAVID SAMUEL GOYER'S *MAN OF STEEL* : MOVIE SCRIPT

DAVARA BARRY BASHYR
davarabarry@gmail.com
CAHYANINGSIH PUJIMAHANANI
cahyaningsih.pujimahanani@unitomo.ac.id

Abstract

This study investigates the portrayal of General Zod's megalomania as depicted in David Samuel Goyer's *Man of Steel* movie script. The investigation utilizes a descriptive method with a qualitative approach to investigate General Zod's character features related to megalomania. Drawing on Sigmund Freud's idea of megalomaniac qualities, the research identifies and evaluates features such as narcissism, delusions of grandeur, and the exploitation of others to satisfy personal aspirations. The findings suggest that General Zod exhibits a particularly grandiose mentality, marked by an inflated self-image, obsessive quest for power, and manipulative behaviour to attain his own interests.

Keywords: David S. Goyer, General Zod, *Man of Steel*, Megalomania, Movie Script

A.INTRODUCTION

Megalomania is a captivating yet complex aspect of our collective psyche within the complicated world of human society. Like the different societies and cultures that affect our world, megalomania goes beyond borders and cultures to affect people and groups. Throughout history, political leaders have frequently shown characteristics related to megalomania, driven by an insatiable need for power and control. The impact of megalomania on government and geopolitics is undeniable, including tyrants with aspirations to take over entire nations and powerful leaders who saw themselves as having a divine right to leadership (Galbraith, 1983).

Adolf Hitler, the ruthless tyrant of Nazi Germany during World War II, is one of the famous examples of megalomania. Hitler's ambitious goal of creating a racially uniform empire and his never-ending pursuit of power led to one of the most terrible eras in human history. The outcome of his megalomania and his never-ending pursuit of absolute control over Europe was seen in the horrors committed during World War II and the Holocaust, leading to a devastating impact that continues to have a deep effect on the present day. (Kershaw, 2000). These individuals typically hold an excessive desire for their importance and supremacy, which drives them to seek authoritative and aggressive methods of governance. (Bullock, 1991).

Psychologist Sigmund Freud described megalomania as a psychological condition characterized by grandiose illusions of power, importance, and influence. Such illusions manifest across various domains, including politics, business, entertainment, and interpersonal relationships. The lure of

Davara, Cahyaningsih	THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GENERAL ZOD'S MEGALOMANIA IN DAVID SAMUEL GOYER'S MAN OF STEEL : MOVIE SCRIPT
---------------------------------	---

power, control, and superiority often intersects with the intricate facets of human psychology, exposing core principles that drive megalomaniacal behavior (Freud, 1914).

General Zod, performed by Michael Shannon, appeared as a complex adversary motivated by a strong desire for power and control. His character's motivations, deeds, and moral complexity provoked thought-provoking inquiries regarding the essence of authority, accountability, and the outcomes of uncontrollable ambition. In contrast to previous depictions of General Zod as a straightforward adversary in the Superman comics and movies, Snyder's iteration allowed for an in-depth analysis of Zod's megalomania and the causes that impact his personality.

A. RESEARCH METHOD

The researchers utilized a qualitative technique, minimizing reliance on numerical data and tables in favour of a focused textual examination. Data gathering involved identifying specific lines, dialogues, and sequences from *Man of Steel*, a screenplay produced by David Samuel Goyer, that revealed elements of General Zod's personality and objectives. These aspects were carefully selected for their relevance to the portrayal of megalomaniac tendencies, based on Freud's theoretical framework.

For data analysis, the researchers conducted a thematic analysis, assessing how the script's language and actions illustrated Zod's characteristics of narcissism, delusional ambitions, and exploitation of others for personal gain. By deconstructing these textual occurrences, the study aimed to provide a detailed understanding of how megalomania was depicted through character behaviour and interactions, strengthening insights into the psychological foundations of Zod's actions and motivations.

C.FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data for this research are collected from specific passages in *Man of Steel*, a screenplay by David Samuel Goyer, highlighting the qualities of General Zod's megalomania throughout the narrative. Key characteristics highlighted include narcissism, big goals fueled by delusions of grandeur, and a tendency to manipulate and use others to fulfill personal aims. An example is when General Zod and his followers forcefully seize control, assassinating Ro-Zar, a member of the Kryptonian Council, in a coup attempt to conquer the planet. These occurrences serve as focal points in the analysis to highlight Zod's megalomaniacal tendencies as depicted in the script.

ZOD: This council has been disbanded.
KRYPTON COUNCIL: On whose authority?
ZOD: Mine.
ZOD: The rest of you will be tried
and punished accordingly. (Goyer, 2013: 4-5)

General Zod displays an obvious tendency towards narcissism and megalomania. He confidently disbands the council, expressing his dominance and displaying arrogance. When questioned by the Krypton Council over the legitimacy of his acts, Zod disregards their concerns with a narcissistic reply, highlighting his preference for making decisions independently and his lack of regard for democratic procedures. Zod threatens to put the council members who disagree with him on trial and punish them, which shows how authoritarian he is.

Zod sees himself as the sole arbiter of justice. During the interaction, Zod repeatedly shows narcissistic characteristics by asserting his superiority over others, disregarding opposing perspectives, and imposing his desires without considering existing systems or the opinions of others. Another portrayal of General Zod's megalomania, which shows narcissistic behaviour, can be seen in the following quotation: Zod shows his arrogance towards Superman by emphasizing his genetic and training advantages as a warrior.

ZOD: I was bred to be a warrior, Kal.
I trained my entire life.
To master my senses.
Where did you train? On a farm? (Goyer, 2013: 139)

From the preceding quotation, General Zod's megalomania becomes apparent as he asserts his perceived superiority over Superman, emphasizing his genetic and training advantages.

"I was bred to be a warrior, Kal," Zod declares, establishing his belief in the genetic superiority of Kryptonians with specific roles. By identifying himself as a warrior, Zod implies that his purpose and abilities are inherently superior, framing his identity in terms of his predetermined genetic makeup. This lays the groundwork for Zod's megalomania, as he sees himself as the product of superior breeding. "I trained my entire life... to master my senses," Zod says, emphasizing his dedication to mastering his abilities. The phrase "entire life" implies a lifelong commitment to training and discipline, reinforcing Zod's belief in the worth of his efforts.

"Where did you train?" is a rhetorical question. "On a farm?" is a dismissive and patronizing remark directed at Superman. Zod's question implies that Superman's upbringing on a farm is insignificant compared to Zod's rigorous training. This reflects Zod's megalomania, dismissing

Superman's upbringing while asserting his superiority based on his perception of a more refined and purposeful upbringing. The overall tone of Zod's dialogue demonstrates his rigid and authoritarian worldview. He asserts genetic and training superiority and dismisses the importance of Superman's experiences. Zod's megalomania stems from his conviction that he is destined to lead, and his contempt for those he considers inferior is palpable in this exchange.

Zod's megalomania, derived from his narcissistic inclinations, is seen in his desire to assert control and degrade Superman. In contrast to Superman's rural background, Zod's rigorous training strengthens Zod's conviction in his exceptionalism and the inherent inferiority of others, including Superman.

Another characteristic of General Zod's megalomania, ambition filled with delusions of success, is found when Zod meets Superman on his ship, Black Zero. The ship was able to paralyze Superman because his body rejected the ship's atmosphere. Superman passed out and found himself in a dreamlike vision of his family's farm while Zod talked with Superman about the aftermath of Krypton's destruction. The quotation is as follows:

ZOD: The only thing we agreed on was that Krypton was dying.
In return for my efforts to protect our civilization and save our planet,
I and my fellow officers were sentenced to the Phantom Zone. (Goyer, 2013: 91-92)

Zod explains his actions by referring to his megalomaniacal ambitions, which show how he desperately tries to bring Krypton back to life. Zod starts by discussing what he thinks he has in common with the other people from Krypton. He says they all agree that Krypton is coming to an end soon. This shared worry becomes the basis for his defense of extreme actions, which he frames as efforts to protect and save their society.

Zod's excessive sense of entitlement comes through in the line, "In return for my efforts..." He sees himself as the self-appointed savior of Krypton. Using "fellow officers" suggests a sense of friendship that is different from what he is talking about. By saying that they were "sentenced to the Phantom Zone," Zod makes himself look like a victim of a misguided justice system, which makes him even more arrogant. In this story, he makes his actions seem brave and selfless, even though they were risky and could have hurt others. Zod's dialogue shows how naive he is about his goals: he thinks he is the only one who can save Krypton, so he justifies his harsh actions by saying they are for the better good. This character trait adds to the complicated picture of Zod's megalomania in *Man of Steel*, showing how his sense of right and wrong is distorted and how far he is willing to go to reach his goal of success.

The second proof of Zod's ambitious behavior can be seen when General Zod and his army are apprehended and condemned to be banished into the Phantom Zone in the following quotation:

LOR-EM: General Zod..for the crimes
of murder and high treason, the Council has sentenced you
and your fellow insurgents to three hundred cycles
of somatic reconditioning. (Goyer, 2013: 141)

Lor-Em reveals the consequences of General Zod's megalomaniacal ambitions. Speaking for the Kryptonian Council, Lor-Em says that Zod is guilty of murder and high treason, giving him a harsh sentence of 300 cycles of somatic reconditioning. This line shows how the Council reacted to Zod's rebellion and disregard of the established order.

Zod's megalomania is shown by the fact that he thinks he is above Krypton's rules and laws because he believes that his plan for the survival of their race justifies his act of doing terrible things. The decision from the Council calls Zod's crazy plans delusional and shows that his ambition for power and control has a hefty price tag. Somatic reconditioning sounds like an attempt to change Zod's thoughts or actions, which shows how dangerous his megalomania is to society.

General Zod also shows characteristics of megalomaniac behavior, exploiting others to achieve his goal. The first proof is in the quotation below when Zod threatens Superman to kill innocent civilians, which causes a moral dilemma for Superman.

ZOD: I am going to make them suffer, Kal.
These humans you've adopted,
I will take them all from you .one by one. (Goyer, 2013: 138)

Zod's words show his determination to exploit Superman's relationships to get what he wants. Zod wants to hurt Superman as much as possible and control him by going after the people he cares about. It was planned for "I will take them all from you... one by one" to take advantage of Superman's kindness and use it against him. This way of doing things fits with the megalomaniacal trait of using others for his gain, control, or power. Zod does not see the people around Superman as individuals with free will; he sees them as tools that he can use to get what he wants. Zod's plans to hurt people close to Superman are well thought out and organized, which shows how selfish his ego is.

Another proof of General Zod exploiting others can be seen when When Zod and his army are put on trial by the Krypton Council, along with Lara Lor-Van, Superman's biological mother, Zod threatens her that he will find Superman no matter what the consequences will be.

ZOD: You believe your son is safe?
I will find him.
I will reclaim.

..what you have taken from us.
I will find him.
I will find him, Lara.
I will find him! (Goyer, 2013: 17-18)

From what Zod said, it's clear that he does not see Kal-El as a person with free will, but rather as a tool or object that belongs to Krypton. After all, Zod is ready to use any means necessary to get back what he sees as an important item for Krypton's life and revival. What Zod did in this situation could be seen as him using Kal-El as a tool to get what he wants, without caring about Kal-El's freedom or wishes. This greedy way of thinking shows a big part of Zod's megalomania: he is ready to control and abuse other people, even if it means forcing his will on people who have different goals or beliefs.

Moreover, Zod's megalomania is seen in his conviction that he has the authority to locate and reclaim Superman, emphasizing a sense of entitlement and superiority. Zod's megalomania is enhanced by his persistent repetition and frequent mention of Lara, Superman's biological mother, which introduces a personal aspect. It implies that he is able to control familial connections and emotions to accomplish his goals. This analysis showcases the manifestation of Zod's megalomania in the script, which involves the willingness to manipulate and take advantage of people, considering them as a means to achieve his goals rather than recognizing their autonomy. Zod's relentless pursuit of Superman, driven by his fixation on regaining control, demonstrates a misguided belief in his inherent right and a lack of concern for the freedom and well-being of others.

D.CONCLUSION

From the previous findings on previous chapter, a conclusion appear that General Zod shows megalomaniac personality by these three characteristics: narcissistic, ambitions filled with delusion of success and willingness to exploit others to achieve his goals.

One of the example of narcissistic is when General Zod disbands the Krypton council by force and assassinates one of the council members, although Zod does not have the authority to disband it. Next, one of example of Zod's ambitions to achieve his goals is when General Zod and his army are apprehended and condemned to be banished into the Phantom Zone due to his ambition to retrieve

codex from baby Superman, which serves as Krypton's future but fails, and killing Jor-El, Superman's biological father.

Another portrayal of Zod's megalomania is his willingness to exploit others to achieve his goals, such as Zod threatening Superman to kill innocent civilians to show his determination.

REFERENCES

- [1] Bullock, A. (1991). *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*. Penguin Books. Harper Perennial.
- [2] Freud, S. (1914). *On Narcissism: An Introduction*. Hogarth Press.
- [3] Galbraith, J. K. (1983). *The Anatomy of Power*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- [4] Kershaw, I. (2000). *Hitler: 1936-1945: Nemesis*. W. W. Norton & Company